

## **The state of the discipline: Hispanic literature and film in U.K. Spanish degrees**

sd367@cam.ac.uk

Dr Stuart Davis, Girton College, Cambridge, CB3 0JG

### **Biographical details**

Stuart Davis is College Senior Lecturer in Spanish at Girton College and Affiliated Lecturer in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Cambridge. Stuart has particular research interests in memory, shame and other emotions in Hispanic literature, film and visual cultures, as well as long standing interests in canon theory, metacriticism, museum studies and representations of gender and sexuality. He is the author of *Writing and Heritage in Contemporary Spain: The Imaginary Museum of Literature* (Tamesis, 2012). As well as lecturing, Stuart is Admissions Tutor for Arts subjects at Girton College.

### **Abstract**

This article examines the shape of the pedagogical canon of Spanish degree courses in U.K. Higher Education institutions. After identifying briefly the current challenges to the sector, the article discusses the results of a data collection from the academic year 2015/16, before comparing them to data collections from the academic years 2006/7 and 1998/99. It will be shown that over the three data collections there is a demonstrable dissipation of any sense of a canonical core. The article concludes by suggesting that the shift away from a literary core towards a greater array of literary and cultural objects of study is part of the evolution of, and may be of benefit to, Modern Languages as a discipline.

**Keywords:** canon, discipline, Modern Languages, Spanish, pedagogy, literature, film

Although often perceived as sites of inertia or resistance to change, Higher Education Institutions are also celebrated as the locations for research innovation and the re-conceptualisation of timeworn ideas. No longer immune to wider socio-political changes, if indeed they ever truly were, in recent years the supposed hallowed halls and ivory towers of academia have been held increasingly accountable for their actions, use of finances and their very existence, as exemplified in the United Kingdom by a succession of Research Assessment Exercises, the newly introduced Teaching Excellence Framework and other regulated conditions imposed in return for research income and the ability to charge higher undergraduate fees. Within these wider changes, the values associated with Modern Languages have themselves been under increasing scrutiny within a school and education system that perceives learning a foreign language as too tricky, in comparison with other curriculum subjects, or sees language knowledge as unnecessary, given the supposed dominance of English in the global market.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, with applications to Modern Languages degrees declining and some language departments being phased out, most recently at the universities of Northumbria and Ulster, it seems that there are significant challenges in attracting and retaining Modern Languages students. This article identifies and assesses the changes in curriculum content of Spanish degrees in U.K. academia, focusing on cultural content (literature and film). As such, it makes no direct analysis of the wider debates mentioned here, but recognises them as important contextual concerns exerting an influence on the shift in curriculum content on Spanish degree courses in the changing marketplace that is higher education. Whilst to some extent the changes presented and discussed are specific to academia, as pedagogical concerns that interact with research interests that remain marginal to primary and secondary levels of the education system, nonetheless the experiences of the undergraduate student body are symptomatic of, and feed back into, wider changes in Hispanic Studies and Modern Languages as an educational discipline.

The data collections of curriculum content that will be assessed in this article are comprised of three different snapshots, spanning eighteen years. The project's origins are to be found in the academic year 1998/99, when as a postgraduate student studying the concept of canonicity I collected information from U.K. university departments offering degrees in Spanish/Hispanic Studies and extracted reading lists of peninsular literature material from them, to ascertain whether or not any consensus existed as to the most important peninsular authors and texts. In the academic year 2006/7, the exercise was repeated but expanded to include also non-peninsular literary material and filmic material from across the Spanish speaking world; this exercise was repeated again most recently in 2015/16. What began as an investigation with questions concerning consensus in canonicity has over time become an exercise in tracing the discipline's change.

As such, this article will not rehearse at length definitions of canonicity and the long history of the term, save for stressing to the reader its key characteristics, pertinent to an understanding of the relative importance of consensus from a disciplinary and cultural perspective.<sup>2</sup> It is worth stressing that at the core of canonicity as a concept is a strong sense of regulation in a variety of forms: as an exclusionary construct that regulates entry to the hallowed aura of the canonical; as a form of controlling standards and models of good practice; as a form of regulating a wider sense of cultural belonging most often underpinned by assumed linguistic and geopolitical commonalities. However, although the structural model of canonical and non-canonical – inclusion and exclusion – suggests that clarity is derived from a 'list' of the fortunately hallowed, instead canonicity inheres more greatly in consciousness. Indeed, the idea of a rigid list is a fallacy, which, as we shall see, my own attempt to construct such a list suggests since it is an exercise in viewing a partial snapshot of a much larger picture. Affiliation to a cultural consciousness, usually an unconscious act, occurs through awareness of authors and texts through a wide variety of forms of exposure,

including but not limited to the cultural environs of bookshops, libraries, cultural events, commemorations of an author's birth or death and, perhaps most potently, through an education system that prizes canonical authors and texts as a form of record of achievement worthy of close study. A canon's value as a representation of a linguistic and geopolitical identity is primarily inward to the culture itself, legitimising its identity and history, looking backwards as a form of heritage and also the culture's futurity, re-presented to the next generation. The canon also has a function in representing the culture externally for comparison with and consumption by other linguistic and geopolitical identities.<sup>3</sup>

