

*Hispanic Literature on Tape**

SHORTLY after recording some of her poems at the Library of Congress, nine years ago, Gabriela Mistral expressed in these words her enthusiastic support of the Library's program for recording poets from the Hispanic world: "I am very much interested in this work of the Library of Congress. Poetry hushed and inert in books fades away or dies. The air, not the printed word, is its natural home. Poetry should not suffer the fate of a stuffed bird. Recordings serve it well."

The celebrated poetess consented to do this recording even in the face of a busy three-day stay in Washington which included the bestowal upon her of the Serra Award by the Academy of American Franciscan History and the transaction of official business in connection with her transfer from Mexico to Italy as a Chilean consular officer.

Ever since 1945, when she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, the Hispanic Foundation in the Library of Congress had been looking forward to an opportunity to record her voice for posterity. Gabriela's graciousness in accepting the invitation to do a chore not contemplated in her pressing schedule insured for future generations (as was dramatically illustrated at the time of her death in January 1957) the enduring presence of her own voice interpreting some of her poems. That recording of the poetess is the only one extant, and is all the more remarkable when we consider that Gabriela was not known to have read her poetry in public—not even when she, an unknown school teacher, was expected to do so at a ceremony in 1914 that catapulted her into fame as the winner of an unprecedented national poetry prize.

Indicating that she was aware of the fortuitous circumstances that had made possible her recording at the Library on December 14, 1950, Gabriela added the following remark: "But this effort to liberate poetry from the limitations of the printed word must be comprehensively undertaken. Let us bear in mind that not

all of us have the opportunity to pass through Washington. The best of our poets do not leave their Latin American homes. . . ."

The advice implied in the warning quoted above did not escape the Library's attention. It was realized that haphazard recording could not lay the foundations for a well-balanced collection. In the seven years that had elapsed between the first poet's recording and Gabriela's visit the Hispanic Foundation had succeeded in assembling the readings of only eight poets. So limited a group could not properly constitute a "collection," much less an "archive," notwithstanding the importance of each individual: Andrés Eloy Blanco from Venezuela; Pablo de Rokha, Winett de Rokha, and Gabriela Mistral from Chile; Jaime Torres Bodet from Mexico; and Eduardo Marquina, Pedro Salinas, and Juan Ramón Jiménez from Spain. It is saddening to reflect that all but two of them are no longer alive.¹ However, it is a consolation to know that owing to their visits to the Library their mortal voices have not faded into utter silence.

In the years 1951-54 32 poets were added. They represented not only the Spanish language but Catalan, French, and Portuguese. Twenty-four of these additions were recorded abroad (in Madrid, Barcelona, Port-au-Prince, Rio de Janeiro, and Caracas) with the cooperation of United States public affairs and cultural officers.²

There followed a period of relative inactivity in the development of the collection, owing partly to the need for determining the role of an archive of this type in the Library's program of Hispanic acquisitions and services as a whole. A careful examination of the problem, which

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¹ Marquina died in 1946; Salinas in 1951; Winett de Rokha in 1951; Blanco in 1955; Mistral in 1957; and Jiménez in 1958.

² Francisco Aguilera, "Iberian and Latin American Poetry on Records," *QJCA*, XIV (February 1957), 51-54.

included canvassing expert opinion within and outside the Library, led to the conclusion that a project with well-defined scope would be desirable. The materials accumulated since 1943 were acknowledged to be unique and of the highest quality, as evidenced by the recordings of the two Hispanic Nobel laureates of our day, Gabriela Mistral (recorded five years after she won the prize) and Juan Ramón Jiménez (recorded seven years before he received the same international distinction). Scholars, creative writers, librarians, educators, publishers, and other users of the Library's materials were unequivocal in their high regard for the incipient collection and its possibilities.

THE 1958 PILOT PROJECT

In 1958 the Library evolved a viable project for a well-integrated collection of Hispanic literature on tape. The term "literature" was selected so as to include writings in either verse or prose noteworthy for their aesthetic value. With the aid of a generous grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, a pilot project was undertaken in the fall of the same year.

