




Spring 2007

Somos y Estamos, Spring 2007

Department of Spanish

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WMU DEPARTMENT OF SPANISH Newsletter

For Friends of the Department of Spanish, Western Michigan University

It is not easy to summarize in a few pages all the happenings in the Department of Spanish since the last issue of our newsletter, but we will attempt to review the most important events of these past months.

First of all, we need to mention two items that have caused us many sleepless nights and great sadness. In spring of last year Professor

Jorge Febles decided to accept the position of Chair of the Department of World Languages at North Florida University, where he began his work on July 1. Several months later, WMU president Diether Haenicke offered a position to our superlative administrative assistant, Elena Gaudio. This left us a bit lost among piles of paperwork and Byzantine administrative chores that only she understood. Gradually, however, things have returned to normal and are running just fine.

Following a period of uncertainty at WMU, and in spite of all the economic problems that affect the state of Michigan, tranquility has finally returned to campus. Thanks to the reassuring presence of President Haenicke and the work he has done there is new optimism and a renewed vision for the future. Cultural activities have multiplied, two modern buildings have been completed, the flowers are again well cared for, and Brown Hall is being renovated. The campus is now a lively place that encourages dialogue and cooperation among students, faculty and administrators. The new president, John M.

Dunn, will assume his position on July 1, marking the beginning of a new era at Western.

With regards to the Department of Spanish, I am pleased to say that since Jan. 4 we have had a new administrative assistant, Colleen Sante, and that I will continue as department chair for another four years. This was not in my plans, but the experience I have had since July 2006 has been so positive that I could not turn down the offer to remain as chair for four more years. It has been a complicated year for everyone, but also very enlightening. My warm feelings and respect for the members of this department are even greater than before. Their support during this year, as well as the numerous demonstrations of cooperation that have traditionally characterized this department, really make my job easy and enjoyable.

As you see, we continue to be your Spanish Department and we continue to occupy Sprau Tower. Stop by for a visit when you are in Kalamazoo!



*Mercedes Tasende, chair,
Department of Spanish.*



Colleen Sante

Want to read this in Spanish?

*See the Department of Spanish website
for complete translation*

www.wmich.edu/spanish

Irma López Receives Award for Teaching Excellence



If you have read the local newspapers recently you will have noticed that Professor Irma López has received one of the most prestigious prizes awarded by Western Michigan University, the

WMU Distinguished Teaching Award. Those who have been in Irma's classes know better than anyone that she deserves that distinction. Irma, to the sincere applause of the crowd in the Dalton Center auditorium, was awarded the prize on Feb. 28 by President Haenicke. And that is not all. Irma also has been nominated to receive another prize on the state level, the Michigan Presidents Council Professor of the Year Award. Congratulations, Irma!

In addition to being one of Western's best teachers, Irma is also a productive scholar. Her area of interest is Latin American women's prose, especially the topic of feminine identity in the writings of authors such as María Luisa Puga, Mayra Montero, Sara Sefchovich, Cristina Policastro, Rosa Nissán, Elena Poniatowska and other well-known figures.

Her articles have appeared in journals such as *Chasqui*, *Confluencia*, *Crítica Hispánica*, *Hispanófila*, *Hispanic Journal*, *Latin American Review*, *Letras Femeninas*, *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe*, *Mujeres y Punto*, *Principia*, *Revista de Literatura Mexicana Contemporánea*, *Anales Literarios*, *Indiana Journal of Hispanic Literatures* and *Texto Crítico*.

She also has authored a book titled *Historia, escritura e identidad: la novelística de María Luisa Puga* (Peter Lang, 1996).

"It has been a great honor to receive the Teaching Excellence Award, but the greatest joy and satisfaction from this recognition has come from the countless acts of kindness and support from so many students and colleagues, especially from those in this department.

Accomplishments are not achieved by just a single individual, but rather are the result of shared ideas and teamwork. Thus, I wish to express my gratitude to all my students—present and past—as well as to my colleagues with whom on a daily basis I share the many aspects of this complex profession, so rich in surprises and fulfillment. All of us, faculty and students, are united by our intellectual curiosity and the desire to broaden our knowledge and horizons through study of the Spanish language, Hispanic culture, literature or linguistics.

On the department level, in addition, we are united by our desire to stimulate in others an interest in the Hispanic world and to show them the extraordinary opportunities that come from knowing the Spanish language and its culture. This goal brings with it, at every level and in all aspects, the passion and dedication that year after year allow us to find the freshness and innovation necessary for maintaining our enthusiasm for teaching. This shared objective has always been a source of encouragement for me in my teaching and research.

