

American literature in the 20th century assignment

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Colonial literature From the very moment when Europeans encountered the New World, early explorers and conquistadores produced written accounts and crónicas of their experience, such as Columbus's letters or Bernal Díaz del Castillo's description of the conquest of Mexico. At times, colonial practices stirred a lively debate about the ethics of colonization and the status of the indigenous peoples, as reflected for instance in Bartolomé de las Casas's *Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*.

Mestizos and natives also contributed to the body of colonial literature. Authors such as El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and Guaman Poma wrote accounts of the Spanish conquest that show a perspective that often contrasts with the colonizers' accounts. During the colonial period, written culture was often in the hands of the church, within which context Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz wrote memorable poetry and philosophical essays.

Towards the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th, a distinctive criollo literary tradition emerged, including the first novels such as José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *El Periquillo Sarniento* (1816). The "libertadores" themselves were also often distinguished writers, such as Simón Bolívar and Andrés Bello. [edit]Nineteenth-century literature

The 19th century was a period of "foundational fictions" (in critic Doris Sommer's words[citation needed]), novels in the Romantic or Naturalist traditions that attempted to establish a sense of national identity, and which often focused on the indigenous question or the dichotomy of "civilization or barbarism", for which see, say, the Argentine Domingo Sarmiento's *Facundo*

(1845), the Colombian Jorge Isaacs's *Maria*, Ecuadorian Juan Leon Mera's *Cumanda* (1879), or the Brazilian Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertoes* (1902).

Such works are still the bedrocks of national canons, and usually mandatory elements of high school curricula. Another instance of 19th Century Latin American literature is Jose Hernandez's epic poem *Martin Fierro* (1872). The story of a poor gaucho drafted to fight a frontier war against Indians, *Martin Fierro* is an example of the "gauchesque", an Argentine genre of poetry centered around the lives of gauchos. [edit]Modernismo and Boom precursors

In the late 19th century, modernismo emerged, a poetic movement whose founding text was the Nicaraguan Ruben Dario's *Azul* (1888). This was the first Latin American literary movement to influence literary culture outside of the region, and was also the first truly Latin American literature, in that national differences were no longer so much at issue. Jose Marti, for instance, though a Cuban patriot, also lived in Mexico and the USA and wrote for journals in Argentina and elsewhere.

And in 1900 the Uruguayan Jose Enrique Rodo wrote what became read as a manifesto for the region's cultural awakening, *Ariel*. Though modernismo itself is often seen as aestheticist and anti-political, some poets and essayists, Marti among them but also the Peruvians Manuel Gonzalez Prada and Jose Carlos Mariategui, introduced compelling critiques of the contemporary social order and particularly the plight of Latin America's indigenous peoples.

So the early twentieth century also saw the rise of indigenismo, a movement dedicated to representing indigenous culture and the injustices that such communities were undergoing, as for instance with the Peruvian Jose Maria Arguedas and the Mexican Rosario Castellanos. The Argentine Jorge Luis Borges invented what was almost a new genre, the philosophical short story, and would go on to become one of the most influential of all Latin American writers.

At the same time, Roberto Arlt offered a very different style, closer to mass culture and popular literature, reflecting the urbanization and European immigration that was shaping the Southern Cone. Notable figures in Brazil at this time include the exceptional novelist and short story writer Machado de Assis, whose both ironic view and deep psychological analysis introduced a universal scope in Brazilian prose, the modernist poets Mario de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade (whose “ Manifesto Antropofago” praised Brazilian powers of transculturation), and Carlos Drummond de Andrade.

In the 1920s Mexico, the Stridentism and los Contemporaneos represented the influx of avant-garde movements, while the Mexican Revolution inspired novels such as Mariano Azuela’s *Los de abajo*, a committed work of social realism and the revolution and its aftermath would continue to be a point of reference for Mexican literature for many decades. In the 1940s, the Cuban novelist and musicologist Alejo Carpentier coined the term “ lo real maravilloso” and, along with the Mexican Juan Rulfo and the Guatemalan Miguel Angel Asturias, would prove a precursor of the Boom and its signature style of “ magic realism”.