



## Chronology

- 1492** October 12, Christopher Columbus lands on one of the Bahama Islands, now known as San Salvador.
- 1500** Discovery of Brazil by Pedro Alvares Cabral; original names for the territory are Santa Cruz and Ilha de Vera Cruz (Island of the True Cross).
- 1519** Hernán Cortés arrives in the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, where a superstitious Moctezuma receives him as a descendant of the god Quetzalcoatl.
- 1531–1535** Francisco Pizarro conquers the Incan civilization of the Andean mountains, centered in Cuzco.
- 1609** *Comentarios reales de los Incas* (Royal Commentaries of the Incas) written by the half-Inca, half-Spanish Garcilaso de la Vega, the first truly American writer.
- 1636** Juan Rodríguez Freile writes *El Carnero* (The Ram) in Colombia. Historical essay with local oral tradition.
- 1691** Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the genius of Latin American baroque, signs her autobiographical “Respuesta a Sor Filotea” (Response to Sor Filotea).
- 1773** *El lazarrillo de los ciegos caminantes entre Buenos Aires y Lima* (El Lazarillo: A Guide of the Inexperienced Travelers between Buenos Aires and Lima), a collection of anecdotal material by Alonso Carrió de la Vandra (known as Concolorvo).
- 1810–1812** Many Latin American countries declare their independence from Spain. The resulting period of confusion proves unpropitious for the development of literary prose.

- 1815** Brazil is named a kingdom coequal with Portugal.
- 1816** José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *El periquillo sar-niento* (The Itching Parrot), a fully elaborated novel.
- 1822** The independence of Brazil is declared by Prince Dom Pedro, who becomes Emperor Pedro I.
- 1830** French romanticism begins to infiltrate Latin American literature through travelers returning from Paris.
- 1836** *O cronista* (The Chronicler) is first published, a Brazilian newspaper that includes the first short stories signed by its founders, Justiano José da Rocha, and others.
- 1838** The Argentine Esteban Echeverría's "El Matadero" (The Slaughtering Grounds) is the first short fiction in Spanish America.
- 1839** Birth of Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, the Cervantes of Brazilian literature, founder of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, and the most important name in Brazilian fiction.
- 1872ff.** Ricardo Palma, born 1833 in Peru, composes *tradiciones* all his adult life.
- 1870** Publication in Brazil of the First Republican Manifesto; publication of Machado de Assis's *Contos fluminenses* (Rio de Janeiro Stories).
- 1883** Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Mexico, publishes the collection *Cuentos frágiles* (Fragile Stories).
- 1880s** Ecuadorean Juan Montalvo writes *Capítulos que se le olvidaron a Cervantes* (Chapters Cervantes Forgot). The Cuban José Martí produces his remarkable journalistic essays, combining reportage, cultural criticism, and renovated, direct, literary Spanish.
- 1888** The Nicaraguan-born Rubén Darío publishes his experimental *Azul . . .* (Azure . . .), marking the beginnings of Spanish American modernism.
- 1888–1891** The prolific Mexican writer Manuel Payno publishes series *Los bandidos de Río Frío* (The bandits of Río Frío).
- 1895** José Martí and Gutiérrez Nájera die. Rubén Darío and Leopoldo Lugones dominate the Buenos Aires literary community.

