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Preparing Narrative for a Bilingual Collection of the Complete Works of Hazel Hall

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Our Voices:

Teaching and Learning at PSU

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Preparing Narrative for a Bilingual Collection of the Complete Works of Hazel Hall

Eva Nunez, Foreign Languages and Literatures

PROJECT

The purpose of my 2005 STRT project was to begin work on a bilingual (Spanish-English) collection of the poetry of Hazel Hall (1886-1924)—one of the most important women writers of Oregon. The research will involve translating her best known book of poems, *Curtains*, into Spanish, as well as archival work to retrieve poems that were published only in periodicals, along with data that will contribute to the accompanying biography. As Oregon grew and prospered, it cultivated a new crop of writers, among them, Hazel Hall, born in 1886. Hall's sensitive, lyrical poetry has been compared to Emily Dickinson's. This extraordinary Portland poet was published and actually did gain a national reputation, but her short-lived poetic career lasted only from 1916 through 1924. Two collections of poems were published while she lived, *Curtains* (New York: John Lane Co, 1921) and *Walkers* (New York: Dodd, Mead Co., 1923). Dutton published her posthumous book, *Cry of Time*, in 1928, four years after her death.

After enjoying initial recognition and national success, Hall fell into obscurity. There are a number of reasons why she disappeared from literary consciousness. Her three short volumes of verse were never reprinted. Her poems disappeared from anthologies sometime in the thirties. The most likely cause for her neglect, however, was not her relatively small output but her sequestered life. Hall was an invalid, confined to a wheelchair from the age of twelve after a bout with scarlet fever. Her days were spent in the upstairs room of a large house in Portland.

Faced with the reality of illness, pain, poverty, and loneliness, Hall responded not with the sentimentality typical of her generation, but with irony and detachment. The

intensity of her emotions as well as the genuineness of it make her work as vital today as when it was written. Hall's perceptive insights into the lives of working women as well as the understated despair make her poetry unique. Hall's poems reflect her solitary and intense spirit, and should be welcomed back to enhance our own contemporary experiences. This translation and research will not only provide the revival of a fine woman poet in American literature, but also open new possibilities to study heritage personalities from a bilingual perspective.

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REFLECTION

The experience of being part of the Writing and Narrative session of the STRT 2004-05 has been a positive and fruitful one. I had the chance to meet other colleagues with similar goals in writing and research as mine. My proposal was specifically to prepare a narrative for a grant submission. Thanks to our monthly meetings, I received feedback from other STRT program participants that helped

me to better my project narrative in terms of quality writing and new perspectives on my ideas.

The fact that I had to dedicate some time for preparing myself for the STRT meeting, and thinking about my project in those sessions, and also getting opinions and suggestions from my colleagues periodically, makes the whole experience worthwhile. Not only have I have been exposed to other interesting projects in writing, but also I have polished and enriched my own work thanks to the vision of other more experienced colleagues. In an academic metaphoric way, the STRT has been an eye-opening experience for me.