One form of presentation of a canon to another culture is through translation, a process itself participative in an economy marked by competing notions of prestige and market value.

Another form of accessing a foreign canon is for the 'foreigner' to affiliate him or herself to the other culture, and here I turn to our students in the U.K., for whom linguistic proficiency is an initial priority, but for whom a growing awareness and appreciation of culture is a vital part of linguistic development, as well as an intellectual pursuit with its own merits. As non-native speakers, typically our students have not had the opportunities to participate in the same education system nor acquire the same cultural consciousness as the native speaker; we, as educators, have a responsibility to introduce them to that culture and 'translate' it for them through pedagogy, that is to say, bridge the gap between the cultures and languages. Our choice of text in the classroom sends an authoritative signal of what is of value in the other culture, or, in the case of Hispanism, cultures expressed in the plural, since the discipline may be defined linguistically through the Castilian language (although even that may be debated), but geopolitically it encompasses more than twenty countries and even more cultural identities. Alongside this need to consider the plurality of the Spanish speaking world within the context of a Hispanic Studies curriculum, pragmatic reasons for text choice are also germane, with the text's length, availability and difficulty – linguistic, structural or

compositional – clearly of importance. Modules within Hispanic degrees at some universities may also be open to students without degree level knowledge of the language, further restricting the choice of material to that available in translation or with subtitles. Anecdotally, our choices of text are often informed by our own encounters with the textual culture of the Hispanic world, either through our own experiences as students (whether filiate or affiliate to Spanish speaking cultures) or our research, with the research-led module often cited as a structural device in syllabus content. As Colin Evans (1988: 131) suggested, using a metaphor for the presentation of the text for study as that of a gift, ‘the staff give, the students receive. So all the onus is on the staff to get it right. Occasionally we try to guess what the students want; very rarely we ask; but the usual method is to give what we ourselves love or used or think we ought to love’. The changes identified in my study here suggest that perhaps several decades later we are better at asking and responding to what students want, as well as adapting our objects of love.

Considerations of the canon’s value and representational power are relevant not only to our discipline, which has its own peculiar challenges, but have also been debated more broadly within and outside academia, particularly in the 1990s during the so-called ‘culture wars’. There are many possible references to make to the large body of writers concerned with canonicity at the time, but the question raised by Lou Charnon-Deutsch (1994: 5. Emphasis in original) in her monograph on nineteenth-century fiction by women is particularly interesting:

in the face of mounting challenges both from inside and outside the academy, Hispanists will soon have to address the following questions: do we broaden the canon affirmative-action style to guarantee a more pluralistic (or more need-fulfilling) reading experience for our students, or do we abandon the canon altogether and

broaden instead the notion of literary criticism so that *all that's writ* is equally worthy of critical comment?

It is my contention that in our discipline the qualities identified by Evans and Charnon-Deutsch have both been under scrutiny and that a gradual shift has occurred by which our canonical core is becoming more diffuse as literary criticism has increasingly embraced 'all that's writ', and indeed moved beyond towards an increasing focus on visual culture. To demonstrate this shift I will present first a brief methodology, followed by data for the most recent syllabus survey, before comparison to previous years' data.

### ***Methodology***

In each of the three data collections, the information is compiled from primary reading texts listed for study on modules taught within a degree leading to a qualification in which Spanish, or Hispanic Studies, features as a key component across all years of study (traditionally known as a Single or Joint Honours degree). When compiling the dataset, texts taught twice within a department on two different modules are only included once; no distinction is made between core or optional courses, nor the level of study at which a text or film might be encountered, since in many cases students following a module may come from a diverse range of degree courses with differing requirements. Where a section or sections of a text are listed, it is understood to mean the whole, since engagement with a part implies awareness of the whole; a frequently encountered example of this is Miguel de Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares*, which in practice is not studied in its entirety, but via a selection of its constituent stories. Anthologies were listed in the data collection under their anthology title, with no attempt to separate out individual authors within the collection, which would have been impractical without acquiring the anthologies in question and making intrusive requests for detailed information. In practice, few anthologies are used, the exception being poetry