## Chronology

- 1896** Machado de Assis founds the Academia Brasileira de Letras, the Brazilian Academy of Letters.
- 1898** Gutiérrez Nájera's *Cuentos color de humo* (Smoke-colored stories) is published posthumously. Spain grants Cuba independence, the last stronghold in the American hemisphere of once-powerful Spanish rule.
- 1899** Birth of Jorge Luis Borges, foremost figure of the Latin American short story.
- 1904** Baldomero Lillo's *Sub terra: cuadros mineros* (Scenes of mining life) appears in Chile.
- 1906** Leopoldo Lugones publishes *Las fuerzas extrañas* (Strange Forces).
- 1910** Lugones is organizer of the cultural arm of the 1910 Centennial. Darío participates with celebratory verse. Publication of "Tuércele el cuello al cisne" (Wring the Swan's Neck) by Enrique González Martínez. Artificially, but conveniently, heralded as the "death" of Spanish American modernism.
- 1910–1920** Decade of the Mexican Revolution. This period gives rise to a vigorous non-European literature throughout Spanish America, focusing on the poor, peasant, Indian, and black.
- 1917** Publication of Horacio Quiroga's *Cuentos de amor, de locura y de muerte* (Stories of Love, Madness, and Death), Quiroga's best-known collection and a landmark in Spanish American short story.
- 1918** *Urupês* (Bracket Fungus), the first major example of twentieth-century short fiction in Brazil, published by the social reformer José Bento Monteiro Lobato. The Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro propounds his esthetic of *creacionismo*, which in later years he will claim is the forerunner of surrealism.
- 1919** Leopoldo Lugones publishes *Los caballos de Abdera* (The Horses of Abdera).
- 1920** The Peruvian Enrique López Albújar publishes *Cuentos andinos* (Andean Stories).

- 1922** The Semana de Arte Moderna (Modern Art Week) in São Paulo inaugurates literary and artistic modernism in Brazil and contemporary vanguard culture.
- 1926** *Cuentos para una inglesa desesperada* (Stories for a Forlorn English Lady), by Eduardo Mallea, one of Argentina's foremost representatives of existential themes.
- 1929** *Lenita*, the first novel to be published by Jorge Amado, the most famous living fiction writer in Brazil.
- 1934** Mário de Andrade, one of the leading figures of Brazilian modernism, publishes *Os contos de Belazarte* (Stories of Belazarte), reflecting his attempt to compose fiction based on Portuguese spoken in Brazil.
- 1935** *La última niebla* (Last Mist), an early collection of short stories by one of Spanish America's most important women writers, María Luisa Bombal, who after 1944 lived many years in New York.
- 1936–1939** Period of the Spanish Civil War, which has a profound effect on many Latin American writers, most notably, her poets.
- 1937** Getúlio Vargas becomes dictator-president of the authoritarian Estado Novo (New State), Brazil's version of fascism. A despondent, erratic, ill Horacio Quiroga commits suicide.
- 1939–1945** The Second World War isolates South and Central America from Europe economically and culturally. Many trace cultural contemporaneity of this part of the world to the period following the end of the war.
- 1940** Puerto Rico's literary generation of 1940, including René Márques, Pedro Juan Soto, Emilio Díaz Valcárcel, José Luis González, and Luis Rafael Sánchez.
- 1944** Publication of *Ficciones*, (Fictions) perhaps still the most widely known collection by Jorge Luis Borges.
- 1945** The Nobel Prize for literature is awarded to Gabriela Mistral, Chilean poet, the first Latin American to be so honored. A military coup removes Vargas from office in Brazil, and democratic government is restored.

- 1946** João Guimarães Rosa's *Sagarana* (Collection of Sagas) is published, an early example of his fiction of magical realism.
- 1950** Peru's literary generation of the 1950s, including Enrique Congrains Martín, Carlos Zavaleta, and Sebastián Salazar Bondy.
- 1951** Publication of *Un sueño realizado* (A Dream Come True) by Juan Carlos Onetti, an innovator slow to receive appropriate recognition. *Bestiario* (Bestiary) a fantasy collection by the Argentine Julio Cortázar, after Borges the most famous contemporary Latin American *cuentista*.
- 1952** *Confabulario total* (Confabulario and other inventions), a collection of fantastic tales by the Mexican Juan José Arreola.
- 1953** *El llano en llamas* (The Flaming Plain), short stories by the Mexican Juan Rulfo, acknowledged as a master for this collection, and the novel *Pedro Páramo* (1955). Publication of *Los pasos perdidos* (The Lost Steps), the most typical early example of Spanish American magical realism.
- 1954** *Los días enmascarados* (The Masked Days), short stories by Carlos Fuentes, a Mexican writer to become best known for his novels.
- 1955** Following the overthrow of the Peron dictatorship in Argentina, Borges is named Director of the National Library in Buenos Aires.
- 1956** One of Cortázar's most widely distributed collection of stories, *Final del juego* (End of the Game).
- 1960** *Life en español* short story contest elicits submission of 3149 original manuscripts. The existential and protofeminist stories of Clarice Lispector's *Laços de família* (Family ties). Cuban generation of 1960, including Norberto Fuentes, Jesús Díaz Rodríguez, Eduardo Heras León, and Juan Luis Herrero.
- 1961** Borges shares with Samuel Beckett the International Publishers Formentor Prize.