My appreciation goes to all my students and colleagues for being a fundamental part of my professional development, for inspiring me to be a better teacher and better human being. The Department of Spanish has won this award."

~ Irma López

Nibert Authors Spanish Textbook

Professor Holly Nibert has also been in the news. She is co-author (with Eduardo Zayas Bazán and Susan Bacon) of the fifth edition of *¡Arriba!*, recently published by Prentice Hall. For those of you who do not know, *¡Arriba!* is the text we have used for many years in Spanish 1000 and 1010. Three of our graduate students (Catherine Hebert, Daphne Villatoro and Mikela Zhezha) have also participated in this latest edition in various ways.

From November 2005 through January 2007, Professor Nibert dedicated countless hours to her work as new co-author of the new edition of *¡Arriba!* This edition will begin to be used in the United States and Canada in fall 2007. One of the responsibilities of the new co-author was to supervise the supplementary materials for the text, a task in which she involved the above-mentioned graduate assistants. Catherine Hebert (Cati), one of the department's TA mentors, wrote the testing program, available in both print and online forms. Daphne Villatoro, also a TA mentor, integrated Cati's activities into finished texts that serve as



From left, Holly Nibert, Catherine Hebert, Mikela Zhezha, and Daphne Villatoro.



models for instructors. Mikela Zhezha, a former TA mentor, completed one of the user reviews of the fourth edition that helped to inform editorial decisions for the new edition. Professor Nibert was pleased to be able to offer to some of our graduate students these professional opportunities with one of the leading publishers in the United States (Prentice Hall) and also found her own work with that publisher to be very satisfying.

In June 2006 Professor Nibert spent a week in San

Antonio, Texas, where she and some 800 other Spanish language educators corrected Spanish Advanced Placement exams.

On a personal level, Holly and her husband Pete Post recently took up a new sport: scuba diving. They spent the week of Spring Break in Curaçao, completing the four dives required for basic certification. Curaçao is one of the Leeward islands of the Netherlands Antilles where four languages are spoken; Papiamentu (a Portuguese-based Creole), Spanish, Dutch and English. Holly was just as excited about hearing this wide variety of languages as she was about scuba diving!

Distinguished Visitors

Under the auspices of the university's Visiting Scholars and Artists Program, Puerto Rican author Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá visited the department on Oct. 16-17. In his presentation on Monday in the Multicultural Room in Trimpe Hall, Rodríguez Juliá read in Spanish passages from two of his books, *La renuncia del héroe Baltasar* and *El entierro de Cortijo*. Professor Benjamín Torres read the same passages in the English translation from *The Renunciation* and *Cortijo's Wake*. On Tuesday, on the 10th floor of Sprau Tower, the writer gave a paper titled "Novela, crónica, ciudad," followed by a reception.

Thanks to support received from The Graduate College, we were also able to invite Arturo Arias and Gustavo Pérez-Firmat. Arturo

Arias, born and raised in Guatemala, teaches literature at the University of Redlands. This year he is a visiting professor at Tulane. Arias has published six novels, among others *Después de las bombas*, *Cascabel*, and *Sopa de caracol*, as well as several books on topics such as the Indigenous movement in Guatemala,

contemporary Central American prose, the controversy involving the writings of Rigoberta Menchú, and many other aspects of Latin American life and culture.

Arias has been honored with numerous awards including the one given by the Casa de las Américas for best Latin American essay and novel and the prize awarded by the Academia de Artes de Berlín for best Latin American novel (Anna Seghers Award for Best Latin American



From left, Marcie Noble, Arturo Arias, Jessica Lynam, and Mauricio Peña.

Novel). Arturo Arias is also known for his work on the script of the film *El Norte* (1984). On Feb. 26 Arias presented his lecture at WMU, "Beyond Subalternism, the Emergence of a New Mayan Literature," which was attended by a large group of Spanish students, as well as by faculty from other departments and other institutions.

Arias's visit provided an excellent background for the visit of Rigoberta Menchú, who came to campus on March 30. This recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, and current presidential candidate in Guatemala, spoke about racism and violence, answered many questions from the audience and signed dozens of books. Her visit was arranged by Peace Jam.