collections compiled by individual lecturers choosing representative poems from a poet's body of works – in this instance it was necessary to list the text for a poet as simply *Obra selecta* [*Selected Works*]. In accordance with the traditional conceptualisation of a canon as a body of work defined monolingually, the dataset included only texts and films read or viewed in Spanish, although texts translated from other languages, such as Basque, are included when studied in Castilian. All forms of writing are included in the data collection, ranging from fiction to essay work and travel writing; as long as the text is treated as an object of study, as primary reading rather than secondary reading, then it is included. For the 2015/16 data collection, there were three main forms of securing the information: lists of primary reading as provided on openly accessible departmental webpages; primary reading lists provided by an institution's library for its students; information and handbooks supplied directly by colleagues.<sup>4</sup>

Although in a very small number of cases it proved impossible to capture the primary reading lists of every module on the degree course, the body of data is a large and comprehensive snapshot of what is taught across the sector. Inevitably there will be a small number of errors if a text is substituted at the last moment or if a list has not been updated. The greatest limitation of the exercise is the recognition that a list can make no attempt to understand the context of the presentation of each author and text in the classroom: how is the material presented thematically or conceptually? What is it compared to? Which authors are mentioned but not studied, particularly in classroom settings that are not focused on set texts, such as language classes? These are the hallmarks of that affiliation to a cultural consciousness of canonicity that cannot be captured by a syllabus database; despite these reservations, the snapshot goes a large way to revealing the current state of U.K. Hispanism.

### ***The 2015/16 data collection***

In the latest data collection I was able to obtain complete or almost complete data from thirty-nine departments, with only three small departments unable to provide data. Of all the material, three quarters of it was textual and one quarter filmic. A total of 617 different authors and film directors were included (not including unattributed texts and anthologies), which were split equally as 50% peninsular and 50% non-peninsular (meaning the Americas, Africa and Asia). The data collection included 1228 different titles of books or films, divided 51% peninsular and 49% non-peninsular. These 1228 titles amount to 2083 objects of study, when each text in each institution is counted individually. The 2083 objects of study were weighted slightly more towards the peninsular (53%), suggesting that although the number of authors and directors is split equally between Spain and the rest of the Spanish-speaking world, there is a slightly greater variety and number of texts within the peninsular material.

As a body of texts and films, the database does not offer much consensus as to the most important names and texts. If we take as a benchmark 50% of departments teaching a particular author or director as a mark of consensus then there are only two canonical authors and one filmmaker for our students: Pedro Almodóvar (taught by 74% of the thirty-nine university departments), Gabriel García Márquez (64%) and Federico García Lorca (54%). In order to find a list of the length that we may anticipate indicates the true breadth of texts, films, authors and directors consummate with our expectations of a canon, the criterion for inclusion needs to be lowered to a threshold of 25% rate of consensus. Here we find a total of twenty-one authors and directors, representing only 3.4% of the entire list of names:

TABLE 1

Name of author/director	% of departments teaching author or director in 2015/16
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Pedro Almodóvar	74
Gabriel García Márquez	64
Federico García Lorca	54
Luis Buñuel	46
Carlos Saura	44
Icíar Bollaín	38
Víctor Erice	36
Jorge Luis Borges	33
Miguel de Cervantes	
Lope de Vega	
Mario Vargas Llosa	
Juan Rulfo	31
Guillermo del Toro	
Isabel Allende	28
Carlos Fuentes	
Alejandro González Iñárritu	
Javier Cercas	26
Luis García Berlanga	

Pedro Calderón de la Barca

Carmen Martín Gaité

Miguel de Unamuno

The list above comprises thirteen authors and eight film directors; eighteen men and three women; thirteen Spanish and eight Latin American writers/directors, amongst which four are Mexican; eighteen writers publishing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and three in the Golden Age; twelve dead and nine living creators, at the time of writing. There is a dominance of film and narrative work represented (novel and short story), with drama, poetry and essay work figuring in several profiles.