- 1962** Translation into English of Borges's *Ficciones*, opening the decade of the boom in Latin American literature in English translation. Gabriel García Márquez, probably the Latin American prose writer most widely read in English, publishes the stories of *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande* (in English, included in *No One Writes to the Colonel and Other Stories*).
- 1964–1970** *La onda*, (the wave), movement of young Mexican writers, including José Agustín, Gustavo Sainz, Juan To-var, and René Avilés Fabila.
- 1964** The government of João Goulart, amid widespread fears of its leftist policies, is deposed by the military in Brazil; intense violence and abridgment of civil liberties and human rights ensue.
- 1965** *Los mejores cuentos de José Donoso* (The Best Short Stories of José Donoso) a Chilean writer; most of the stories are included in *Charleston & Other Stories*.
- 1967** Miguel Angel Asturias, Guatemalan novelist and short-story writer noted for his mythic and political writing, is awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.
- 1970** *The Cardinal Points of Borges* is a special issue of *Books Abroad* in book form, dedicated to Jorge Luis Borges. Salvador Allende is Chile's first democratically elected marxist president.
- 1971** *Nueva Narrativa Hispanoamericana*, special issue dedicated to the short story. Pablo Neruda, Latin America's most widely translated poet, wins the Nobel Prize for literature. *Review* runs special supplement on the writing of Gabriel García Márquez. *Studies in Short Fiction* dedicated to the Latin American short story.
- 1972** Winter issue of *Review* focuses on Julio Cortázar. Fall issue of *Review* focuses on José Donoso.
- 1973** In Chile, a counter-coup of the military deposes Allende government; Allende dies of suicide, or murder. *Modern Fiction Studies* 19 dedicated to Borges. *Revista Iberoamericana* 39 dedicated to Cortázar.

## *Chronology*

- 1974** Ernesto Geisel assumes presidency in Brazil as first elected president since the 1964 coup.
- 1976** *Books Abroad* 50 dedicated to Julio Cortázar.
- 1977** *Revista Iberoamericana* 43 dedicated to Borges.
- 1980** *Jaula de palabras* (Cage of words), an anthology of fifty-three Mexican short stories edited by Gustavo Sainz. *Review* 27 dedicated to contemporary Chilean literature. *Agua quemada* (Burnt Water), latest collection by Carlos Fuentes. (The stories under this title in English are accompanied by a number from previous collections.)





## Introduction

The twenty-one Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries of Latin America have produced an enormous body of short stories and a number of superb creators of brief fiction, among them, Horacio Quiroga, Julio Cortázar, João Guimarães Rosa, Rubén Darío, Gabriel García Márquez, Juan Rulfo, Machado de Assis, and Jorge Luis Borges (Brazil, of course, is the only Latin American country whose language is Portuguese, but its literary production nearly equals that of the Spanish language countries). Of these, probably the only figure widely recognized in the United States for his short fiction is Borges. Why is the English-language-reading public so little familiar with the work of literally scores of Latin American short story writers? To some degree, the answer may lie in the comparative lack of attention devoted to the form in general in the United States. The principal reasons, however, are undoubtedly more direct. North Americans have been slow to recognize Latin American literature. It is only since the “discovery” of Jorge Luis Borges in the early 1960s, and with the explosion in that decade of the novelists of the Boom—García Márquez, Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and others—that we seemed to realize there was a literature in the vast lands to our south. Slowly, we are beginning to read Latin American poets, although among many gifted figures I suspect that only the name of Pablo Neruda is familiar to the average well-read North American. It goes without saying that language is the principal barrier to our awareness of the Latin American short story. While ideally those tales, stories, and *ficciones* should be read in the language in which they were written, a number of anthologies and an occasional collection of the works of a single author are beginning to appear in English translation. There are, of course, specialists in the short story among scholars of Latin American literature, including Seymour Menton, Luis Leal, and Enrique Pupo-Walker; as Pupo-Walker has noted, the “amazing success achieved by the Hispanic narrative has resulted in an