On March 28 we had the pleasure of hearing a lecture by Gustavo Pérez-Firmat entitled "Have it in Havana: Cuba in the American Imagination." Pérez-Firmat was born in Havana and grew up in Miami. He received his doctorate in comparative literature at the University of Michigan and presently teaches in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Columbia University. He is the author of numerous poems, essays and books, among others *Life in the Hyphen*, *The Cuban American Way* (1999), *Tongue Ties: Logo-Eroticism in Anglo Hispanic Literature* (2003) and *Scar Tissue* (2005).

As you can see, this year has seen an abundance of cultural activities that have kept students and faculty quite busy.



From left, Benjamín Torres, Antonio Isea, and Gustavo Pérez-Firmat.

Graduate Student Hedy Habra

“This past year has been entirely dedicated to the writing of my doctoral dissertation on the prose of Mario Vargas Llosa. My interest in the works of this Peruvian writer goes back several years and I always knew that when I began doctoral studies I would focus on his writings. I never imagined that someday I could meet such a famous author who resides in both Europe and Peru and whose visits to the most prestigious American universities seemed to be beyond my reach.

This year I have had the good fortune, which comes to only a few people, of meeting personally the creator of a body of literary work which inspires such great admiration and which deserves such considerable study. I met Vargas Llosa in April while attending a series of lectures at Emory, the Richard Ellmann Lectures. At that time it was not possible for me to ask him questions pertaining to my dissertation, so I requested an interview, which he granted to me on Oct. 19 at Georgetown University. As a word of encouragement to researchers who are doubtful about the possibility of actually meeting their favorite authors, I am pleased to add that I recently attended (February 2007) another series of lectures given by Vargas Llosa in Lansing as part of the LeFrak Forum.

To summarize the most memorable events of this year, I would say that I managed to see Vargas Llosa on three occasions while at the same time continuing the daily struggle of trying to understand and analyze his writings. My only academic achievement this year has been an article on *La reivindicación del Conde don Julián* by Juan Goytisolo, but that effort pales in comparison to the other happenings.”

~ Hedy Habra



Mario Vargas Llosa with Hedy Habra.

The first doctoral degree in Spanish at Western Michigan University!

Hedy Habra defended her doctoral dissertation last May 23rd. In her study, Hedy examines the importance of visual elements in Vargas Llosa’s prose and the role that said elements play in the creation of imaginary worlds or “sub worlds.” Congratulations, Dr. Habra!

Hedy has a long list of publications to her name. In addition to several essays on the work of Vargas Llosa, she has authored articles on the writings of such varied figures as Silvina Ocampo, Juan Goytisolo, Rubén Darío, Angel Rama, Alfonsina Storni, Carlos Fuentes, Juan Rulfo, Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Alonso de Ercilla and Roberto Fernández. These articles have appeared in *Chasqui*, *Latin American Literary Review*, *Confluencia*, *Hispanic Journal*, *Alba de América* and *Explicación de Textos Literarios*, among other journals.

Besides being an excellent researcher, Hedy is also a poet and author of short stories. Her poems, written in Spanish, English and French (languages in which she is fluent, in addition to Arabic), have placed high in several literary competitions. Many of them have been published in anthologies and prestigious journals.

Study Abroad Programs

The study abroad programs of the Department of Spanish continue to enjoy exemplary success, due in part to the enthusiastic recruitment efforts of the program directors and the other faculty and in part to the positive experiences our students have abroad. All of them, without exception, return from these programs transformed, open to new ideas and ready to take off again, be it to Spain or Mexico.

The department has a new exchange program with the University of Lleida in Cataluña. Students accepted in the program will spend a semester in Lleida, one of the oldest cities in Europe. This program is ideal for all those students, graduate or undergraduate, interested in bilingualism (Spanish/Catalan).

Santander Program

Last summer a group of 21 students participated in the summer program in Santander (Spain) during the months of June and July. Professor Mercedes Tasende directed the program for the second consecutive year and also offered a course in Spanish culture in June. Professor Mariola Pérez de la Cruz will be the program director this summer.

Attention Graduate Students, Spanish Teachers, Alumni: New program is coming. We have just proposed a new summer program in Querétaro for graduate students. If everything goes as planned the first group will go to Mexico in June 2008. The program will begin in mid June (when school teachers begin their summer) and will last for seven weeks. Two graduate courses will be offered, one taught by faculty from the Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, the other by faculty from WMU. Students may live with families during their stay.



Mercedes Tasende with the group of students who were in Santander in 2006.