As might be expected with such a low threshold for consensus on authors, there are only eight specific texts or films that are taught across 25% or more of the departments; instead it will be more useful to use a threshold of 20%, where, identical to the number of authors and directors, there is also a list of twenty-one meeting the requirement, although they represent just 1.7% of all the titles in the database:

TABLE 2

Author/Director	Title	% of departments teaching the text/film
Erice	<i>El espíritu de la colmena</i>	33
Cervantes	<i>Novelas ejemplares</i>	31
	<i>Crónica de una muerte</i>	
García Márquez	<i>anunciada</i>	28

	<i>Mujeres al borde de un ataque</i>	
Almodóvar	<i>de nervios</i>	
García Lorca	<i>Bodas de sangre</i>	26
García Lorca	<i>La casa de Bernarda Alba</i>	
González Iñárritu	<i>Amores perros</i>	
Cercas	<i>Soldados de Salamina</i>	
Bollaín	<i>Te doy mis ojos</i>	23
Rulfo	<i>El llano en llamas</i>	
Puenzo	<i>La historia oficial</i>	
Saura	<i>Cría cuervos</i>	
Anon	<i>Lazarillo de Tormes</i>	21
	<i>El coronel no tiene quien le</i>	
García Márquez	<i>escriba</i>	
Borges	<i>Ficciones</i>	
Arguedas	<i>Los ríos profundos</i>	
Puig	<i>El beso de la mujer araña</i>	
Cervantes	<i>Don Quijote</i>	
Calderón de la Barca	<i>La vida es sueño</i>	
Buñuel	<i>Viridiana</i>	
	<i>Un chien andalou/Un perro</i>	
Buñuel	<i>andaluz</i>	

As most likely expected, the constitution of this list resonates with the diversity – or lack of it – found in the list of authors and directors: thirteen texts and eight films; twenty male authored/directed and one female directed; thirteen peninsular and eight Latin American, with

Mexico and Argentina well represented; fourteen works created in the twentieth century, three in the twenty-first century, three in the seventeenth century and one in the sixteenth century; of the thirteen texts, the dominant form is narrative with seven novels/novellas, three collections of short stories and three plays.

In many ways the lists of authors, directors, texts and films confirm most Hispanists' expectations of the key moments in the Hispanic cultural canon: the Golden Age; pre-Civil War twentieth-century Spain (the so-called 'Silver Age'); twentieth-century narrative in Latin America; a spread of film across the decades with some focus on the 1970s, 1980s and 2000s. However, glaringly absent from the lists are medieval culture, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and writings from pre-independence Latin America, as well as a number of countries such as Chile. This core represents just a handful of texts and authors amongst a great many more.

Indeed, as just suggested, the data collection as a whole reveals certain geographical focal points and strong representation, in a dataset where almost every country that has Spanish as an official language is represented, the exceptions being Honduras and Panama. The most represented country, as may be expected, is Spain forming 50%, but other key countries are Argentina (13%), Mexico (9%), Cuba (7%), Chile (4%), Colombia (4%), followed by Colonial writers (defined as those writers living and writing in pre-independence Spanish America regardless of place of birth) (4%), Peru (2%), Uruguay (2%) and the other 9 represented Spanish-speaking countries grouped together.

For the purposes of the analysis of contextual and historical period of writing, the authors and directors are grouped by the century of their birth; this method does lead to some anomalies, such as García Lorca and Borges counting as nineteenth-century authors despite both being only babies at the start of the twentieth century, but it provides a more objective form of

division than ascertaining when an author published the majority of his or her works. Of the total number of 617 authors and directors, 434 (70%) were born in the twentieth century, signalling that a vast majority of the works studied are recent. However, a comparison across centuries is skewed by the presence of film directors in the dataset who are almost all twentieth-century born. Examining only the dataset for literature still reveals nonetheless a bias towards the twentieth century, which makes up 59% of the total, followed by the nineteenth century (18%), the sixteenth century (10%), the fifteenth century (5%), the eighteenth century (4%), the seventeenth century (2%) and pre-sixteenth century (2%). Twentieth-century born authors are well-represented amongst the list of the most commonly taught writers, as might be expected given their linguistic and cultural accessibility for undergraduates, yet the sheer number of contemporary authors suggests that there are many different authors available to teach and little consensus as to who are the most important; indeed, nearly 60% of the 434 twentieth-century born authors and directors appear on only one university list. It may be worth noting that of the thirty-nine university departments in the dataset, sixteen did not offer set study of any text from the pre-1700 period. The majority of those sixteen universities were small departments in institutions that are not part of the Russell Group, often taken as a signal of a more prestigious reputation in the U.K. higher education sector. This does not mean, of course, that students at those institutions are not aware of Iberian medieval and Golden Age history and culture, but that they did not have the opportunity to study literary texts from the period that academic year.

As such, the dataset from the academic year 2015/16 suggests a canonical core exists, but that its profile may not be clear within the broad scope of material taught on our courses. As we shall see, this canonical core is less visible than that identified in previous data collections.