avalanche of commentaries." In spite of scholarly interest, however, English-language criticism, histories of the genre, and special issues of journals dedicated to the form have been rare. It is to be hoped that the essays in this volume will contribute to the reversal of that trend, and that through them new North American readers will be introduced to a large, varied, and significant body of literature, and that those students already familiar with the writers included here will form additional insights and gain new appreciations of this major Latin American genre.

The appearance of the short story in Latin America closely parallels that of the modern short story in North America. Its influences were largely European (even Poe reached Latin America by way of France) during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although nineteenth-century styles arrived somewhat later and lingered somewhat longer in Latin America than the corresponding movements in Europe. With the advent of modernism—and Latin America had its own versions of this larger phenomenon—Latin American short-story writers began to speak with more authentically indigenous voices. The forms of their fiction, its themes, its modes, became so diverse that since the decade of the 1920s it has been virtually impossible to speak of sharply defined broad movements; rather, there have been regional clusters of authors, loosely knit schools, and individual writers who composed narratives that somehow fit within the genre defined as brief fiction.

Latin America's literatures have traditionally been linked to those of Europe. Its earliest landmarks are the chronicles, those letters and reports sent back to Spain and Portugal by awed, if determined, seekers after gold and souls, the explorers and priests—often one and the same—who relayed to the Old World the real and exaggerated glories of the New. The contemporary novelist and short-story writer Carlos Fuentes has divided the literature of the New World into three periods: the utopian, the epic, and the mythic. The utopian period in Fuentes's classification represents the comparatively brief years of exploration and discovery. Some writers have hazarded that if the New World had not existed, it would, out of Europe's need for it, have been invented; and for a while, this great new continent seemed to promise the opportunities Sir Thomas More had envisioned. The search for Utopia rather quickly evolved into a period that lasted for several centuries, the epic conquest, the colonization, expansion, population, and development of the vast spaces of South and Central America, and Mexico, and even, we should remember, southern and western United States. (The mythic literature Fuentes defines is offered as the only solution to exhausted

epic modes, and its ambience has in recent years given rise to a manner-of-telling referred to as magical realism.) During the long epic process, Latin America was very directly—economically, politically, socially, and literarily—bound to the mother continent. Even as the decadence of Spain and Portugal set in so rapidly on the heels of the conquest, its commanding literary figures dominated seventeenth-century literature in the New World. This European literature realized its culmination as its influence reached the shores of the new continents, which has led to the assessment, and the bizarre conclusion, that the true beginnings of Latin American literature were formed in the last convulsions of an exhausted European baroque expression.

As the world powers of Spain and Portugal declined, Latin America, during a primarily dormant eighteenth century, gradually turned for inspiration to a sister Latin nation, France. During the early years of the nineteenth century, Latin Americans eagerly absorbed French revolutionary ideas. In the political sphere, such influence may be seen as early as 1811 in Paraguay's independence, in 1816 with the declaration of independence from Spain of the United Provinces of La Plata (the southern cone of South America), and in 1922 with Brazilian independence from Portugal, soon to be followed by similar actions throughout the continent. These wars for independence from the mother countries were echoed in the literary rebellion of romanticism, imported directly from France and first observable in narrative in the Argentine and Colombian novels of Jorge Isaacs and José Mármol.

There is general agreement that the Latin American short story was born during this romantic period with the publication of "El matadero" (The slaughtering grounds) by the socially and politically oriented Argentine Esteban Echeverría. As Naomi Lindstrom describes, one may argue that certain fragments from previously published longer narratives bear certain characteristics of and similarities with the short story, but even though "El matadero" does not conform to current definitions of the genre, its composition in the late 1830s is a landmark in the history of short fiction in Spanish. Although its subject matter is searingly realistic, it is clear that it was published during the full flower of romantic influence. In Brazil, David Foster places the initiation of the form at a later date, the 1870s during the second generation of romantics.

