Prologue. What I Have Learned from Writing Studies in the Other Americas

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In the last few decades, writing programs and writing studies have been expanding in Spanish- and Portuguese- speaking Americas, to meet the needs of economically transforming and democratizing societies. The expansion and democratization of education have created space for long-time workers in writing education to share their experiences and for a new generation of committed writing scholars and teachers to emerge. This volume makes accessible to the English-speaking audience an influential selection of the growing literature from the region. These articles give a window into the ways of thinking and researching of some of the most prominent and influential educators, suggesting the larger climate of evolving thinking and practice in the region.

The articles translated here reveal lessons the writing scholars in the Spanish- and Portuguese- speaking Americas have learned from writing and language studies in the rest of the world. Some of these lessons are familiar to us in the English-speaking world but these articles also expand our view, from the situations and traditions of their countries, their broad intellectual eclecticism, their critical awareness, and their social commitment. While in the North writing scholars are primarily grounded in the humanities, in the South scholars bring tools from the social sciences such as linguistics, psychology, education, and semiology to the task of writing education.

North and South share core problems of serving students in expanding secondary and higher education, democratizing higher education, including non-traditional and marginalized students, and transforming traditional curricula to foster student creativity, critical judgment, thought, agency, and contribution. Histories of economic inequality, lack of access to schooling, social and racial marginalization for large groups are even more immediate and pressing in the South, with attempts to address the challenges more current. Higher education in the South is generally less costly for students than in the North, and often free. In further contrast, the higher education systems in

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many of these countries are even more disciplinary and examination bound than in North America, with less attention to individual development and little general education, so writing needs are embedded in the major (or career, as it is called in a number of countries).

Two decades ago, like many North Americans, I had limited knowledge of the great variety, energy, and educational ferment in the rest of the Americas, but since then travels and friendships have opened my eyes to the great similarities that bind the Americas together, despite historical exploitation by the North. All of the countries of the Americas were formed by colonization and immigration, suppressing indigenous peoples, and oppressing transported slaves. Yet all gained independence of colonial European powers, in most cases by revolution. Since then, they have been experimenting with forms of government, haltingly moving towards democracies with few vestiges of royalty. All the countries of the Americas still are challenged by integrating the many peoples into citizens of modern multicultural nations and modern economies in an information age—while addressing historic inequities and genocidal crimes, and responding to the justified grievances of the those historically exploited, now finding their voice and political power. These countries forged in the last few centuries are creative, optimistic, and exploratory with vibrant traditional and contemporary cultures. Despite constant threats of regression to authoritarianism and rule by elites, both North and South struggle to create modern states out of these complex roots.

Social concern pervades the work of writing education in the region and is explicitly or implicitly present in most of these articles. We see here the great influence of Paulo Freire, but the impulse towards social justice runs even deeper within the histories of the countries and the educational systems. It is appropriate that the earliest work presented here, Judith Kalman's 2003 article, examines the role of literacy in everyday social life outside the confines of school. Working in Mexico and associated with CINVESTAV (Centro de Investigacion y de Estudios Avanzados del Instituto Politecnico Nacional), in this article she considers how the health difficulties of a child and the needs of a small store owner drew two women more deeply into literacy practices. Kalman's work is part of her long-standing community literacy engagement, previously visible in English through her important 1999 book *Writing on the Plaza*, one of the earliest works considering writing in everyday life, among people developing largely outside the traditional school system.

At the same time a number of writing scholars had been developing programs of different sorts to meet the needs of undergraduate and graduate students in higher education. Several chapters here represent this work. Elvira Narvaja de Arnoux, drawing on linguistic approaches, led a group studying

writing at Universidad de Buenos Aires and developing a course to meet the needs they identified. María Cecilia Pereira's article documents the history of this group and Arnoux's article describes one particular practical course she offered. Both date from 2006 and cite extensively from the publications of this group and their sources.

Paula Carlino, at Universidad de Buenos Aires and CONICET (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas), drew on educational psychology to lead a team studying the writing needs of graduate and undergraduate students, and to develop resources for students and teachers. Her focus has been on how writing is tied to cognitive development within the context of academic disciplines and genres. She is represented here by a 2005 chapter describing a writing intensive course for education majors that helped students address the often loosely defined genre of "monograph," similar to the loosely defined "term paper" we are familiar with in the North.

Another longstanding group led by the late Giovanni Parodi in Chile focused on higher education genres, using linguistic tools within a sociocognitive framework. The 2008 article here is just one example of his extensive publications describing the reading and writing tasks of students at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso.

René Venegas and other authors, also part of the research group in Valparaíso, in their 2013 article offer a more detailed linguistic description of how student writers position themselves in the undergraduate and Master's theses in two different fields, philosophy and linguistics. Through examining the use of the first person and of citations of literature, they find the philosophy students predominantly present their work in their own voice and reasoning, while the linguistic students are more reliant on the literature and placing their work within it.