### ***Comparison to earlier data***

Whilst the first data collection undertaken in the academic year 1998/99 focused only on peninsular texts with data from thirty-one departments, the 2006/7 data collection was identical in scope to the most recent collection just discussed, therefore offering a fuller comparison. The number of departments involved in the two most recent data collections was also almost identical: forty (out of forty-four departments) in 2006/7 and thirty-nine (of forty-two) in 2015/16.

Firstly, taking all the material into account, what the comparison statistics show most clearly is the growth in the total number of authors/directors from 435 to 617, an increase of 42%. In 2015/16, 329 new authors or directors were present who were not taught in 2006/7, the vast majority of which were represented by only one text or film; conversely 147 authors and directors had disappeared from the lists. The number of different titles grew from 1005 to 1228, a 22% rise. However, the actual body of material grew only fractionally, by 2%, from 2045 objects of study to 2083. These figures suggest that in 2015/16 students are not encountering more material in their courses than they did nine years previously, but that there is a greater diversity within that body of material. The largest growth has been in film studies in the syllabus; where previously in 2006/7 film had accounted for approximately 20% of each of the three measurements just provided, by 2015/16 this had increased to 30% of the 617 authors and directors, 23% of the 1228 titles and 26% of the 2083 objects of study. The study of non-peninsular material also appears to have grown in the interim, since in 2006/7 non-peninsular authors and directors accounted for 45% of the total, but by 2015/16 this was 50%. Similarly, in 2006/7 non-peninsular material made up 38% of titles and 36% of the total number of objects of study, increasing in 2015/16 to 49% and 47% respectively.

Given the additional space given to film studies, has literature study diminished when comparing the two data collections? Taking literature alone, we see that the figure of 338 authors taught in 2006/7 increases to 429 in 2015/16, despite forming a smaller percentage of

the overall number of authors and directors than previously. The percentage of non-peninsular authors remains almost identical in both data collections at 46% and 47%, showing that the peninsular and non-peninsular have experienced a similar expansion of numbers. Whilst the number of titles also increased from 821 to 953, the number of peninsular texts decreased slightly from 503 to 490 whilst the non-peninsular increased from 318 to 463, the latter comparative statistic representing in percentage terms a shift from 39% to 48.5% of all the titles. This decrease in the number of peninsular texts is more pronounced when assessing the number of objects of study, dropping by 22% from 1028 in 2006/7 to 803 in 2015/16, while at the same time the non-peninsular number of objects of study increased by 21% from 611 to 737. Taken all together these statistics demonstrate that the body of peninsular material has become markedly more diverse, with a smaller number of texts and objects of study made up by a greater number of authors, while the non-peninsular material has continued to expand by all measurements. As we shall see shortly, this increasing diversity within peninsular literature is a continuation of a trend already observed when comparing the 2006/7 data with that of 1998/99 data collection, which focused on peninsular textual material only.<sup>5</sup>

Before turning our attention to the three sets of data on peninsular material only, we might question whether there are any particular Latin American authors and texts that have increased or decreased in popularity from 2006/7 to 2015/16. The table below shows the percentage of departments teaching at least one text by all the Latin American authors who were taught by at least 20% of departments in either data collection:

TABLE 3

Latin American Author	% of departments teaching at least one text on 2006/7	% of departments teaching at least one text on 2015/16
Gabriel García Márquez	68	64
Juan Rulfo	40	31
Isabel Allende	35	28
Pablo Neruda	35	18
Jorge Luis Borges	30	33
Mario Vargas Llosa	30	33
Julio Cortázar	30	21
Rosario Castellanos	25	21
Carlos Fuentes	25	28
Ángeles Mastretta	25	13
Manuel Puig	23	21
Domingo F Sarmiento	20	15
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz	18	23
Alejo Carpentier	20	21
José María Arguedas	18	21

In all cases there has been a decrease, or at best a small increase, in representation on the departments' lists, which, when taken alongside the increase in the overall number of authors



and texts, suggests that there is a lessening of a sense of a canonical core of value to the educational mission of the Spanish degree. The corresponding analysis of film across the two data collections shows a more mixed picture, with the presence of only some canonical film directors decreasing. Whilst Latin American directors González Iñárritu, Bemberg and Gutiérrez Alea saw their presence diminish, Puenzo and del Toro's increased, particularly the latter who saw a large increase from 13% to 31% representation. Peninsular film saw a marked increase in representation of films by Almodóvar, Buñuel, Erice and Bollaín, a small increase for Berlanga and decreases for Saura and Medem.