Burgos, Fall 2006

By Carolyn Harris, program director

The program in Burgos (Spain) was again a success in 2006. Sixteen students participated this year and all of them returned with pleasant memories of their stay in the city of El Cid. Upon arrival in Burgos in August, our students were lodged with families and immediately began to become immersed in Spanish culture. They were comfortable with their Spanish families and only two students opted to move to a residence hall (Residencia San Agustín) in October. Several students commented to me that the food was good in their homes and that they got along well with their “adoptive parents.” They continue to believe, however, that it is good to have the option of staying in the residence hall and the two who did so were pleased with their experiences also. They shared rooms with Spanish students and met other university students during their two and one-half month stay in the dorm.

Once again this year, María Simarro, a graduate of the WMU Spanish M. A. program, was in charge of the Spanish language courses. She was assisted by Ana María Aguilar. Students, divided into two groups, took an intensive course in language and culture during August and September. They had class sessions in the

Study Abroad Programs, continued



La catedral de Burgos.

morning and workshops in the afternoon, in addition to several field trips conducted by a young art instructor. Everyone enjoyed these classes, so they tell me, and I know that they made considerable progress with their Spanish. At the conclusion of this part of the academic program students had a week of vacation, which they used to travel in Spain and beyond.

From October until mid-December our students took courses in Spanish art and history, given by several University of Burgos faculty who are experts in these fields. Classes were held Monday through Thursday, leaving Friday free for field trips. Visits were made to places of interest in the province of Burgos, and also to important cities such as Madrid and Salamanca. Upon returning from these excursions, students wrote brief papers on their impressions for Professor Lena Iglesias. Professor Iglesias, who has been in charge of the art and history classes for a number of years, was favorably impressed with most of the papers and sent me copies of

several of them so that I could see how much our students were learning about Spanish culture.

In addition to studying and taking field trips, some students worked as volunteers in schools in Burgos while others assisted the Spanish Red Cross. Some students chose to take extra courses at the university or participated in extra-curricular activities such as hiking. Other students preferred to enroll in dance classes or aerobics in various studios or fitness centers in Burgos. All the students realized the importance of having contacts outside the WMU group in order to have a better understanding of the University of Burgos and the city itself.

In sum, the students from the 2006 group believe that their experience in Spain was very beneficial and they want to return to Burgos soon to see their families and friends. They agree that their Burgos adventure has changed them forever, and now they would like to encourage others to participate in the program in the future.

Study Abroad Programs, continued

Santiago de Querétaro, 2007

By Patricia Montilla, program director

A brief walk around the historical downtown area of Santiago de Querétaro (Mexico) is sufficient to make one realize that this is a splendid city. I had that experience on a beautiful sunny day in February of 2005 when, accompanied by my colleagues Dr. John Benson and Dr. Irma López, I saw Querétaro for the first time. We arrived on a Sunday afternoon and the plazas were full of life and music. Dr. Benson invited me to enjoy a delicious tamarind popsicle as we listened to the State Symphonic Orchestra in the Jardín Zenea. With its beautiful colonial architecture, wonderful climate and hospitality, Querétaro easily won my heart. It was a pleasure for me to share this experience with the nineteen students from Western who are participating in the program this year.

It is a privilege to be with our students as they embark on this phase of their university studies which undoubtedly provides them with an opportunity for great personal and professional growth. With the assistance of their friends and the faculty at the Autonomous University of Querétaro (Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro = UAQ), Western students have adjusted quickly to their new way of life. In addition to taking courses in language and culture they study a wide variety of subjects such as art history, photo journalism, marketing, and public relations,

among others. Our students are learning not only in the classroom, but also are experiencing culture through daily life. In March, Professor Maria Elena Villegas organized an excursion which Western students termed “unforgettable,” with guided tours to the Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City and the pyramids in Teotihuacán. Students are acquiring insights into other aspects of Mexican culture as they live with their families, play soccer and basketball at the UAQ and make weekend trips to Bernal, San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico City and other cities and states in Mexico.