The salient feature of the project was that the Library commission a member of its staff (in this instance, the writer) to visit four countries of South America (Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay) for the purpose of obtaining recordings on magnetic tape of selections read expressly for the Library by outstanding literary figures. These readings (as many as could reasonably be obtained in a three-month period) were to be incorporated in the permanent collections as a contribution to the establishment of an Archive of Hispanic Literature on Tape.

The decision to send a representative abroad seemed to solve the problem suggested by Gabriela Mistral's reminder that not all of the poets have the opportunity to pass through Washington.

In the three-month period, 68 writers were recorded. Their distribution was as follows: Argentina, 20; Chile, 11; Peru, 21; and Uruguay, 16. Seven of the writers met in Argentina are not Argentines: two Peruvians, one Cuban, one Dominican, one Guatemalan, one Paraguayan, and one Spaniard. One of the writers recorded in Montevideo is a Salvadorean.

The criteria of selection were as objective as it is possible in this realm of activity. They were primarily based on the recognition accorded to each writer (poet, novelist, short-story writer, or essayist) at home and abroad by critics, professors of literature, publishers, translators, textbook editors, award committees, motion picture directors, and the like. Experience gained by the Hispanic Foundation indicated that it was best to consider first those authors whose printed works are acquired comprehensively in response to scholarly demand. The selection of writers reflected the professional responsibilities of subject specialists, acquisition officers, and bibliographers. The Library's representative availed himself of the vast amount of information collected in the Hispanic Foundation and supplemented it in the field with factual reports from various sources.

The results accomplished would not have been possible without the unreserved cooperation of the writers themselves, as a group, or groups, and as individuals. Since no honorarium was offered to any participant, success depended on the writers' recognition of the program's soundness and merit. The criteria of selection and the Library's observance of literary rights were explained to each participant, to each cooperating institution, and to inquiring reporters. The program had a favorable press; influential persons assisted the Library's agent in locating writers and solving problems of transportation; literary societies, national libraries, and university departments lent their moral support and furnished office space and telephone-answering services; local recording studios offered their facilities without charge. The project became literally a cooperative undertaking.

One powerful reason for such enthusiastic response was a fact which was made widely known by personal contacts and through the press and radio, that the Library had recorded 40 poets of distinction prior to 1958. Names such as Mistral and Jiménez are symbols with well-defined meaning in Hispanic America. Literary people were deeply impressed when they listened to a longplaying record, not yet ready for distribution at the time, containing the late Pedro Salinas' reading of *El Contemplado* (from the Library's pre-1958 collection,

published under the joint auspices of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and the Library of Congress).³

We have so far mentioned the assistance rendered by the nationals of each country visited. To it must be added—and it was a vitally important addition—the cooperation of the United States Information Agency. In each capital this agency helped the project with its facilities and prestige to the extent it was needed. An indication of this is the fact that 36 of the 68 tape recordings brought back to Washington were made in the USIA studios functioning in the respective American embassies.

The recording was done in local studios, at no cost to the project—in Argentina, at Municipal Radio and the USIA; in Chile, at the Institute of Musical Extension of the University of Chile, and the USIA; in Peru, at National Radio in Lima, the Peruvian-United States Cultural Institute in Cuzco, and the USIA; and in Uruguay, at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of the Republic, the state-owned SODRE, Radio El Espectador, and the USIA.

One non-Hispanic language was added to the collection during the trip to South America. This was Quechua, the official language of the late Inca Empire. A Peruvian poet who has revitalized Quechua as a literary instrument recorded several poems he has written in the original Indian language and in a splendid Spanish translation. A special trip to Cuzco was made for this purpose. When this recording is made available to the public, Dr. Andrés Alencastre, well-known as a Quechua scholar but hardly known as a poet even in Peru, may take his place as a literary giant.

PRESENT HOLDINGS AND FUTURE PLANS

Prior to 1958 the Library had recorded forty poets, the collection then being devoted exclusively to poetry. The languages represented were Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan (as spoken in Catalonia and kindred linguistic areas), and French (from Haiti). As a consequence of the joint Hispanic Foundation-Rockefeller Foundation pilot project the number of writers rose to a total of 108, prose fiction and essays were added to poetry and an American Indian lan-

guage with a formal literary tradition joined the Indo-European languages.