With three sets of data on peninsular authors, spanning 1998/99, 2006/7 and 2015/16, it is possible to trace changes more meaningfully across an eighteen year period, albeit via only three snapshots. Whilst in 2015/16 only one Spanish author – García Lorca – was represented on over 50% of departments' lists, in 1998/99 ten peninsular authors surpassed the same threshold with a further twenty-one authors reaching over 25% representation, making a total of thirty-one core authors, plus the two anonymous texts *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *El poema de mío Cid*. This total of thirty-three reduces to twenty in 2006/7 and then to just seven meeting the same criteria in 2015/16. As might be expected from those numbers alone, the presence of many peninsular authors once considered central to the curriculum has much diminished. The table below lists all the authors and two anonymous texts who have met the 25% inclusion criterion in any of the three data collections.

TABLE 4

% of depts. teaching at least one text – 1998/9	% of depts. teaching at least one text – 2006/7	% of depts. teaching at least one text – 2015/16
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Federico García Lorca	97	65	54
Benito Pérez Galdós	71	33	23
Camilo José Cela	71	40	21
Miguel de Cervantes	68	45	33
Miguel de Unamuno	68	38	26
Juan Goytisolo	65	25	10
Antonio Buero Vallejo	61	33	10
Lope de Vega	58	33	33
<i>Lazarillo de Tormes</i>	58	33	21
Pedro Calderón de la Barca	55	38	26
Tirso de Molina	48	33	21
Luis Martín Santos	48	13	3
Ramón del Valle- Inclán	45	33	23
Fernando de Rojas	45	25	15
Francisco de Quevedo	42	28	23
Antonio Machado	42	33	18

Rafael Alberti	42	23	13
Carmen Martín Gaité	39	20	26
Pío Baroja	39	28	18
Luis de Góngora	39	13	15
Emilia Pardo Bazán	39	15	13
Ramón J Sender	35	23	13
Juan Ruiz	32	13	13
Miguel Delibes	32	15	8
<i>Poema de mío Cid</i>	32	25	10
Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer	29	18	5
Diego de San Pedro	29	8	5
Alfonso Sastre	29	15	3
José Martínez Ruiz (Azorín)	26	10	5
Garcilaso de la Vega	26	15	18
Fray Luis de León	26	8	10
Pedro Salinas	26	8	10
Carmen Laforet	23	30	15

Javier Cercas	0	18	26
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With the exception of Javier Cercas, whose entry and rise in position on the table is based almost entirely on the 2001 publication *Soldados de Salamina*, all these authors are now less commonly taught than they were in 1998/99, with dramatic reductions in some cases, most notably Pérez Galdós, Cela, Goytisolo, Buero Vallejo, Martín-Santos, Delibes and Sastre. Unsurprisingly, individual texts have also shared a similar fate. In 1998/99 a total of forty peninsular texts were represented on more than 25% of departments' lists; this had dropped to fourteen by 2006/7 and by 2015/2016 to only four, authored by García Lorca (in two instances), Cervantes and Cercas.

TABLE 5

Text	% of depts. teaching the text – 1998/9	% of depts. teaching the text – 2006/7	% of depts. teaching the text – 2015/16
<i>Lazarillo de Tormes</i>	58	33	21
<i>Bodas de sangre</i>	55	33	26
<i>La casa de Bernarda Alba</i>	55	33	26
<i>Novelas ejemplares</i>	52	35	31
<i>Don Quijote</i>	52	38	21
<i>Tiempo de silencio</i>	48	13	3
<i>El burlador de Sevilla</i>	45	33	18

<i>La celestina</i>	45	25	15
<i>Niebla</i>	42	15	13
<i>Yerma</i>	42	25	8
<i>La familia de Pascual</i>	42	23	8
<i>Duarte</i>			
<i>La colmena</i>	42	25	3
<i>La vida es sueño</i>	39	18	21
<i>Góngora: Antología poética</i>	39	13	18
<i>Campos de Castilla</i>	35	30	15
<i>El alcalde de Zalamea</i>	35	13	5
<i>El público</i>	35	13	5
<i>Señas de identidad</i>	35	13	3
<i>San Manuel Bueno, mártir</i>	32	20	18
<i>Libro de buen amor</i>	32	13	13
<i>El Buscón</i>	32	18	13
<i>Poema de mio Cid</i>	32	25	10
<i>El árbol de la ciencia</i>	32	15	10
<i>Fuenteovejuna</i>	32	18	10