Congratulations and best wishes to the participants of Querétaro 2007: Jessica Alvarez, Hannah Bouck, Justin Carunchia, Allison Groce, Nayanna Holley, Shane Jones, Marissa King, Derek Krallman, Ashlee Lamberson, Akane Nishimura, Kristen Ramer, Benjamin Rance, Anthony Rinna, Mirisa Roy, Andrea Sheridan, Sarah Spiwak and Kimberly Torres. I would also like to recognize Brian Gunderson, a master’s degree student at Western who is teaching English courses and taking courses in Mexican literature in the UAQ this semester, and Nuria Ibáñez, a WMU doctoral student and assistant to the director for the Querétaro program. Thank you, Brian and Nuria, for your work and assistance with the program. I wish to thank my colleagues at the UAQ and all the families that participate in our program for your friendship and your warm hospitality. Finally, my thanks to Dr. Irma López and Dr. John Benson for their inspiration and support.



Professor Patricia Montilla with the group of WMU students who were in Querétaro in 2007.

Student Awards

Chris Durren

On Oct. 13, Chris Durren received the Alumni Achievement



Award in Spanish. Chris, who graduated from Western in 1999 with majors in business and Spanish, is currently Senior Producer Manager in Herdez Corporation Joint Venture. His wife Lourdes and their daughter Elena were also present at the awards ceremony.

Pilar López Castilla, Graduate Research and Scholar Award



Berta Carrasco de Miguel, Graduate Teaching Effectiveness Award

Megan Donajkowski Department Presidential Scholar

Megan Donajkowski, Department Presidential Scholar: Each year the Department of Spanish awards this prize to its most outstanding student. Megan has just graduated with majors in Engineering and Spanish. Professors who have had Megan in class have been impressed with her dedication and enthusiasm for Spanish language and Hispanic culture.



Lori B. Pattison Scholarship

Lori B. Pattison Scholarship: Lori Beth Pattison majored in Spanish in our department. After finishing her studies at WMU Lori went to the University of Kansas, where she completed the doctorate in Spanish literature. Lori was on the Spanish faculty at Central Michigan University when she died some years ago. At that time, her family decided to create this scholarship in her honor. Each year the Department of Spanish selects a student who plans to pursue graduate studies as a way of continuing the work begun by Lori. This year, the department chose one of its very best Spanish students, Tammy Troutman. We are confident that Tammy will follow Lori's example and keep her spirit alive.



Undergraduate Award Winners

The students whose names appear on the next page were chosen by the Spanish faculty to receive awards. The award ceremony took place on April 13. On that occasion we were pleased to have Tim Statler as the guest speaker. Tim, a graduate of our department and recipient of the Alumni Achievement Award, is a successful businessman who travels frequently to Spanish-speaking countries. He is a perfect example of how the ability to speak Spanish can open the door to abundant opportunities in today's world. Notwithstanding a long list of successful endeavors, Tim retains the simplicity, wit and charm that his former professors remember fondly. At present, Tim is president of Statler International Corporation.



Award Recipients!

<i>Award</i>	<i>2005-2006</i>	<i>2006-2007</i>
Herb B. Jones Scholarships	Katie Perz.....	Anna Hamman
	Sara Kenning.....	Alexander Hudson
Ruth Y. Kirby Scholarships.....	Daniel Corbett.....	Andrea Baschal
	Sarah McGuire.....	Caroline Clifford
	Dena Staggs.....	Allison Groce
	Laura Phelps.....	Derek Krallman
	Brandi Bertch.....	Andrea Sheridan
	Nicole Prichard	Ashlee Lamberson
	Grayson McKinney	Sandy Lisenbee
	Charity Mansfield	Grace McNeil
	Caroline Hodge.....	Tim Patton
	Jessica Glover	Sharon Pearce
	Alia Kaakani.....	Shawna Shall
	Sarah Spiwak
Department Travel/Study Abroad Awards	Hannah Bouck.....	Megan Allen
	Griselda Carisalez	Lauren Kenny
	Laura Cojocari	Renee Roodvoets
	Ashley Flowers.....	Stephanie Terhaar
	Jessica Glover	Nichole Walz
	Caitlin McAndrew	Sarah Wight
	Kristen Redd	Ashley Yount
	Laura Phelps	
Mathilde Steckelberg Scholarship in Spanish..	Kristen Redd	Grayson McKinney
President's Award for Study Abroad		Daniel Ebenhoeh
President's Scholarships for Study Abroad	Anna Hamman	Marisa King
	Christine Clark	Hannah Bouck
	Melissa Pierce.....	Nayanna Holley
	Kelly Karl.....	Marissa King
	Kimberley Clemence.....	Loren LaPointe
	Anthony Rinna	Kaitlyn Paynich
	Sofia Ruelas.....	Marielle Walker
Department Presidential Scholar	Maureen Osborne.....	Megan Donajkowski
Lori Beth Pattison Scholarship.....	Julie McManus	Tammy Troutman
Sue C. Mardis Scholarship	Andrea Brown.....	Lindsay Conklin
Suzanne Wheatley.....	Abigail Schmidt	Jessica Glover
Premio Octavio Paz.....	Monica Bonham	Elisha Wickey
Premio Jorge Luis Borges.....	Kevin Fisher	Griselda Carisalez
Premio Inca Garcilaso de la Vega	Rachell Calhoun	Sandy Linsenbee
Premio Alfonso X el Sabio.....	Andrew Drenth.....	Aubrey Moody
Premio Joan Coromines	Charity Mansfield	Ryan Minier
Premio Rosalía de Castro	Brandi Bertch.....	Kirstyn Dannecker
Premio María Moliner	Laura Phelps.....	Shruti Sevak
Premio Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.....	Megan Donajkowski	Alicia Moore
Premio Antonio de Nebrija	Holly Greiner.....	Mary Radcliffe
Premio Rubén Darío.....	Pam Wiersma	
Premio Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra	María Markus	