Romanticism was a long-lived movement in Latin America, spanning the decades of earliest influence in southern South America, the 1830s and 1840s, and lasting well into the 1860s and 1870s in some countries

and with some writers. Realism and naturalism, whose effect was most strongly felt during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, followed in rapid order, coexisting with the last bastions of romanticism, and often mixed indiscriminately in the same works with romanticism. It is difficult to find in Latin America examples of pure naturalist work; realism was adapted somewhat more effectively, although in these works as well one can often identify sections of high romantic prose, especially in descriptions of nature. It must be stressed that although this schema of European influences is in general accurate, a number of factors makes suspect any absolute correlation between European and American movements. Certain exclusively American realities were not to be denied even in the midst of styles decreed by models from across the seas. Gaucho and Indian cultures, undeniably American social and political truths, branded Latin American literature with their distinctive marks. Some American writers had also assimilated a particularly Spanish brand of romanticism called *costumbrismo*, the depiction of local manners and scenes, and, as in the case of the Peruvian Ricardo Palma, invented their own forms, in his case neither fiction nor fact, but a whimsical blend incorporating local color and folklore. It was, nevertheless, European models who set the stage for the ensuing literary development that was to be considered Latin America's first indigenous movement.

*Modernismo*, as it is now defined, had its beginnings about 1888 and survived as a fairly cohesive movement for some two decades. Many of its characteristics were absorbed from the traditional French sources: the cold measuring eye, the visual perfection of the parnassians; the musical sonority and symbolic vocabulary of the symbolists. *Modernismo* represented an elitist, art-for-art's-sake accord that swept the Spanish American world, and it is a matter of pride that with *modernismo* the traditional direction of literary influences was temporarily reversed: briefly, Spanish America shaped literary tastes in Spain.

*Modernismo* was primarily a movement of poets. Rubén Darío was its principal exponent, the magnetic figure who gave coherence to the movement. This supremely poetic phenomenon produced few prose works, and though a few of Latin America's most important short-story writers were formed by *modernismo*—Horacio Quiroga, Leopoldo Lugones, Darío himself—only in an occasional story such as "La Muerte de la emperatriz de China" (the Death of the Empress of China) do story and form seem to coalesce.

With the modernist movements, the literary histories of Brazil and Spanish America, until that time roughly parallel, began to diverge. Brazilian *modernismo* is more closely allied to the vanguardist movements of the 1920s than to the Spanish American movement whose name it shares, and was emerging at about the time the latter was beginning to ebb. Unlike the earlier Spanish-language version, Brazilian *modernismo* had its origins in the plastic arts, specifically in a 1916 exhibition in São Paulo of German and expressionist and cubist painters. In 1922 this São Paulo group, which included a number of literary figures, sponsored with a similar group from Rio de Janeiro a Modern Art Week in São Paulo; the resulting artistic experimentation soon spread across Brazil. This movement may be less cohesive than its Spanish-language counterpart, and fairly rapidly split into subgroups such as the *antropofagistas* ("cannibals") and the *verdeamarelistas* ("green-yellows," a name derived from the colors of the Brazilian flag). As David Foster points out, this movement, whose members comprise the Generation of 1922, dominated the literary scene in Brazil for some fifty years, culminating in the figure of João Guimarães Rosa.

Similarly, Spanish American literature dating from the end of the modernist period (which is often cited as 1910, but in fact continued for many years after that date) is marked by few definable groups or movements, rather, by continuing waves of conservatism and experimentation.

Horacio Quiroga was the first truly major Spanish American short-story writer. With his first collection of stories in 1917 his position as a premier *cuentista* was established. As John Brushwood notes, Quiroga was the first Spanish American to devote his attention to theory, and his "Decalogue of the Perfect Short Story Writer" today offers interesting insights into his esthetic. As Quiroga was creating his haunted, obsessive tales in Uruguay, conflicting literary currents were swirling across Spanish America. Mexico was suffering the trauma of its Revolution, and the Indian and the *mestizo* became the focus of its art and of its literature as well. This passionately nationalist art was soon to be followed by the cosmopolitan and experimental works of the *contemporáneos* of the 1930s. In fact, during the 1930s vanguardist movements flourished in all of Spanish America, echoing Brazilian *modernismo*, and once again European trends were eagerly sought after. Surrealism inspired a multitude of Spanish American "*ismos*": *cubismo*, *creacionismo*, *ultraísmo*, and *estridentismo*, among others. Contempo-

