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Literary Studies in Honor of Robert L. Fiore

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Studies in Honor of
Robert L. Fiore
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Writting this introduction not only honors an extraordinary Hispanist but, more than anything else, a formidable professor whose work in education has reached beyond the classroom to the hallways of the department, to his home over a glass of brandy, to the local coffee shop, to long fruitful conversations in nearby Italian restaurants, to the opera, to the paddleball court or golf course, or in front of Masaccio's frescos in Florence. Robert L. Fiore, mentor and friend, has remained the truest advisor and teacher to his students, consummate supporter to his colleagues, and loyal friend to those who know him outside academia. His wise and constant counsel—the most precious gift he could have ever offered to his students—is exactly what he received from trusted and faithful mentors early on in his career. This volume of essays by some of the most well known Hispanists today is not only proof of Bob's impact on Golden Age studies, but also a small measure of appreciation by all who have had the good fortune to have known him, and been affected by him in some way. This introduction, surely too short and insignificant alongside Bob's accomplishments, endeavors to put into words Bob's lifelong contributions in and out of academia which are here remembered by those who respect and admire him.

Many of us know Bob from his pioneering work on the picaresque, a part of his life he experienced first hand growing up in New York. It was his parents' explicit desire that he achieve a college education they thought he so deserved, especially since it was denied them because of the Great Depression and other misfortunes. His mother introduced him early on to some of the world's great literary treasures, works by
Robert Louis Stevenson, Jack London, John Steinbeck, Sir Walter Scott, and other major authors. It was this early grounding in literature that instilled in Bob a love for reading and fostered a naturally inquisitive mind. According to one of his first graduate students, Tony Madrigal, literature was a significant part of life: “Bob taught me that literature is not written in a vacuum but is a filter for many things in life. He taught me about the wholeness of a work and especially for works in our field...works for which we don't have the contemporary perspective. He opened my eyes to other literatures...that was a first for me.”

Two books in particular became the basis for Bob’s understanding of American culture, Mark Twayne’s *Huckleberry Finn* and the *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. With the first tome Bob was infatuated with the Mississippi’s Southern point of view and its picaresque elements. With the second, Franklin became for Bob the “Da Vinci of America.” Considered together, Bob has often stated that these works offer the best representation of America. In his youth he knew that an education would open an infinite number of doors but he, and others like him growing up in New York, battled stereotypes and attitudes that limited their opportunities. Therefore, Bob realized early on that he must work to change the system from the inside out, and provide opportunities to those who were viewed as less fortunate, a battle he continues to wage today on behalf of his students. If you ask, Bob will tell you that he owes this steadfastness and sense of justice to his parents who guided him to overcome those early obstacles through hard work and persistence.

Two lesser-known facets of Bob Fiore’s life may be surprising, even to those who know him well. First, Bob served several years in the Air Force where he was stationed in Mississippi for radar school. Second, Bob learned to box and competed in the coveted Golden Gloves, an experience that helped form the tenacity and discipline which he brings to every task. The time in the south also helped Bob understand the racial climate of the day, and invigorated his desire to stand up for those less fortunate and provide opportunities to those who do not have them or, as Bob puts it, “to fight the good fight.” Some of these beliefs echoed back to his time growing up in New York. Social attitudes toward Italian-Americans, or similar issues he encountered during his military service, only spurred Bob on toward completing his studies. He remembers with
pride the formidable instruction he received under the guidance of the Irish Christian Brothers at Iona College where he would eventually graduate with a degree in Spanish and honors in Italian. At Iona, Bob studied philosophy, English (British and American literature), Spanish, Italian, French, Latin—a true liberal education. Required readings led to in-depth knowledge of the early philosophers and their teachings, such as scholasticism and skepticism, philosophical doctrines that would later form a cornerstone of his research on Golden Age Literature. One of Bob’s earliest examples for his eventual dedication to Spanish and Italian was motivated by an American professor teaching Italian. And, Bob simply wanted to be different from the rest of the students who dedicated themselves to the study of only one language. Indeed, his college pal Chris Romito remembers it thus: “He came to college with a love for the Romance languages and for the cultures they represent. He dove in, as they say, and never came up for air.”