Congratulations to all the Award Recipients!

Notes of Interest

- Professor Gary Bigelow gave a paper at the Mountain Interstate Foreign Language Conference at James Madison University in October 2006: “Humor, amor y locura en *Tú estás loco*, *Briones* (by Cabal) and *Fuera de quicio* (by Alonso de Santos). In June 2006 he traveled in Guatemala and Costa Rica. He also received a visit from Spanish writer Ignacio del Moral, who spent two weeks in the Bigelow home in Portage. In May 2007 Professor Bigelow served as tour guide for a group that traveled through Spain, Portugal and Morocco.

- Professor Pablo Pastrana-Pérez, in tandem with Professor Catherine Julien (History), received a \$100,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for academic year 2006-2007. These researchers, assisted by Spanish doctoral student Pilar López Castilla, are working on an edition of a collection of 61 documents on the South American expedition of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, undertaken between 1540-1544. Professor Pastrana-Pérez is preparing the documents for the edition. This work includes the paleographic transcription of the originals, a task in which he was assisted by Pilar, as well as the formatting for the Spanish text and the preparation of linguistic, philological and textual annotations. Professor Julien will translate the documents into English and provide historical and ethnographical annotation. The final edition will consist of two bilingual volumes to be published by the University of Nebraska Press in 2009. This work is intended to extend and complement the authoritative scholarly edition prepared by Rolena Adorno and Charles Pautz on the North American expedition of Cabeza de



Pablo Pastrana-Pérez

Vaca, published by the same university press in 1999.

In addition to his work on the Cabeza de Vaca project, Professor Pastrana-Pérez organized two sessions on “La lengua de la conquista y la exploración” for the 2007 Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo. In these sessions Professor Julien presented the initial findings from the project. The sessions were created in recognition of the work of professors Jerry Craddock (University of California-Berkeley) and Barbara de Marco (Princeton University), directors of the *Cíbola* project on the language of the exploration of the southwestern United States.

The overall objective of these activities is to link the Cabeza de Vaca project with existing projects such as the *Cíbola* project and the *Proyecto Vargas* (University of New Mexico). There are promising and innovative possibilities for the digitalization of the Cabeza de Vaca project documents with the collaboration of Waldo Library. This aspect of the project, as well as the others, will be continued.

Pilar López Castilla began her doctoral studies in fall 2006 and at that time joined professors Pastrana-Pérez and Julien on the project. Pilar assists in the transcription of legal documents dated between 1540-1560. These documents come from the prosecution of Cabeza de Vaca, who was detained for supposedly having encroached upon the king’s authority. The paleographic transcription of the 60 manuscripts from the case will make this material accessible to the modern reader.



Pilar López Castilla

continued on p. 12

- Professor Robert Vann designed and offered a new graduate course in Spanish linguistics (Spanish Pragmatics), as well as a hybrid course that a sizable number of students took online (Hispanics in the US: Language and Culture). In addition, he presented the results of his research at two international conferences, published two articles and had two others accepted for publication. Dr. Vann has been invited to give two talks at the University of Lleida, one about the teaching of foreign language in the public schools and another on the topic of Spanish language and culture in the United States. Finally, we note that Dr. Vann has been named a member of the Scientific Committee/Comité scientifique /Wissenschaftlicher Beirat for the international linguistic publication *Etudes linguistiques/ Linguistische Studien*.
- Professor Michael Braun presented a workshop titled “Don’t Just Sit There, Habla Something!” at the Michigan World Language Association Conference (MWLA). Miguel has been busy helping Professor Harris with the Burgos program because next year he will be in charge of that study abroad program, thus giving Professor Harris a well deserved break.