<i>Así que pasen cinco años</i>	32	10	0
<i>El tragaluz</i>	29	15	3
<i>Poeta en Nueva York</i>	29	28	10
<i>Los pazos de Ulloa</i>	29	13	5
<i>Doña Perfecta</i>	29	8	10
<i>Réquiem por un campesino español</i>	29	20	13
<i>Luces de Bohemia</i>	29	25	13
<i>Romancero viejo/Ballad selection</i>	26	23	13
<i>Rimas</i>	26	15	5
<i>Romancero gitano</i>	26	15	10
<i>Garcilaso de la Vega poetry selection</i>	26	15	18
<i>El cuarto de atrás</i>	26	13	15
<i>Tristana</i>	26	15	8
<i>Cárcel de amor</i>	26	8	5
<i>El caballero de Olmedo</i>	26	8	10

<i>Peribáñez y el comendador de Ocaña</i>	26	5	3
<i>Nada</i>	19	25	15
<i>Soldados de Salamina</i>	Not yet published	15	26

Just as we saw when examining the representation of the authors, with the exception of Cercas's *Soldados de Salamina* every text has declined in presence from the first to the most recent data collection, most declining across all three snapshots of our curriculum, some quite dramatically. The list of authors and texts identified as having decreased the most strongly suggests a movement away from those texts which are most linguistically and conceptually complex such as novels by Goytisolo and Martín-Santos, García Lorca's most challenging plays, as well as away from the study of literature produced during the Francoist dictatorship (although almost bucking the trend is the lengthy but linguistically accessible *Nada* by Carmen Laforet, which increased in 2006/7 but decreased in 2015/16). This may well be a result of the establishment of a new generation of scholars, whose life experiences and cultural interests are not as strongly shaped by the dictatorship compared to the previous generation, and also due to wider shifts in Hispanic Studies, as identified by Martin-Estudillo and Spadaccini (2010: xvii):

It is no longer sufficient to hold onto [sic] the old canon of contemporary, post-civil war writers, which has fed academic curricula and research agendas for the last few decades; it is time to open critical pathways which can reveal, and reflect upon, the complexity of a cultural system increasingly characterized by an enduring plurality.

There is no doubt that a stronger sense of a canonical core of texts in peninsular literature existed in 1998/99 and that the core has begun to dissipate. Theories of canonicity suggest

that in all cases of canon evolution the most recent popular publications will become less visible with only the most 'worthy' remaining within the canonical core – in short, 'time will tell' – yet the broader decreasing presence of more canonical writers such as García Lorca, Cervantes and Pérez Galdós is symptomatic of an opening up of the cultural system, as Martín-Estudillo and Spadaccini claimed in 2010, and as foreseen by Charnon-Deutsch in 1994. It certainly appears true that the student experience in the U.K. is more pluralistic than it was previously; although only the growth of film is quantified in this data, during my research I noticed a stronger presence of visual cultures with painting, etchings and architecture as examples of key objects of study. Indeed, the textual material in the 2015/16 data includes a small number of graphic novels, journalistic writings and web-published writings, although the vast majority still fit in to well defined literary genres. The ability to access materials of study digitally – indeed to make digital cultural products and practices objects of study themselves – is also shaping research and pedagogical practices.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The changes observed are the result of a complex interaction of a number of variables. The diversification of research interests and the increasing legitimisation of previously non-canonical objects of study have been a major influence on what is considered of interest, enjoyment and use in the classroom context. Students' and lecturers' expectations of the content of a languages degree have also become more centred on the contemporary world and on the study of material that is by and large less challenging than previously, 'challenging' here understood in terms of text length, structural complexity and linguistic accessibility.

The shift from canonical core to a broader range of objects of study is not unique to the study of Spanish-speaking cultures. In their quantitative study of key terms and topics used in several prestigious literary journals over many decades, Andrew Goldstone and Ted



Underwood conclude that in recent decades there has been a turn towards the historical and cultural within literary scholarship, without there having been a particular change in method: ‘unlike the earlier transition from the interests of philological scholarship to those of criticism in the mid-century, the changing scholarly language gives fewer cues to changing method; it is alteration of subject matter that appears most consequential from the perspective of our model’ (2014: 376).

What, if anything, is the discernible impact of such a shift on the discipline of Hispanic Studies? If we consider a discipline to exist as a core of agreed methods and material, reproduced through the ritual of institutionalisation, then a dissipation of the previously assumed canon and a move towards a broader range of contemporary material suggests an interdisciplinary approach to a broad range of material that could be conceived as a potential threat to the singularity of the discipline in the U.K. academic setting. As Armin Krishnan (2009: 43) notes:

[a] discipline should be taught in a manner that it is a coherent body of knowledge.

Coherence makes it easier for students to learn and understand a discipline.