Iona College also required all students to take the Graduate Record Examination even if they had no intention of earning an advanced degree. In his senior year, Bob took the exam, placed exceptionally high, and was accepted at Middlebury College. As part of his M.A. at Middlebury, Bob studied at the Universidad de Salamanca and at the Universidad Madrid where he was taught by Carlos Bousoño (Madrid) and Fernando Lázaro Carreter (Salamanca), two members of the Spanish Royal Academy, as well as Isabel García Lorca (Madrid). His studies in Spain also provided him the opportunity to study the picaresque with Lázaro Carreter and semiotics with Bousoño. Bob loved every minute of it, especially his graduate seminar with Lázaro Carreter who often invited Bob to his office to talk about Lazarillo. The proximity to these eminent professors and the time spent with them were priceless to Bob. On one occasion, faced with a clever commentary by Bob, Bousoño said to his pupil, “O eres muy inteligente o estás loco.” For its part, Salamanca proved to be the city that changed Bob’s life as he wondered its streets and cherished the time in this urban medieval museum.

The strength of his degree at Middlebury secured him a teaching position in Greensboro, North Carolina. And, armed with a tremendous background in Romance languages and literatures, Bob was accepted into the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, arguably the
best doctoral program in the nation at the time. Richard P. Kinkade, Bob’s colleague at the University of Arizona, would later underscore the significance of Bob’s Chapel Hill degree: “Graduate students there were trained in the Romance Philology approach to texts first acquiring the necessary linguistic tools, including Latin, German, Old French, Provençal and Spanish and, certainly, a reading knowledge of all the contemporary Romance Languages, and then a close analysis of literary texts including those from Classical Antiquity to the twentieth century. In this regard, Bob is truly a Renaissance man in his breadth of knowledge and his understanding of the ways in which the various European languages and literatures have interacted over two thousand years of history. Few graduate students in our field today possess this type of intellectual foundation and as Bob retires, it is clear that we will not soon see again scholars of his academic attainment.” Chapel Hill’s obvious strengths in medieval and renaissance Italian and French literature matched Bob’s personal interests. It was there that he worked with William C. McCrary, an electrifying force in the classroom whose specialization on comedia studies was well known. Indeed, Bob’s first term paper combined his lessons from McCrary’s course with his Iona College training in philosophy to produce an essay, “Natural Law in the Central Ideological Theme of Fuenteovejuna” published shortly thereafter in Hispania. Publications by graduate students were relatively uncommon then and, in Bob’s case, this first article represented his commitment to excellence early on in his career.

Like Bob’s study with renowned scholars in Spain, the selection of a dissertation theme also includes the influence of illustrious figures. After a talk at Chapel Hill, A. A. Parker advised Bob to look into the auto sacramental from a philosophic perspective, a piece of advice the young graduate student took to heart as he converted it into the central theme of this thesis. Combining his deep knowledge of scholastic philosophy with the nature of the Calderonian auto, Bob’s thesis earned praise, and would later be the genesis of his first book, Drama and Ethos: Natural-Law Ethics in Spanish Golden-Age Theater (1975). From that time on, A. A. Parker, along with Bruce Wardropper, became two of the most influential figures in Bob’s career due to the clarity of their prose and the creativity they brought to literary analysis.

When Bob’s chairman at Greensboro, Charles Blend, accepted the
Chair at Michigan State University, he contracted Bob as an Assistant Professor of Spanish and Italian. Michigan State would be his home for 32 years (1967-1999) where he taught two languages and offered a graduate course on the picaresque for the first time. Bob remembers fondly that particular course where he claims to have been so scared that he didn’t move his eyes six inches from his notes. Those of us who have taken that course years later know very well that while Bob may bring his notes to class, his profoundly critical perspectives on the picaresque render them useless. Nonetheless, that first course, and the freedom to offer others creatively, became the perfect tool for Bob to continue to be a student. Indeed, at Michigan State Bob offered a variety of culture courses on art, music and philosophy in the Renaissance, but also García Lorca’s poetry, the picaresque in Spain and Latin America, and many others—all in an effort to continue studying the topics he loved so much. Bob even made time to work in theater. As Eufemia Sánchez de la Calle points out, it was during this time that Bob starred in one of several theatrical productions in the department: “The first thing that comes to my mind when I think about him is the twinkle in his eyes and his infectious smile, and also his witty remarks, amusing anecdotes, and amazing stories from his interesting life. One of my great memories of Bob Fiore is our performance together in the play Usted tiene ojos de mujer fatal. Even now, when I remember those rehearsals, it brings a smile to my face.”

