



---

## The Contemporary Scenario of Latin American Literature

Monica S. Rana,  
Purva Kanoongo  
(Research Scholar)

School of Studies in English  
Vikram University, Ujjain, Madhyapradesh, India

---

### Abstract

*This paper has taken up only the latest authors of Latin American literary world that have recently drawn the attention of the world towards them. They still need a close revisiting to their works. Three of these authors have been honored with the most coveted Nobel Prize in literature. The writing of these authors ranges from poetry, essays, short stories, plays, film scripts to the novel including many more genres of literature. These authors are quite different from the authors of the yore and are chiefly available in translations as their native language is Spanish.*

---

### Introduction

It is an attempt to probe into the contemporary Latin American scenario with regard to the literature written particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century. The purpose is to make a close examination of the latest historical and political factors that served as a backdrop to the present literary world of the Latin American literature. Not going far back into the history of colonial Spanish literature or the Spanish language as the mother of the literature of the Spanish speaking Latin American nations, the work is limited to the present scenario of Latin America only and to Columbian, Mexican and the Cuban revolutions in particular that have a great impact on the writings of the modern writers. As per Bell-Villada, Gene H.

### Revisiting work

The Cuban revolution seemed like the dawn of a new era, and intellectuals and artists flocked to display their devotion to the cause. Ernest Hemingway, who lived near

Havana, seemed to join in the spirit briefly.

Jean Paul Sartre soon visited Cuba; Carpenter who had been living in Caracas since 1945 moved back to Havana, and Neruda visited the Island. Very soon García Márquez, Fuentes and Vargas Llosa did so too. The Cuban capital became the hub of Latin American literature of what came to be known as that of the Third World. <sup>1</sup>

Although the writers of the Latin American countries continued writing and acquired marginal fame in translations in the world till 1950 onward, it was during 1975 that a novel trend and dimension was added to the literature. It was realism, experimentalism and publication with novelty in the characters. The modern writers wrote about their surroundings, sufferings of people, dictatorship, massacres, politics and exploitations of people by the power. These are mainly Gabriel García Márquez of Columbia, Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortazar of Argentina, Carlos Fuentes of



Mexico, Mario Vargas Llosa of Peru, Isabel Allende of Chile, José Donoso Yáñez of Chile and José Lezama Lima of Cuba. These authors are the chief components of the Latin American Boom of literature. The Boom was a literary movement of the mid-twentieth century, known as Boom Latino Americano. The movement was chiefly in the hands of the young writers of the Latin America.

Julio Florencio Cortázar was born on 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1914 in Ixelles, Belgium. He basically belonged to Argentina. He is known for his novels, short stories, essays, prose poems and for his translations. He published a collection of sonnets under the pen name Julio Denis in 1938. He has also published a play in 1949 with the title *The King* which had a mythical background. Then in Paris he worked as a translator for the various works of renowned authors like Edgar Allan Poe. His short story collections are *Bestiario*, *Final del juego* and *Las armas secretas*. His collections of stories were translated by Paul Blackburn. The translations occurred with the titles *Blow-up and Other Stories*. His novels include *The Winners*, *Hopscotch*, *62: A Model Kit*, *A Manuel for Manuel* etc. His works also include non-fiction, essays and scripts. He died on 12 of February, 1984.

As a Latin American novelist, essayist, screenplay writer, dramatist and short story writer the reputation of Carlos Fuentes Macías keeps himself from rest of the literary world. He is a prolific writer and has

won many awards for literature. Fuentes, born on November 11, 1928 in Panama City was a Mexican author. Fuentes joined the daily newspaper and began writing short stories. In 1958 he wrote a novel entitled *Where the Air Is Clear* and soon gathered praises. His *Diana: The Goddess Who Hunts Alone* is a novel with the theme of love and its longings. His novels include *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, *Aura*, *The Old Gringo*, *The Good Conscience*, *Terra Nostra*, *Christopher Unborn* etc. He lived in France for two years as ambassador of Mexico. He had many awards to his credit like Biblioteca Breve Award in 1967 for his novel *A Change of Skin*; Xavier Villaurrutia Award for *Terra Nostra* in 1977, honorary doctorate degree in 1983, honorary D. Litt. in 1987 and Prix Formentor in 2011 etc. Fuentes died on May 15, 2012.

One of the boom writers from Chile is José Donoso Yáñez. Born 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1924. he wrote his stories in English. His self imposed exile is said to be the reaction against the dictatorship. During his exile he lived in U.S.A., Mexico and Spain. His well known novels are *Hell Has no Limits*, *Coronation* and *The Obscene Bird of Night*. His book *The Boom in Spanish American Literature: A Personal History* is an account of the literary Boom in the Latin American countries and particularly in Chile. His most appreciated book *Hell Has no Limits* describes a homosexual man with a concubine in a brothel. She gets impregnated through him. The author relates all irrelevant and improbable in the novel.