rary with these universalist trends was the nativist focus of what was perhaps in broadest terms the dominant mood of the 1930s, *criollismo*. A *criollo* was American-born, and the writing consistent with this epithet turned its eyes inward, toward the land and its inhabitants. The result was literature of self-examination and self-identification. The conflicts that Domingo Faustino Sarmiento had posed in 1845 in his essay *Civilización i barbarie* (Civilization and Barbarism) were explored anew through the old polarities of the provincial and the urban, conservatism and progress. The lives of the citizens of South America's great cities were examined in the brilliant, unflattering light of their own social castes, as well as contrasted with the peoples of the vast open spaces of the continent. During the period between the two great wars, as it sought to define its own realities, Latin America shook off and simultaneously absorbed the literary modes of Europe, and for the first time, the great writers of the English language, foremost among them, James Joyce.

By the 1940s Latin America's literatures blended synchronically with world literature. Particularly in southern South America, which was most closely allied with European cultural models, writers delved into the psychological narrative and exhibited the neuroses of European angst. The 1950s and 1960s produced the experimental story, interior monologue, stream of consciousness, new departures in form, the narrative as prose poem, and typographical experimentation. It was during this period that the reputation of Jorge Luis Borges, Latin America's giant among short-story writers, was established. With the 1960s the English-language literary community began to acknowledge the presence of a literature that in fact burst upon them in the form of the Boom. Simultaneously, magical realism, a term imperfectly defined, often controversial, but perhaps Latin America's most authentic literary mode, came into vogue.

The phenomenon of the Boom is due in large part to the "discovery" of Borges by the French in 1961, when he shared the International Publishers Formentor Prize with Samuel Beckett. Following that award, Borges's stories began to appear in English translation, opening the floodgates to a stream of literature that continues unabated until today. Borges changed the shape of literature, and made common a term of his invention—the *ficción*.

The third great *cuenterista* of Latin America, sharing that distinction with Borges and Horacio Quiroga, is the Argentine Julio Cortázar, whom George McMurray accurately describes as a seeker after the

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surrealist absolute. Of a number of internationally recognized writers such as Alejo Carpentier, Jorge Amado, Pablo Neruda, Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, João Guimarães Rosa, César Vallejo, Ernesto Sabato, Octavio Paz, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Juan Rulfo, José Donoso, Osman Lins, José Agustín, Clarice Lispector, Demetrio Aguilera Malta, and a host of lesser recognized younger writers, Cortázar is the most consistently and most essentially a short-story writer.

Since the 1960s Latin America can truly be said to have influenced world literature, and its writers have been recognized as masters of the short story and other genres as well. Although magical realism, a uniquely American movement, typifies the work of many of the authors contained in this study, even it cannot be said to characterize all of Latin American literature. No one manner of telling can satisfactorily define the variety of literatures of Latin America's many nations or its historical periods. Because of the number of countries and races and cultures that have shaped it, the diversity of the Latin American short story is probably unsurpassed.

If a single presence can be identified in such diversity it is that of the hovering figure of Edgar Allan Poe, whose long shadow spreads across the history of the genre in Spanish America, though less perceptibly in Brazil. In his "Decalogue," Horacio Quiroga listed Poe first among his masters, and some of his early stories are transparent recreations of Poe's. With Borges, one again finds Poe's influence in the predominance of the detective story pattern; through much of his intellectual brilliance shines the game of the puzzle, the search, the occult solution. It is significant that the third of the triumvirate, Julio Cortázar, translated into Spanish all of Poe's prose works and frequently refers to Poe in his critical writings on the genre.

Latin America has been extremely receptive to the short story. The essays that follow chart the main currents and the principal figures of the historical mainstream of the Latin American short story, suggesting the outlines of the great depth and breadth of the genre in these lands.

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