At Michigan State Bob directed study abroad programs thirteen times in three countries (Spain, Italy and Mexico). Many former students got to know Bob through their time abroad, and more than a few, such as Alison Ridley, set their sights on a career in academia in part due to their participation in a program directed by Bob: “In the summer of my junior year, I went on M.S.U.’s abroad program in Denia, Spain, and Bob was the program director. During that six-week program, I remember taking an independent study with him on the dramas of Federico García Lorca. My love of Spanish theatre had its roots in that short class that Bob taught me so many years ago. During my graduate studies, I took every class I could with Bob and became very interested in the picaresque novel. As my dissertation director, Bob dedicated countless hours to reviewing drafts with me and making suggestions for improving the text. His guidance was invaluable and he helped to make
my dissertation a body of work that I can still be proud of today.”

In 1980 Bob accepted the position as Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Letters where he was charged with a variety of what he has characterized as unique and exciting tasks: he supervised the College’s twenty-two study abroad programs, established an Alumni Association and was in charge of fundraising campaigns, directed the College’s Career Placement and Services office, coordinated the Lifelong Education Program, and he established an undergraduate Internship Program. David Maters, a former student and original member of the Alumni Association Board understood early on how Bob was instrumental in re-engaging former alumni with the university: “While my career has taken me far away from my Spanish Major background, Bob renewed my involvement by inviting me to serve on the A&L Board as well as participate in the career retreat. I had never really considered serving MSU beyond graduation day, but Bob appealed to my sense of duty. As it turns out, I couldn't have been more pleased. I was happy to serve the needs of the College, but I certainly gained as much personal and professional satisfaction from these experiences as well.” These administrative successes were notable but bittersweet as he was simultaneously faced with a divorce and joint custody of his two children, Gabriella and David, both of whom understood and admired their father’s commitment to his students and his love of literature, art and travel: “Our father’s dedication to the education of his students has been something we have been impressed with throughout our lives. Often he speaks of his former students as though they were part of his extended family and he is always happy for them when they succeed in life. Through his work, we have had the great fortune of traveling to Europe with our father when very young and these were life-changing experiences. We will always be grateful for the chance to have been exposed to different cultures, art, etc., at such a young age. It definitely changed our lives and our view of the world for the better. Yes he has taught us a tremendous amount and has been a profound influence in our lives, but we like the dad in him more than the teacher.”

Despite personal obstacles, or perhaps because of them, Bob endeavored to continue his brilliant career. He was a regular reviewer for the National Endowment for the Humanities, U.S. Department of Education, and the National Endowment for the Arts. He also
joined several editorial boards and professional associations, acted in department plays, and continued giving talks at national and international conferences. In fact, at one conference, Joseph Ricapito heard Bob speak on the Lazarillo and recommended that Manuel Criado del Val, director of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, invite Bob to give a similar talk in Madrid. The presentation was very well received by the audience, and served to inspire Bob to work more on the picaresque. So much so that Bob became a regular speaker at CSIC and even delivered the clausura speech twice, invitations remembered well by Criado del Val: “Tengo un recuerdo inolvidable de la participación de Robert Fiore en los Congresos de Caminería y de su interpretación muy original del gran tema de la Picaresca… es francamente merecido el homenaje que los hispanistas le hacemos y tengo la seguridad de que su labor no sólo no termina sino que seguirá avanzando.” On the strength of his burgeoning reputation, Bob was graciously invited by Everett Hesse to write the Twayne study of Lazarillo de Tormes. Many mornings, from 3 to 8 a.m., before working all day in the Dean’s office, Bob worked feverously to complete the book. The Twayne monograph was published in 1984 and led to a segment on Radio España.