The 1958 trip increased the holdings as follows: Argentine writers, from one to 14; Chilean, from four to 15; Peruvian, from zero to 23; and Uruguayan, from zero to 15. The non-Argentines recorded in Buenos Aires and the one Salvadorean recorded in Montevideo increased the archive thus: Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Paraguay, from zero to one; and Spain from 17 to 18.

As for the areas not listed above, the situation at present is: six are not represented at all (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Portugal, and Puerto Rico); four are represented by one writer each (Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua); two by four writers each (Brazil and Venezuela); and one by seven writers (Haiti). The Portuguese language, with four recordings, lags behind Spanish (87), Catalan (9) and French (7). Of Quechua there is one.⁴

From the above it can be seen that the vast Hispanic world is still far from being adequately represented in the archive. However, with the continued cooperation of the Rockefeller Foundation the Library is fortunate to be in a position to plan two more recording expeditions, one in 1960 and the other before July 1961. At the same time, some work to fill gaps in the collection can be done at the Library, whenever occasion arises that Washington is visited by a leading writer from the Iberian Peninsula or Latin America.

³ Pedro Salinas, *El Contemplado*. Poema leído por su autor el 24 diciembre de 1946 en la Biblioteca del Congreso (Washington, D. C.) para el Archivo de Poesía de la Fundación Hispánica en la misma institución. Edición patrocinada por el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña y la Biblioteca del Congreso.

A twelve-inch longplaying disc accompanied by a 43-page text. The text, with introduction and notes by Juan Marichal and illustrations by Carlos Marichal, was published in 1959 by the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. The disc and booklet, in a limited edition, are distributed by the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, Apartado 4148, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

⁴ Two more recordings were made in Washington in 1958–59, bringing the total as of now to 110. The speakers were Guillermo de Torre and Salvador de Madariaga, both Spaniards living respectively in Argentina and England.

Parallel with continuing acquisitions such as those envisaged in the next two years, special attention will be given to meeting the growing demands from scholars, educators, and lovers of Hispanic literature in general. Requests come in regularly from individuals and institutions (particularly, in the latter case, from the foreign language institutes functioning under the National Defense Education Act) for the loan or sale of tapes in the collection. To meet this demand it will be necessary to enter into arrangements with the writers themselves or, in the case of those no longer alive, with their executors. It is expected also that the example set by the Institute of Puerto Rican Literature and the Library of Congress when they issued a long-playing disc of the late Pedro Salinas' *El Contemplado* may be followed by other nonprofit organizations. Similarly, there is hope that commercial enterprises may follow the steps of the New York publisher who contracted with Gabriela Mistral and Jiménez before their deaths for the eventual publication of their recordings in disc form.

THE RECENT ACQUISITIONS

The following summary of the 68 recordings added in the fall of 1958 to the Archive of Hispanic Literature on Tape offers basic information on each of the participants.⁵

Recorded in Argentina

Thirteen Argentines and seven writers of other nationalities participated. Unless otherwise indicated the nationality is Argentine.

ENRIQUE BANCHS (born in 1888). Poet; required reading in United States colleges. His undisputed place among the principal Argentine poets of this century rests on four books published between 1907 and 1911. Since then he has remained silent; time and again he has refused offers to bring out new editions of his works. His willingness to record for the Library agreeably surprised Buenos Aires literary circles. This recording is a priceless document.

JORGE LUIS BORGES (1899). Poet, short-story writer, essayist. Director of the National Library, professor of northern European literatures at the University of Buenos Aires. One of the world's great living writers; required read-

ing in United States colleges. His short stories are being widely translated in Europe and the United States. He read a score of poems written between 1923 and 1958.

ARTURO CAPDEVILA (1889). Poet, essayist, university professor. Recipient of the National Prize for Literature in 1920 and 1922. Handicapped by failing eyesight, he contented himself with giving an informal account of his half-century of poetry writing. His wife read a cross section of his poems.

LUIS L. FRANCO (1898). Poet, essayist. Recipient of the National Prize for Literature, 1941. He read poems inspired by nature and man in the Catamarca region.