Contradictory knowledge claims or fragmented knowledge is simply far more difficult to digest and far less compelling. Coherence has therefore a major effect on the attitudes of students towards learning and their educational success.<sup>7</sup>

Krishnan’s identification of the value of coherence is relevant to disciplines per se, but not languages specifically, where disciplinary coherence has long been under question. In 1988, Evans’s description of the academic landscape of Modern Languages notes that language forms the core of any such degree. At that time, he identified two types of languages degree: the literary degree, offered predominantly by older universities, and the non-literary degree, focused on practical language skills, offered by newer universities and what were then known

in the U.K. Higher Education sector as polytechnics, buoyed up by industry's demands for linguists to support growth in the European Economic Community and the bright future awaiting the U.K. and E.U.. More recently, and writing in the United States, Janet Swaffar and Katherine Arens (2005: 5) note that foreign language degree courses, no matter their literary or cultural content, demonstrate to students knowledge creation and distribution within 'communicative frameworks'. For them, 'not only must FL learners identify differences between texts in individual customs or languages; they must also learn to overcome their strong horizon of expectations for culturally based phenomena, attitudes and perceptions' (Swaffar and Arens 2005: 42). Yet within Hispanic Studies the learner is confronted by not only one culture, or often even one language, but by a complex network of cultures – European, American, African, Asian – and, depending on the university department, a variety of languages with the teaching of Catalan, Galician, Basque, Portuguese, American indigenous languages, or the possible encounter with translated material from other languages and cultures within the realm of the Hispanic.<sup>8</sup>

Somewhat pessimistically, in 1988 Evans (1988: 184) predicted that the traditional single and joint honours language and literature degree did not have a rosy future; the case for the continuation of such a structure continues today, as evidenced by Christopher J Pountain's (2017: 268) argument for the interrelation of language, linguistics and literature in the Modern Languages discipline:

Focus on the teaching and learning of a foreign language constitutes the non-negotiable core, but the cultivation of what is an essentially instrumental skill only becomes part of an academic discipline through awareness of the language's linguistic structure, the variety observable within its speech community and the nature of its standardisation, and through engagement with the uses to which the language is put,

especially those language-dependent cultural manifestations which we collectively call literature.

Pountain (2017: 269) goes on to recognise that the growth of specialisms within the discipline will result from an encouragement to a 'general awareness of the social, political, historical, geographical and cultural contexts of the language and its literature', but always with language acquisition at its core. My curriculum data suggests that the claims by Evans and Pountain, nearly thirty years apart, are true, in the sense that literature remains core but does not stand alone within what is now effectively a language/culture degree. These are developments that have responded and continue to respond to changes in the sector where there is tough competition between institutions and disciplines. Is the shift away from the literary canon satisfying a demand for differing forms of knowledge, marketable or otherwise? What should the language graduate know; what skills should such a graduate develop or acquire through degree level study? The acquisition of a language is a skill, but with application and cultural understanding comes greater thought, intercultural awareness, empathy and analysis, whether through the study of canonical poetry, recent films or political essays. I return here to Swaffar and Arens (2005: 6) and their definition of cultural literacy as 'not only the mastery of a mass of facts about a culture, but also, and more important, a complex understanding of the communication, knowledge and authority frameworks of a culture, the frameworks that generate, empower or disempower and that stage the way the available facts are negotiated'. Whatever our material for discussion in the classroom, it is surely a strength – and our privilege – to teach and inspire the ability to understand the world and its many forms of culture, authority and language.

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<sup>1</sup> On perceptions of the study of languages pre-university see, for example, Graham (2004), Coleman (2009), Lanvers and Coleman (2017) and Tinslay and Board (2016).

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<sup>2</sup> The interested reader may wish to consult Gorak (1991), Guillory (1993), Pozuelo Yvancos (1995) and Brown (2010).

<sup>3</sup> For more on canonicity, heritage and the canon as a form of 'museum without walls' see Davis (2012).

<sup>4</sup> I note here my enormous gratitude of debt to all colleagues who took the time to secure information for me, or pass on my requests to the relevant person.

<sup>5</sup> For a more in-depth comparison of the 1998/99 and 2006/7 datasets, see Davis (2010).

<sup>6</sup> For more reflection on the impact of digital cultures in Modern Languages, see Taylor and Thornton (2017).

<sup>7</sup> With thanks to Catherine Davies for drawing my attention to the work of Krishnan, Colin Evans, Janet Swaffar and Katherine Arens.

<sup>8</sup> It is of interest to note that in 2015/16 fourteen U.K. departments offered Catalan as a language of study within their Spanish degrees; three offered Galician, three offered Basque and one offered Quechua. Not all departments offer a strong focus on culture within those modules, so any data collection would be statistically insignificant compared to the Spanish dataset. It is assumed that students on those courses will not be reading primary material in Castilian.