After six years on the Dean’s office staff at Michigan State, in 1986 Bob returned full time to teaching but continued his work with study abroad, the Alumni Association and other administrative bodies he helped create or oversee. Bob kept up his research agenda publishing a number of articles and co-editing with Everett Hesse, John Keller and Tony Madrigal a festschrift, Studies in Honor of Willam C. McCrary (1986). But, more than anything, the time away from administration allowed Bob to renew interests of his own: he traveled frequently, played golf and paddleball, practiced the vibraphone, and perfected his extraordinary cooking talents. In fact, Ricapito remembers fondly the times he shared with Bob at conferences discussing their mutual interests in the picaresque and in cuisine: “I was convinced that Bob was one of the heavy hitters in the field. Along with his intellectual prowess there is a personal aspect that is very imposing. Alongside the intellectual figure is the person that is warm, caring and interested. We also share a passion for our Italian heritage and have had long talks about it. Along with our heritage is our love of the kitchen. We both love to cook, especially Italian favorites.” This was also the time when
Bob met the love of his life, Carol, a practicing psychiatrist, who shared many of Bob’s passion for cooking, travel, opera, art, and literature: “Bob’s vitality for life, for new discoveries, and his passion and wonder for the as yet uncharted life are truly an inspiration for all who are fortunate enough to walk with him in this world. His lifetime of achievement, emotional presence and deep concern for the lives of others are gifts that I will always admire and treasure. I am one of many who have reaped the benefits of his encouragement, generosity, intense devotion and loving ways for which I am eternally grateful.” John Keating, Bob’s stepson was likewise appreciative of Bob’s involvement in his life: “Bob Fiore is one of the most unselfish people I have ever known. When he and my mother were married he took me into his home and treated me as if I were his own child, and has done so ever since. When I have had questions, he found the answers, when I needed direction, he gave me his best advice, when I was about to make a mistake, he let me know it (even if I didn’t always listen). He has never judged me, only accepted me as his own. I admire him greatly because he has always stuck to his convictions and throughout his life, no one that has ever known Robert could say that he didn’t always put his students, his friends and especially his family before himself. Robert Fiore is truly a man among men.”

At Michigan State Bob also enjoyed the opportunity to meet and talk with such distinguished visiting writers such as Arthur Miller or E.L. Doctorow. He also speaks fondly of introducing Isabel Allende, the keynote speaker for the Dean’s celebrity lecture series, or hosting a dinner in his home for Jorge Luis Borges. During these years he also directed numerous dissertations, several of which won the prestigious Hinman Award for best dissertation at Michigan State. Any Ph.D. candidate writing with Bob were assured of early morning breakfasts at Theio’s and frequent dinners at Spagnolo’s where the mentor reminded his students to “guide the reader.” Impressionable graduate students were no doubt thankful for these breaks from writing, but even more appreciative of Bob’s sound advice and willingness to push them along when they needed it most. When graduate students chose Bob as a thesis director, they were promised two things: they would work hard and “sweat blood,” and that he would be their greatest ally. Both were true, both yielded successful defenses and fruitful careers,
and both made students ever grateful. Bob also furnished professional opportunities to graduate students by writing grants to offset the cost of their participation at conferences and he asked one student to work with him when he was invited to be Guest Editor for a volume of Crítica Hispánica dedicated to Lazarillo de Tormes (1997).

It is fully in Bob’s nature to help his students well after they have graduated. His capacity as trusted confident and truest of advisors is noted by Danny Brunette-López who writes that “Bob is best described as a devoted teacher and scholar who always encourages students and colleagues to strive for excellence and motivates them to achieve their goals. I am very fortunate that Robert Fiore continues to help me with my future decisions, endeavors and career goals. He has definitely changed my outlook on life and I always make every effort to follow his example.” This is echoed by Antonia Petro who writes that “De todos los logros académicos y personales que podría destacar en tan merecido homenaje al profesor Roberto Fiore, me quedo con éste: después de haberlo conocido y admirado como profesor y mentor (cuántos brunches en Theio’s viéndolo reír al quejarme de que al mismo Cervantes le habría reconvenido “You have to guide your reader”), pese al paso de los años y los kilómetros de distancia, ha conseguido que sigamos teniendo la maravillosa certeza de que continúa velando por todos los que hemos formado parte de su vida y compartido, espada y pluma en riñón, sus aventuras.”

When the work deserved praise, Bob gave it; when it needed additional revision, he guided students through it. He was there to help. Ed Sorenson recalls when Bob recommended that the young graduate student publish a course paper on Tirso de Molina and subsequently helped the student get it into shape for publication: “And so it was that for the next three months or so we slugged it out over every word, every thought in that paper. There were some heated discussions, there were some glasses of wine (Fiore’s best, made with grapes purchased in Canada) and a few fine meals, there were some chuckles, but, most of all, there was serious work. During that period he taught me to discipline my thoughts, to express them succinctly and clearly, to avoid the flashy turn of phrase that masks the lack of discipline. At the end, in spite of the countless hours that he spent working with me editing the paper, he insisted that I publish it under my name, and not as a joint paper. After
all, he said, it was my work, not his. Just like Socrates with his disciples, Bob saw himself as the midwife of my paper.” This is an excellent example of how Bob remains true to his belief that he must plant a garden, let it grow, because that way “flowers always bloom brighter.”