MANUEL GÁLVEZ (1882). Novelist, essayist. Corresponding member of the Spanish Academy. Recipient of the National Prize for Literature, 1932. Twice formally proposed for the Nobel Prize. Required reading in United States colleges; one of the most widely translated Latin American novelists. He read excerpts from a novel, a biographical essay, and poems (some still unpublished).

ROBERTO F. GIUSTI (1887). Critic, essayist, university professor, and cofounder of the literary monthly *Nosotros* (1907-43). He read passages from his memoirs.

ENRIQUE LARRETA (1875). Novelist, poet, diplomat. Author of *La gloria de Don Ramiro*, considered one of the best historical novels in the language; required reading in United States colleges; widely translated. He read the opening pages of this novel and a dozen sonnets.

EDUARDO MALLEA (1903). Novelist, essayist, editor of the literary supplement of *La Nación*. Recipient of the "Gran Premio de Honor" of the Sociedad Argentina de Escritores (SADE), 1946. Widely translated; required reading in United States colleges. He read a short story, excerpts from one of his novels, and an autobiographical sketch.

RICARDO E. MOLINARI (1898). Poet, counselor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. National Poetry Prize, 1958.

CONRADO NALÉ ROXLO (1898). Poet, short-story writer, playwright. Recipient of the National Drama Prize, 1941. Required reading

⁵ For data on the poets represented in the collection before 1958 see *QJCA*, XIV (February 1957), 51-54.

in United States colleges. He read selected poems and a short story.

VICTORIA OCAMPO (1891). Essayist, founder and editor of the literary journal *Sur*, published since 1931. "Gran Premio de Honor" of SADE, 1950. One of the most influential promoters and supporters of literary activity in the history of Argentina. She read autobiographical selections.

ALFREDO L. PALACIOS (1880). Jurist, essayist, orator. Formerly dean of law at Buenos Aires and La Plata national universities and rector of the latter; senator, ambassador to Uruguay. He read an especially prepared "message to the university students of Latin America."

HORACIO E. RATTI (1908). Poet, critic, director of the Buenos Aires Municipal Radio. Former president of SADE. He read a selection of published and unpublished poems.

XAVIER ABRIL, Peruvian (1905). Poet, cultural attaché at large for the River Plate countries.

RAFAEL ALBERTI, Spaniard (1902). With Jiménez and Salinas gone, he is probably Spain's most celebrated poet. Buenos Aires has been his home since 1940. He read a 30-minute selection of poems from one of his most admired books, *Sobre los ángeles*, to be issued in 1959 in a deluxe Buenos Aires edition honoring the thirtieth anniversary of its publication in Madrid.

MIGUEL ANGEL ASTURIAS, Guatemalan (1899). Novelist, poet, diplomat. His novels and verse have been translated into French. He read selected poems, including some "Indian messages" published in 1958 in Paris in a bilingual edition.

MANUEL DEL CABRAL, Dominican (1907). Poet widely known in Latin America and Europe.

NICOLÁS GUILLÉN, Cuban (1904). Spanish America's leading exponent of poetry on Afro-Antillean themes. Required reading in United States colleges; widely translated.

ALBERTO HIDALGO, Peruvian (1897). Immensely gifted poet and stormy polemicist. He read selected poems.

AUGUSTO ROA BASTOS, Paraguayan (1917). Novelist and short-story writer. He was about to depart for Paraguay to assist an Argentine motion picture company in the filming of a

bestseller of his which has for its background the war between Paraguay and the Triple Alliance. He read a short story.

Recorded in Chile

All participants were Chileans.

JULIO BARRENECHEA (1910). Poet, former ambassador to Colombia. An edition of his complete poems was published at Quito in 1958 by the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana.

EDUARDO BARRIOS (1884). Novelist, director of the National Library, former Minister of Education. Recipient of the National Prize for Literature, 1946. Required reading in United States colleges. He read excerpts from his widely translated novel, *El hermano asno*.

MARTA BRUNET (1901). Short-story writer, retired consular officer. Required reading in United States colleges. She talked extemporaneously on the art of short-story writing.

