

The Archive of Hispanic Literature on Tape

A Descriptive Guide

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Introduction

Shortly after Gabriela Mistral recorded some of her poems at the Library of Congress on December 14, 1950, she expressed her enthusiastic support for the Library's program of recording poets from the Hispanic world. Indicating that she was aware of the fortuitous circumstances that had made possible her recording at the Library, she added the following remark: "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 this opportunity to pass through Washington. The best of our poets do not leave their Latin American homes."

Ever since 1945, when Gabriela Mistral 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. She graciously accepted the invitation, despite her policy of not reading her poetry in public. The Library's recording of the Chilean poet is the only one extant.

It was then realized that haphazard recording could not lay the foundation for a well-balanced collection. In the seven years that had elapsed between the first poet's recording and Gabriela Mistral's of only eight poets. So limited a group could not properly constitute a "collection," much less an "archive," notwithstanding the importance of each individual. The first group consisted of Andrés Eloy Blanco (Venezuela), who recorded in 1943; Pablo de Rokha and Winett de Rokha (Chile) in 1944; Eduardo Marquina and Pedro Salinas (Spain) in 1946; Jaime Torres Bodet (Mexico) in 1949; Juan Ramón Jiménez (Spain) in 1949; and Gabriela Mistral (Chile) in 1950. Most of these poets are no longer alive; thus it is fortunate that, owing to their visits to the Library of Congress, their voices have not faded into utter silence.

Pedro Salinas, one of the eight poets who initiated the collection, contributed a reading of *El contemplado* in the Recording Laboratory of the Library of Congress on December 24, 1946. Five years later, on December 19, 1951, *El contemplado* was transmitted by radio to Puerto Rico on the day of the poet's burial in San Juan. A 12-inch long playing disc of *El contemplado* was published in 1959 by the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, in San Juan, with the collaboration of the Library's Recording Laboratory. The disc was accompanied by a 43-page text, with introduction and notes by Juan Marichal and illustrations by Carlos Marichal.

In the years 1951-54, 32 poets were added. They represented not only the Spanish or Castilian language but also Catalan, the ancient romance language of a territory of northeastern Spain; Portuguese, the language of Portugal and Brazil; and French, the language of Haiti. These additions were made possible by the generous cooperation of United States public and cultural affairs officers at posts abroad. Their efforts resulted in a collection of readings in a variety of languages from the Iberian Peninsula and the New World.

During these years, poets recorded their work in the following cities:

Madrid, 1951 (Spanish): Vicente Aleixandre, Gerardo Diego, and Leopoldo Panero
 Barcelona, 1951 (Catalan): Clementina Arderiu, J. F. Foix, Tomás Garcés, Josep Maria López-Pico, Marià Manent, Carlos Riba, Josep Maria de Sagarra, and Joan Teixidor.

Lisbon, 1951 (Portuguese): Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, João de Barros, Julio Dantas, and Adolfo Casais Monteiro.

Port-au-Prince, 1951-52 (French): René Bélance, Jean F. Brierre, Roussan Camille, Luc Grimard, Dominique Hippolyte, Léon Laleau, and F. Morisseau-Leroy.

Rio de Janeiro, 1953 (Portuguese): Manuel Bandeira, Ascenso Ferreira, and Jorge de Lima.

Caracas, 1954 (Spanish): Rafael Olivares Figueroa and Manuel Rodríguez Cárdenas.

There followed a period of relative inactivity in the development of the collection, owing partly to the need for clarifying the role of an archive of this type in the Library's program of Hispanic acquisitions and reference services. A careful examination of the problem, which included canvassing expert opinion within and outside the Library, led to the conclusion that a project with a 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 such outstanding literary figures as Gabriela Mistral, and Juan Ramón Jiménez. Scholars, creative writers, librarians, educators, publishers, and other users of the Library's materials were unequivocal in their high regard for the developing collection and its possibilities.

In 1958 the Library evolved a program for a well-integrated collection of noteworthy Hispanic literature – either verse or prose – on tape. With the aid of a generous grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, a pilot project was undertaken in the same year, September to December inclusive. The salient feature of the project was that the Library commissioned the curator of the Archive, Francisco Aguilera, to visit Peru, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay and obtain recordings on magnetic tape expressly for the Library of Congress. The decision to send a representative abroad seemed to solve the problem suggested by Gabriela Mistral's reminder that not all Latin American writers have the opportunity to pass through Washington.

Mission No. 1

In the three-month period of what became known as Mission No. 1, 68 writers were recorded. The first stop was Peru. All of the writers recorded there were Peruvians. Martín Adán, Andrés Alencastre, Washington Delgado, Alberto Escobar, Julio Garrido Malaver, César Miró, Luis Nieto, Juan Ríos, Alejandro Romualdo, Sebastián Salazar Bondy, Javier Sologuren, and Alberto Ureta recorded poems. Luis Felipe Angell, Enrique Albújar, and Fernando Romero read prose. The sole woman in this group, Amalia Puga de Losada, recorded

prose fiction as well as poems. José Luis Bustamante i Rivero, Jorge Basadre, Mariano Ibérico, Raúl Porras Barrenechea, and Luis Alberto Sánchez chose to record essays for the Archive.

