

Latin American Literature: My Future Personal Library*

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The love of languages is often accompanied by the need for good literature. As a student of Spanish, I quickly discovered the merits of Latin American writings. Reading has always been and perhaps always will be my favorite pastime. Before coming to Berea College, I had stumbled upon many great authors among the dust covered shelves of my hometown's public library, Sylvia Plath, Zora Neale Hurston, Emily Dickinson, J.R.R. Tolkein, C.S. Lewis, and Mark Twain, for example.

Upon my arrival at Berea College, I was introduced to many distinctive Latin American authors by my professor and adviser, Dr. Margarita Graetzer. I hope someday the works of these authors will be pieces in my personal library. Of these, my favorite author thus far is the Nobel Prize winner from Colombia, Gabriel García Márquez. *Love in the Time of Cholera* captivated me as no other novel has before. Best known for introducing audiences around the world to magical realism, the style of García Márquez has been a delight for me. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* and *Of Love and Other Demons* were also wonderful short stories and I intend to begin his famous *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in the upcoming month.

My start with Latin American literature began with the Pre-Colombian writing *Popol Vuh*, a Mayan oral account recorded after the arrival of Europeans, followed by many excerpts from well-known colonial writers such as Bartolomé de las Casas, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, and Simón Bolívar.

Yet, my most passionate interests lie in the *modernismo* movement. After sampling Reubén Darío, who is known as the father of modernism, I long to someday have read all his works. His poetry is colorful, thought-provoking, and imaginative. Also,

Jorge Luis Borges, a writer from Argentina, is a simply brilliant author whose works, in my opinion, possess a dreamlike quality.

Having read several of Nicolás Guillén's poems, I certainly hope to someday acquire, not only his written works, but also his recorded poetry. Guillén, an intensely famous Afro-Cuban poet, addresses the issues of race, identity, politics, and culture in much of his *poesía negra* (black poetry). Also, the often erotic and very expressive poetry of Uruguayan poet Delmira Agustini, is another set I hope to add to my collection. In my opinion, Agustini should be more recognized by contemporary feminist readers. She wrote about female sexuality in a time when men dominated literature and such subjects were not topics for discussion.

After studying abroad, I became interested in the metaphorical views of Mexico, held by Octavio Paz, another Nobel Prize winner and I hope to someday own his extensive collection of writings, especially *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, a book delving deep into Mexican culture. Furthermore, I am introduced to new authors almost everyday, often recommendations from my Spanish professors or online reviews.

Obviously, I could extend this list for pages and pages. However, each of the mentioned authors possesses qualities which draw me to them. Whether it is a lacking element in my own culture or a genuine desire to better understand the cultures I study, I find Latin American literature fascinating. I already own many peninsular texts, such as *El Cid*, *La Celestina*, and *Don Quijote*, all of which I adore reading. Yet, Latin American literature captivates me in an indescribable fashion and each text leaves me wanting more.