If you know Bob you also know that he has maintained good health, a positive attitude, a critical mind, and has become ever more successful as a teacher. Perhaps, then, it was surprising that, after 32 years at Michigan State, Bob decided to retire in 1999. In honor of his career and to thank him for his commitment to graduate education, in the spring of 2000, over thirty graduate students gathered for a surprise party for Bob at a local eatery in East Lansing where he was presented with a plaque and a bound collection of written personal comments by students as a testament to the impact he has had on those who have known him. Bob has often said that the celebration was one of the most rewarding moments in his life. Little did he know that students felt it was one of the smallest demonstrations of appreciation they could ever have given. Indeed, Chad M. Gasta writes that Bob’s impact on his life has easily transcended academia: “Since my undergraduate years, Bob has been involved in every facet of my life. He directed my first study abroad experience, served as my M.A. and PH.D. advisor, and mentored me into academia. During these times he demanded perfection from himself and made me seek out perfection, too. At the most difficult moments, he suffered with me, and during the high points, we celebrated together. Perhaps the best measure of Bob’s impact on my life can be viewed in his attendance at my wedding in Spain where my wife and I invited him to read a passage at the ceremony. Bob was an intricate part of the ceremony because he was an important part of our lives. I suppose this is also a tribute to our feelings about Bob: he started as a professor, served as a thesis director, provided sound mentoring and became a colleague. More importantly, he became one of our most cherished friends. Few mentors ever have this sort of impact on their students. Fewer even try.”

In typical fashion, Bob still had a few surprises of his own. While he decided to leave behind three decades of friends and colleagues at Michigan State, it was only to embark on another career at the University of Arizona. Since 1999 Arizona has become Bob’s home where he continues the work he is best known for: teaching Golden Age
literature and culture, mentoring students, working in administration, and continuing his research on the Hispanic picaresque. It was not surprising either that Bob quickly found a place for himself at the University of Arizona. Surrounded by new colleagues and old friends such as Malcolm Compitello, Richard Kinkade and Amy Williamsen, Bob’s proven experience and leadership qualities were quickly tapped as he was charged with heading several department and college committees including several years as the Chair of the College promotion and tenure committee. Despite a busy schedule, Bob also found time to finish his scholarly edition of Lazarillo de Tormes (2000), give invited talks around the world, and direct graduate theses—one of which won the University Best Dissertation Award. Bob’s impact on students’ personal and professional lives at Arizona continued unabated, as Julia Domínguez indicates: “My transition to the University of Arizona was much easier due to Bob’s willingness to introduce me to Tucson’s fantastic Hispanic cultural attractions including restaurants and local celebrations, a visit to San Xavier as well as to listen to local Mariachi players. I am very proud to say that my years at the University of Arizona were very productive and memorable, and I must admit that I owe some of that success to Bob for his constant commitment to my wellbeing, and for leading me on numerous paths to academic success. Without Bob, my life in the United States would have been very different. In fact, his enthusiasm and support during my most difficult moments instilled in me a confidence that makes me who I am today.”

For his work mentoring graduate student, in 2005 Bob was awarded the College of Humanities’ Graduate Advising/Mentoring Award. This was followed by the Outstanding University Achievements Award in 2007 given to honor excellence in teaching. With so many awards and honors, it is perhaps not surprising that Bob also was recognized with one of the most prestigious awards given by the Government of Spain, the Encomienda con Placa de la Orden Civil de Alfonso X, el Sabio. Bob was given this award in honor of life-long commitment to Spanish studies. The public ceremony, held by the University of Arizona, included the following introduction by his colleague, Amy Williamsen:

Last spring two former students of his and I met for lunch at a conference. Naturally, our conversation turned to Bob and how much
we love and admire him. Personally, we love him for the amazing man he is and the gentle way he has touched so many lives. […] Professionally, we admire him as an exemplary scholar and teacher. […] His outstanding contributions to our profession include books that set the gold standard for work on the picaresque, and over fifty ground-breaking articles. Yet, what truly distinguishes Bob is his unswerving dedication to his students and fellow colleagues. If anyone ever needs him, he is always there. We discussed how we might best honor him now, despite our most heartfelt objections, he insists on contemplating retirement from the U of A. Of course we pursued all the normal venues and measure…but nothing seemed quite good enough for Bob. I laughingly remarked that only an honor bestowed by a King would ever do.