His themes are that of sexuality, humor, identity and psychology. The novel presented almost a distorted world and situations which have nothing to do with logic. Apart from the novels stated above Donoso has written many fictional memories, articles for magazines and short stories. His novel *Lagartija sin cola* was published posthumously. Donoso died on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1996.

Isabel Allende Llonca, one of the greatest exponents of the boom, was born on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1942 in the capital of Peru, Lima is a Chilean writer. She read much of Shakespeare in her school days. She is a novelist and short story writer. Her novels that brought fame and prosperity to her are *The House of the Spirits* and *City of the Beasts*. Her works are basically written in Spanish and translated into English. She worked as a translator and translated many works from English to Spanish. Her fiction is known to have the element of magical realism as some of the most renowned authors of the Latin American literary scenario. *The House of the Spirits* is written for her dying grandfather and it received a considerable acclaim having the element as mentioned above, that of magical realism. Allende's novel that has the nature of nostalgia and in which she remembers her childhood in Santiago is *Paula* which was published in 1995. The book contains autobiographical elements as a memoir, furnishing true account of her past but as a letter to her beloved daughter only who died of brain damage on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1992.

Still, the book made a record in its commercial circulation both in the continents of Europe and America.

Allende's novels have been translated in many languages from Spanish and are now a treasure of translated Spanish literature. Her novels are also turned into movies and brought proper reputation to her troubled life. Still she kept on writing and is still writing and to her credit, a long list of awards is tacked, like Novel of the Year (Chile, 1983); Author of the Year (Germany, 1984); Book of the Year (Germany, 1984); *Grand Prix d'Evasion* (France, 1984); Feminist of the Year Award, The Feminist; Majority Foundation (United States, 1994); Hans Christian Andersen Literature Award (Denmark, 2012) and many more that are in the line.

José Lezama Lima of Cuba was born on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1910 in Havana. He was a novelist and poet and his importance in Latin American literary world is still saluted. His work displays the glimpses of his autobiography with the themes of homosexuality, solitude, struggle, death and mystery. His highly ornate style is evident in his novel *Paradiso* which was published in 1966. This novel dealt with homosexuality so frankly that it was taken both with awe and joy. At the age of twenty-seven he published a long poem "Muerte de Narciso" bringing him fame and national acclaim. He has written almost seven long poems, many essays, articles and has edited many anthologies of poems. He was not widely travelled yet his works draw images from all



the world and cultures. Almost all his work is in Spanish language translated into different languages. His chief works in poetry are *Muerte de Narciso* (1937); *Enemigo rumor* (1941); *Aventuras sigilosas* (1945); and *Dador* (1960). His novels *Paradiso* (1966) and *Oppiano Licario* (1977) influenced a great number of authors that succeeded him. José Lezama Lima died on 9<sup>th</sup> of August, 1976.

The Nobel laureate Gabriel Jose de la Concordia García Márquez was born in a Columbian town Arcataca on March 6, 1928. His father was Gabriel Eligio García and mother, Luisa Santiago Márquez. His *Collected Stories* include his three collections short storied, namely, *Eyes of a Blue Dog*; *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother* and *Big Mama's Funeral*. Apart from the twenty six short stories in these three volumes, *Strange Pilgrims* contains twelve short stories as a separate volume. All these stories make a labyrinth of situations with various themes that the reader falls short of coming out of them even after having finished them to the end. Most of the stories in the *Strange Pilgrims* deal with the themes of exile and magic. They have the capacity to send a sense of thrill to the reader's spine. The element of irony in these stories can also not be denied. He died on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, 2014.

Mario Vargas Llosa was born in 1936 in Arequipa, Peru. He did his Ph.D. from the University of Madrid, Spain. Llosa is a journalist, novelist, essayist, screenplay

writer and a short story writer. Bestowed with a multifaceted genius for literature Mario Vargas Llosa was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2010. He experimented with the narrative techniques in his novels and is known for his techniques and revolutionary ideas. An unyielding personality Llosa also fought Presidential elections in Peru against Alberto Fujimori in 1990. He kept on writing and produced a plethora of books. His novels are the carriages of his ideas and the surroundings of his country that troubled him. The works of Mario Vargas Llosa include *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, *The Bad Girl*, *The Time of the Hero*, *Death in Andes* and so on. The awards that go to his credit are Nobel Prize in Literature 2010; Premio Biblioteca Breve (1962); National Book Critics Award (1963, 1966); Premio Internacional de Literatura Rómulo Gallegos (1967); Premio Planeta (1993) and Cervantes Prize (1994). Mario Vargas Llosa is healthy and is still writing.

#### Work Cited :

1 Bell-Villada, Gene H. *García Márquez: The Man and His Work*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. 43. Print.