ANGEL CRUCHAGA SANTA MARÍA (1893). Poet. Recipient of the National Prize for Literature, 1948. To solve the problem presented by his failing eyesight, he discussed his various books; and his wife read his most characteristic poems.

HERNÁN DÍAZ ARRIETA, equally known by his pseudonym "Alone" (1891). Critic, essayist. Chile's most influential professional book reviewer during the past 40 years. He was given a grant by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1958 to edit the unpublished poetry of the late Gabriela Mistral. Recipient of the National Prize for Literature, 1959. He read an autobiographical sketch especially prepared for this occasion, and an essay on Gabriela Mistral.

DIEGO DUBLÉ URRUTIA (1877). Poet, retired diplomat. Early in the century he attained renown with two books published in 1898 and 1903. For several decades he lived abroad as a foreign service officer, disappearing from the literary scene. Back in Chile, he gathered into a single volume his two early books and a few additional poems written during 1905-52, published it in 1953, and had a resounding success, all the more dramatic since many people were not aware that he was still living. Finally in 1958 he was awarded the National Prize for Literature. He recorded a selection of poems with extemporaneous comments.

JOAQUÍN EDWARDS BELLO (1888). Novelist, newspaper columnist. Recipient of the Na-

tional Prize for Literature, 1943. He read an especially prepared paper on his native city, Valparaíso, and fragments from his novel *El roto*, a Chilean classic.

JOSÉ SANTOS GONZÁLEZ VERA (1897). Novelist, essayist, retired Secretary General of the Chilean Commission on Intellectual Cooperation. Recipient of the National Prize for Literature, 1950. He read excerpts from an essay on the writer's experience.

MANUEL ROJAS (1896). Novelist, short-story writer, retired Director of the University of Chile Press. Recipient of the National Prize for Literature, 1957. Widely translated; required reading in United States colleges. He read two short stories.

BENJAMÍN SUBERCASEAUX (1902). Novelist, essayist, Director of the Department of Cultural Relations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Three of his books have been translated into English. He read selected passages from his works.

JUVENCIO VALLE (1907). Poet, division chief in the National Library. He read selected poems inspired by his native South.

Recorded in Peru

All participants were Peruvians.

MARTÍN ADÁN (1908). Poet. He has lived as a recluse for the last ten years owing to failing health. Literary inactivity has not prevented the growth of his prestige and influence as a significant force. Literary circles were elated over his acceptance of the invitation to record some of his poems.

ANDRÉS ALENCASTRE (1910). Poet, professor of Quechua language and literature at the University of Cuzco. "The most important exponent of Quechua literature since the eighteenth century." He recorded several of his poems in the official language of the Inca Empire, followed by his own Spanish translations and with musical interludes played by him on the traditional Indian flute called *quena*.

LUIS FELIPE ANGELL, pseudonym "Sofocleto" (about 1920). A celebrated humorist whose column in a leading Lima paper is a unique feature in Peruvian journalism. Some time after he recorded a witty essay purporting to be a philosophical discussion he won a sizable prize in Lima for the best unpublished Peruvian novel.

JORGE BASADRE (1903). Historian, essayist, Minister of Education, former Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs in the Pan American Union. He read a chapter from his scholarly and engagingly written study about the Count of Lemos.

JOSÉ LUIS BUSTAMANTE I RIVERO (1894). Essayist, poet, jurist, former President of Peru. He read a prose description of Peru which has become a classic, as well as a few poems.

MARIANO IBERICO (1892). Dean of Peruvian philosophy, essayist. He read a series of prose sketches depicting the Peruvian sierra.

ENRIQUE LÓPEZ ALBÚJAR (1872). Novelist, short-story writer, retired judge. The undisputed father of Indianist prose fiction as practiced in the insurgent thirties and forties. Required reading in United States colleges. He read one of his best-known stories.

RAÚL PORRAS BARRENECHEA (1897). Historian, essayist, Minister of Foreign Affairs. He read an essay on the chroniclers of colonial Peru.

AMALIA PUGA DE LOSADA (1866). Poet and short-story writer. Early in the century a selection of her poems was published in Spain in a publisher's series of "best works in the Spanish language." She read both prose and verse.