Amy Williamsen’s comments were echoed by Bob’s friend and former colleague from Michigan State, George P. Mansour, whose speech succinctly summarized Bob’s professional impact:

Nature and experience remind us often that every action prompts a reaction. And for every loss, something is gained. Such is clearly the case of Robert L. Fiore. What was a major loss for Michigan State University a few years ago has been an obvious gain for the University of Arizona.

In his years at Michigan State Robert Fiore served the profession, the faculty, and the students in multiple ways. His scholarship on the comedia, natural law, the Lazarillo, the picaresque, the auto sacramental provides models of scholarly writing worthy of emulation. His work, which consistently deals with substantive matters, is characterized by innovative thought, clarity of expression, thorough documentation, and a patent absence of trendy jargon. He approaches his scholarly writing not as an ephemeral exercise, but rather as a contribution to a continuum, a contribution to an enduring tradition within Spanish studies.

Although I could reference a number of his publications, I’ll limit myself to one in particular. In 1969 and 1970, at lunch almost daily, he talked about the film that Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight did in 1969, Midnight Cowboy. He would speak obsessively of this
film in terms of the picaresque. And I have to admit it really troubled me. My own positivist training in 18th and 19th-century literatures always got in the way in this discussion because what he was saying did not resemble, in any way, the discussion of the picaresque by authors we were reading in the classes I was teaching! In that decade Hispanists were beginning to reevaluate the picaresque. Wardropper rocked the boat with his “El trastorno de la moral en el Lazarillo,” Claudio Guillén was preparing his monumental “Towards a Definition of the Picaresque,” and A. A. Parker had published his book, Literature and the Delinquent. Fiore was part of that exciting moment for the picaresque. Little did he or I know then that, in applying narrative principles to film, he had a groundbreaking idea for both film studies and the picaresque. His article, “Midnight Cowboy and the Picaresque Tradition,” was to be a turning point in his approach to narratology, in his teaching, and publications. In that article, and in subsequent ones, Fiore was an active participant in revisioning the picaresque.

He provided leadership for the faculty in program and curricular development, leadership that was based on solid academic principles, not on faddish notions. He helped design a graduate program which, with the collaboration of other colleagues, maintained for several years a high national ranking among doctoral programs in Spanish. In his service as Assistant Dean for the College of Arts and Letters, he created well-conceived opportunities to develop new study abroad programs—ways to provide faculty and students opportunities to experience academic life outside of the U.S. Under his direction, the College of Arts and Letters registered the highest number of overseas study programs at Michigan State. Also as Assistant Dean, he helped develop a two-fold mission for the College: to educate students and to enhance their credentials for the world of work—quite an innovation for the world of arts and letters at that time. He produced internship and externship programs that gave students the opportunity to apply their academic skills in a work setting in the real world. As you probably know, arts and letters or humanities faculty are not easily moved by, or convinced of, innovation especially when it involves work outside of academia. Fiore nevertheless prevailed, and as a result, arts and letters majors
were more marketable at a time when a high number of university graduates went unemployed. The significant increase in employment of our alumni for several years thereafter was due, in large part, to Fiore’s vision.

His contributions did not go unnoticed while he was at Michigan State. For example, to recognize Fiore the teacher, the mentor, and the education innovator, the Alumni Association endowed the Robert L. Fiore Student Book Scholarship, a grant which is available to needy academically strong students. He received the Paul Varg Award, which is presented annually to one faculty member who has gained a national reputation through scholarly contributions and who has communicated those insights to undergraduate students. In 1999, the Michigan World Languages Association, the organization that represents the more than 1,400 language professionals in Michigan, granted him the highest recognition in world languages in the state, the Educator of the Year Award.

Yes, Bob’s move to the Southwest was a loss for Michigan. But, in that loss, your community, university and the state of Arizona gained a man with a firm belief in excellence, with passion for teaching and research and a deep commitment to Spanish studies. As a longstanding colleague and friend, I thank the University of Arizona community for welcoming him here, and for supporting him for this prestigious honor.

For Bob, the Alfonso X award marked the “cumbre de toda buena fortuna,” and made easier his decision to stretch his initial two-year commitment to Arizona to nine. And though his career is coming to a successful end, Bob shows no signs of slowing down. At the publication of this volume in his honor he is working on several articles as well as a critical edition for the Calderonian auto sacramental, coming full circle and returning to the research that started his career. We speak for all when we say that on the eve of Robert L. Fiore’s retirement, we hope his brilliant contributions to Golden Age studies persist, and that he continues to “fight the good fight.”