Within Brazilian education at all levels, reading and writing specialized genres had become a major priority as the social use of genres had been made a central component of the National Curricular Parameters (PCNs). There several scholars took up the challenge of drawing on international work on genre and interpreting and applying it to Brazilian education. Angela Kleiman at Universidade Estadual de Campinas, had long been a leader in language arts teacher education in Brazil, with many highly cited works in Portuguese. Here her 2007 article addresses how genre can be integrated into meaningful literacy practices and events realized within the life of students and the classroom, and not just reduced to the study of form. She argues for a focus on literacy projects and the kinds of text that most interest and engage students.

Désirée Motta-Roth from Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, Brazil over many publications has been a major theorist of genre. Her 2008 article

here surveys four approaches to critical genre theory going back to the 1990s (three of which are familiar in the North, but the Swiss socio-discursive interactionism school less so). She synthesizes and evaluates the different approaches to come up with an integrated understanding, as she has done in her other works.

Drawing more centrally on the Swiss school, Anna Rachel Machado (Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo) and Vera Lucia Cristovão (Universidade Estadual de Londrina) provide a useful explanation and overview of socio-discursive interactionism and its classroom application in pedagogic sequences. Viewing human cognition and consciousness as based on our social natures and use of language, this approach considers genres as facilitating students entering into the forms of thinking within professions, disciplines, and other social groups. Pedagogic sequences bring students into the use of new genres as ways of thinking and interacting, and not just compulsory forms. Machado and Cristovão have been central in introducing and popularizing this approach in Brazil and other countries in the region, and the 2006 article here indexes a number of the studies fostered by this approach.

Alicia Vázquez and her research group at Río Cuarto in Argentina in their 2009 article highlight the problem of students gaining deeper uses of writing when most of their practice is limited to reproduction tasks that require only low-level processing. They found that without reinforcement from writing assigned in subject areas, direct instruction in concepts of the constructive nature of writing have little hold in the abstract and even less on the quality of text productions or writing processes.

To develop more in-depth assignments by professors and to provide students with the linguistic tools to engage with those assignments, a number of scholars at Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento in Buenos Aires developed a project called PRODEAC (*Reading and Writing Skills Development Program Across the Undergraduate Years*), similar to what we in the North would call writing in the disciplines, but with a more decidedly linguistic focus. Estela Moyano in her 2010 article here describes a process of negotiation between the language specialist and the subject area instructor to develop assignments and to analyze the language skills necessary for successful completion of these newly ambitious tasks. This leads to a more elaborated specification of the tasks for the students and supportive language teaching by the language specialist to supplement the content teaching. This process provides more meaningful use of writing in the courses where students experience intellectual rewards, the subject teachers see improved work and understanding, and the language teachers become more focused on what students actually need for their academic work.

Lucía Natale and Daniela Stagnaro evaluate the PRODEAC project by surveying the workplaces that employ students and recent graduates of the university to determine what genres are used. Comparing these workplace genres with those encountered by the students during their actual work at these corporations, they found a strong match (23 out of 28), with 19 also encountered in their programs at their university. While this correspondence is higher than reported at other universities, these results suggest some additional adjustments to the university writing tasks and instruction. This article gives a window into work done on a number of campuses to correlate writing instruction with workplace needs.

While much work has sought to support students' writing to participate more fully in their societies, Virginia Zavala from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú, has through many publications sought to understand and address the multilingualism and identities of indigenous students as they seek to find their place in the university. She has investigated the sociocultural and political environment of higher education and the stakes for social justice and social transformation when education is democratized. In the 2011 article translated here she contrasts the concept of agency with language deficit and other essentializing assumptions of typical linguistically based approaches to second language education. The focal students in this study form hybrid identities and language uses to integrate what they are learning into their own sense of values and priorities, while still doing their best to submit the kind of work their professors ask for. Zavala argues for a more open classroom discussion, inviting students' invention of their hybrid voices.

Two final articles indicate how far writing programs and writing studies have come in the last two decades. Each draws on the many programs that have developed to provide guidance for others who seek to initiate programs. Violeta Molina Natera from Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Cali, Colombia has been one of the leaders in bringing Writing Centers to South American universities. In the 2014 article translated here she documents the rise of writing centers in the region by placing them in the context of the history and lessons of writing centers in North America, which have provided theory and guidance. She then identifies important moments and directions taken in the Latin American adoption and adaptation and provides a series of questions to ask in establishing new centers.

Federico Navarro (currently at Universidad de O'Higgins in Chile) in his 2017 article provides an overview of the higher education situation and the rise of writing programs. He identifies key considerations for creating new writing programs to meet the particular needs, conditions, and resources in different countries and universities, with their particular structures.

Ultimately, he advocates for writing campuses with writing embedded within all the activities and learning. He exemplifies his principles with the design of a program at Universidad Nacional de Quilmes in a working-class neighborhood of Buenos Aires.

Collectively these articles demonstrate that writing studies in the region are developing programs and literatures that respond to local needs, conditions, resources, populations, and cultures, along with the structures of universities. Both writing and education more broadly are understood as parts of societies, economies, and citizenry. While program goals and details are similar to those in the North, they bring a different repertoire of intellectual tools and social values that can challenge and expand our thinking. For me, communication with my colleagues in other parts of the Americas has led me to see and understand new things about writing. It has been an unexpected gift that has come to me in the latter part of my professional life. I recommend these articles to you as part of your journeys of discovery and commitment to our rich educational calling.