Miguel urges all his former students to remain in contact with him and to let him know where they are. He is always willing to help with problems that they may have in the classes they are teaching. If you are in the vicinity of Sprau Tower, be sure to visit to Miguel in his office, where you can occupy an easy chair, admire the collection of flags from the Américas, and sample some chocolate.

Gathering at South Padre Island



Several faculty and graduate students participated in an international conference on Caribbean studies which took place on South Padre Island (Texas) from Nov. 2 - 5. The WMU contributors and their papers are as follows:

- Patricia Montilla, “Memory, Hybridity, and the Poetic Imagination in Carlota Caufield’s *Ticket to Ride*”
- Mariola Pérez de la Cruz, “La Guerra de Cuba, Valle-Inclán y Juanito Ventolera: otro esperpento trágico en la historia”
- Mercedes Tasende, “El discurso colonial en dos libros de viajes: *Viages: Isla de Cuba*, de Jacinto Salas y Quiroga, y *Souvenir of Florida and Cuba, 1886*, de Roger Williams Woodbury”
- Alicia Arribas, “*Flores de otro mundo: una perspectiva de la mujer caribeña en España*”
- Pilar López Castilla, “*Prometeo: Una pintura verbal de Julián del Casal*”
- Marcie Noble, “El concepto del otro en *Tirano Banderas*”

The WMU students and faculty alike took advantage of this academic gathering to visit with Professor Jorge Febles and his wife, who were also in attendance at the conference.

Recent Publications

Patricia Montilla-Parody, *the Avante-Garde, and the Poetics of Subversion in Oliverio Girondo*

Professor Patricia Montilla has just published a book titled *Parody, the Avant-Garde, and the Poetics of Subversion in Oliverio Girondo*. The Argentine poet Oliverio Girondo (1891-1967) was one of most important figures in the “vanguardia” movement in Spanish America. In her study, Dr. Montilla examines the use and function of parody in Girondo’s poems and drawings. She considers the literary theories proposed by Girondo in his manifestos and analyzes the manner in which Girondo, through his subversion of traditional and vanguardia poetry, questions the values imposed upon artistic creativity by the institutions and social conventions of the time.



In addition to this book, Professor Montilla has published chapters in the following books: *Into the Mainstream: Essays on Caribbean and Latin American Literature and Culture*, *A Companion to U. S. Latino Literature*, and *Matías Montes Huidobro: Estudios críticos sobre su obra ensayística y literaria*. She has also contributed numerous reviews to the journal *Caribe* and several articles on the literature of Girondo and Judith Ortiz Cofer to the journals *Studies in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Literature*, *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe* and *The University of Pennsylvania’s Working Papers Series*.

Mariola Pérez de la Cruz- Edition of *Lola, espejo oscuro*

Lola, espejo oscuro by Carlos Muñiz (1927-1994) is a theatrical adaptation of the novel of the same name, written by Darío Fernández. Muñiz is one of the best exponents of Spanish drama from the Franco era. Since his pieces are innovative, nonconformist and critical, the author was relegated to obscurity. This play was censored in 1964 because the playwright harshly criticizes the institutions and values of the Franco regime. In the play, a 16-year-old female servant is forced to grant sexual favors to her master in exchange for a kilogram of sugar for her family.

Professor Pérez de la Cruz’s edition of *Lola, espejo oscuro*, a play that had remained unpublished until now, opens the door for us to post-war Spain, exposing the corruption and hypocrisy of the guardians of morality and the defects of a supposedly perfect society.

This is not the first extensive study that Mariola has made on Carlos Muñiz. Her doctoral dissertation, “Carlos Muñiz: vida y obra de un dramaturgo realista de la Posguerra Española,” is the result of lengthy research on post-war Spanish theater. She also has published a bibliography and an article on Muñiz’s dramatic production. Besides the work of this playwright, Mariola has other research interests and has written articles on the role of Spanish women as portrayed in several post-war literary works.

Torres Publishes his Third Book

Para llegar a la Isla Verde de Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, the third book by Professor Benjamín Torres, recently was published by the Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico. This study provides an introduction to the writings of one of the most important authors of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.