FERNANDO ROMERO (1904). Short-story writer, Rector of the University of Ayacucho. He first became noted for his stories of life in the Amazonian region of Peru. He read a story from a book recently published in Chile, dealing with the life of South Americans in New York City.

LUIS ALBERTO SÁNCHEZ (1900). Literary historian, essayist, former Rector of the University of San Marcos, professorial lecturer at American and European universities. He read selections from a book then in press in Buenos Aires.

ALBERTO URETA (1885). Poet, one of the great figures of the Modernist movement in the history of Spanish American literature, a lone survivor of a memorable period. Required reading in United States colleges. He read selected poems.

A brilliant group of nine poets, five of whom have won important prizes, also recorded for the Library's Archive: César Miró (1907), Julio Garrido Malaver (1909), Luis Nieto (1910), Juan Ríos (1914), Javier Sologuren

(1921), Sebastián Salazar Bondy (1924), Alejandro Romualdo (1926), Washington Delgado (1927), and Alberto Escobar (1929).

Recorded in Uruguay

All participants but one were Uruguayans.

VICENTE BASSO MAGLIO (1889). Poet, editor of *El Espectador*. In his thirties and early forties he made a significant contribution to the important body of Uruguayan post-Modernist poetry.

ESTHER DE CÁCERES (1903). Poet, physician, professor of literature at the University of the Republic. Recipient of prizes from the Ministry of Education, 1933, 1939, 1941.

ENRIQUE CASARAVILLA LEMOS (about 1890). Poet. For very many years withdrawn from virtually all social contacts, he was gracious enough to accept the Library's invitation. Unpublished verse of the last decade was represented in the selection he recorded with consummate art.

EMILIO FRUGONI (1880). Poet, law professor, political leader. The revered author of civic and social poems of enduring esthetic quality, he selected compositions from most of his books and some that have appeared lately in literary periodicals.

PEDRO LEANDRO IPUCHE (1889). Poet, short-story writer. One of the leaders of the movement called Nativism in Uruguay. He read some poems and brief stories.

ADOLFO MONTIEL BALLESTEROS (1888). Short-story writer, novelist. One of the masters of *criollismo* in fiction, he possesses a salutary dose of humor. Recipient of folklore and literature prizes from the Ministry of Education. Noted also for his contribution to juvenile literature. He read selected stories.

EMILIO ORIBE (1893). Poet, professor of philosophy, university dean. He typifies the reaction against the exoticism of the belated Modernists and has developed a philosophical

brand of poetry that has found no imitators.

CARLOS SABAT ERCASTY (1887). Poet, professor of literature. Recipient of the Ministry of Education prize, 1930. A major figure of Spanish-American poetry.

FERNÁN SILVA VALDÉS (1887). Poet, university professor. Recognized as the highest exponent of Nativism in poetry. A radio headliner as a reciter of his own poems. Author of the lyrics of popular songs widely known through records. Recipient of the National Poetry Prize, 1925. Translated into several languages. He read some of his most memorable compositions, making illuminating comments.

JUSTINO ZAVALA MUNIZ (1898). Novelist, member of the National Council of Government. Famous for his historical novels portraying the period of armed conflict among political chieftains in the late nineteenth century. He read a chapter from *Crónica de la reja*.

ALBERT ZUM FELDE (1890). Literary historian, essayist, former Director of the National Library. Professorial lecturer in various American countries. Author of a literary history of Uruguay (1930) which stands as the most noteworthy achievement in the field and of a similar work covering the whole of Spanish America, the second volume of which came out in Mexico in 1959. He read a chapter from the first volume of the latter work.

CLARIBEL ALEGRÍA, native of El Salvador (1926). Poet. Has published three warmly acclaimed books of verse in Mexico and Chile.

Four "younger" Uruguayan poets were recorded, representing new trends in a country noted for some of the highest achievements in Spanish-American poetry. They are distinct personalities whose poetic genius is matched by their perseverance and skill. They are: Roberto Ibáñez (1907), winner of the National Poetry Prize in 1939; and Sara de Ibáñez, Clara Silva, and Juan Cunha (all three born about 1910).

FRANCISCO AGUILERA

The Hispanic Foundation

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