Beginning with his first novel, *La renuncia del héroe Baltasar* (1974), Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá has sketched an image of Puerto Rico as it evolves from the initial manifestations of island cultural identity in the seventeenth century to the vibrant portrayal of a contemporary society in rapid transformation. The “isla verde” (green island) that Rodríguez Juliá creates in novels, short stories, chronicles and essays is inseparably linked to the subjectivity of the author himself. This intimacy is perceived with greater intensity in the writings that belong to the periods “crisis de la medianía” (Midpoint Crisis) or “época playera” (Beach Era), which have as a setting or background the coastline of the isla verde/ Isla Verde, consisting of societal and personal demons.

Professor Torres is the author of two other books, *Gabriel García Márquez o la alquimia del incesto* and *Literatura e ideología*. In addition to dozens of articles and reviews, Torres has prepared editions of four works by Rodríguez Juliá: *Elogio de la fonda*, *Mapa de una pasión literaria*, *Musarañas de domingo* and *La renuncia del héroe Baltasar*.



Sports Section



From left, Irma López, Seidy Flórez, Mercedes Tasende, Mariola Pérez de la Cruz, Carolina Harris and Patricia Montilla (front).

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Race for the Cure

On May 20, 2006, a group of women from the department –Seidy Flórez, Irma López, Patricia Montilla, Mariola Pérez de la Cruz, Carolina Harris and Mercedes Tasende– participated in this race (really more of a walk) through downtown Kalamazoo. Professor Benson served as official photographer for the team. He took several good photos, one of which is on this page.

Las Tortugas Finish Again

Las Tortugas, the departmental track team, chalked up another triumph. Team captain, Professor Patricia Montilla, describes the event this way: “Las Tortugas made an all-out effort in the 2006 Campus Classic, a five kilometer race across the WMU campus that took place on Oct. 14 in conjunction with Homecoming.”

Congratulations to Robert Baxter, Michael Braun, Cathy Cheron, Daniel Hopkins, Patricia Montilla, Mauricio Peña Sánchez, Xochilt Palafox, Marlene Roldán Romero and Sherry Selby, members of the largest group of runners ever to represent the Department of Spanish. Thanks to Dr. Benjamín Torres and Elena Gaudio, team photographers, and to Dr. John Benson and Seidy Flórez for their cheers of encouragement, especially on the hills!



The Mambo Kings

According to well-informed sources, the Mambo Kings suffered through a so-so season last summer (not to say just plain rotten). Things are going better this year and at the present pace it would not surprise us to see another Mambo championship.

The Department of Spanish and the Kalamazoo Promise



From left: Evelia Olvera, three Latinitas, Berta Carrasco, Pilar López, and Marlene Roldán.

The department has been cooperating in a number of ways with the Kalamazoo public schools, long before the existence of the Promise. In the past several years our international graduate students have visited Parkwood Upjohn Elementary School to talk with the students about their respective countries. Some of these graduate students also have participated in other activities, such as teaching flamenco dance and salsa to students in area schools.

Professor Mariola Pérez de la Cruz coordinates our community outreach activities. On March 19 she spoke at the Hispanic American Council of Kalamazoo to a group of young Hispanic women, The Latinitas Group. She talked about her experiences at college, the advantages of being bilingual and the opportunities that a university education can offer to Latinas in Michigan. Later that week Professor Pérez de la Cruz and four of our graduate students—Evelia Olvera Hurtado and Marlene Roldán Romero from Mexico, Berta Carrasco de Miguel and Pilar López Castilla from Spain—gave a talk at Saint Joseph’s School about the differences between Spain and Mexico.

We Want to Hear From You

We hope that you have enjoyed reading this newsletter. We would very much like to hear from and about you. What you have done, where are you, what are your plans?

Send me an e-mail when you have time, to

mercedes.tasende@wmich.edu

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

E-Mail:

Graduation date:

Degree:

Activities since graduation:

Send to: Mercedes Tasende, Chair
Department of Spanish
Western Michigan University
420 Sprau Tower
1903 W. Michigan Ave.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5338

Yes, I want to support the WMU Department of Spanish!

In a time when state funding is increasingly restricted, the support we receive from friends and alumni is vitally important. Such funds are used to take advantage of new or unbudgeted opportunities in order to enhance the teaching or the research of the department, or to assist students in achieving their educational and professional goals. *Thank you for considering a gift to the WMU Department of Spanish.*

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