All the writers recorded in Santiago were Chilean. Julio Barrenechea, Ángel Cruchaga Santa María, Diego Dublé Urrutia, and Juvencio Valle read selections from their poetry. Eduardo Barrios, Marta Brunet, Joaquin Edwards Bello, José Santos, González Vera, Manuel Rojas, and Benjamin Subercaseaux recorded from their novels, and Hernán Díaz Arreta recorded essays.

The next stop was Buenos Aires, where 13 Argentines and seven writers of other nationalities were recorded. Enrique Banchs, Jorge Luis Borges, Arturo Capdevila, Luis L. Franco, Ricardo E. Molinari, and Horacio E. Ratti were the Argentine poets who recorded.

Eduardo Mallea read portions from several novels. Conrado Nalé Roxlo, the well-known playwright, chose poetry and a short story. The Argentine essayists include Roberto F. Giusti, Victoria Ocampo, and Alfredo L. Palacios.

Two Peruvians, Alberto Hidalgo and Xavier Abril, recorded poems in Buenos Aires. Other foreign writers added in Buenos Aires were Miguel Ángel Asturias (Guatemala), Rafael Alberti (Spain), Manuel del Cabral (Dominican Republic), Nicolás Guillén (Cuba), and the only Paraguayan author represented in the Archive, Augusto Roa Bastos.

In Montevideo the Library's representative recorded the following Uruguayan writers: Vicente Basso Maglio, Esther de Cáceres, Enrique Casaravilla, Emilio Frugoni, Emilio Oribe, Carlos Sabat Ercasty, Fernán Silva Valdés, Pedro Leandro Ipuche, Justino Zavala Muniz, Adolfo Montiel Ballesteros, Alberto Zum Felde, Roberto Ibáñez, Sara de Ibáñez, Clara Silva, and Juan Cunha. The Salvadorean poet Claribel Alegria was also added here to the collection.

Mission No. 2

The continued cooperation of the Rockefeller Foundation made possible a second acquisitions mission, which took place during September and November 1960. The countries visited were Panama, Guatemala, and Mexico.

In Panama City the poetry participants were Ricardo J. Bermúdez,

Ana Isabel Illueca, María Olimpia de Obaldía, and Stella Sierra. Joaquin Beleño, César A. Candanedo, Manuel Ferrer Valdés, Ramón H. Jurado, José Maria Nuñez, and Gil Blas Tejeira recorded prose fiction. Mario Augusto Rodriguez recorded poems and prose, and Baltasar Isaza Calderón, essays.

In Guatemala City, the second stop, the program's collaborators were Rafael Arévalo Martínez, Flavio Herrera, Francisco Méndez, Antonio Morales Nadler, Werner Ovalle López, Carlos Samayoa Aguilar, Carlos Girón Cerna, Pedro Pérez Valenzuela, Virgilio Rodríguez Macal, Carlos Amayoa Chinchilla, and Ricardo Castañeda Paganini.

Cosmopolitan Mexico City contributed to the Archive recordings of 21 native-born writers and five of other nationalities. The Mexicans included Ali Chumacero, Jaime García Terrés, José Gorostiza, Marco Antonio Montes de Oca, Jaime Torres Bodet, Juan José Arreola, Sergio Galindo, Xavier Icaza, Juan Rulfo, Rafael F. Muñoz, Agustín Yañez, Arturo Arnáiz y Freg, Daniel Cosío Villegas, José Luis Martínez, Francisco Monterde, Jesús Silva Herzog, Antonio Castro Leal, Edmundo O'Gorman, Ignacio Chávez, Angel María Garibay, and Andrés Henestrosa. Henestrosa recorded poems in the Zapotec language and prose fiction and selections from his memoirs in Spanish.

The foreign-born writers were Germán Pardo García (Colombia), Ernesto Cardenal and Ernesto Mejía Sánchez (Nicaragua), and the Spaniards Agustí Barta and Ramón Xirau.

Mission No. 3

The third Library of Congress-Rockefeller Foundation expedition took place during April-June 1961 and covered Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. The Ecuadorian phase centered in Quito. In the limited time available, it was possible to meet a cross section of the leading writers of the country. The voices added to the Archive were those of Miguel Ángel Zambrano, Alejandro Carrión, José Alfredo Llerena, Francisco Tobar, August Arias, Jorge Icaza, Jorge Fernández, Gonzalo Zaldumbide, Fernando Chaves, Benjamin Carrión, Jaime Chaves, and Galo René Pérez.

The mission then proceeded to Bogotá to record 19 Colombians and one Spaniard: José Manuel Caballero Bonald (Spain), Eduardo Carranza, Fernando Charrá Lara, Eduardo Cote Lamus, Jorge Gaitán Durán, Andrés Holguín, Carlos Martín, Rafael Maya, Héctor Rojas Herazo, José Umaña Bernal, Juan Lozano y Lozano, Hernando Téllez, Eduardo Caballero Calderón, Fernando Antonio Martínez, Alberto Miramón, Joaquín Pineros Corpas, Ramón de Zubiria, Luis López de Mesa, Félix Restrepo, and José Manuel Rivas Sacconi.

In Caracas, the last phase of the journey, 11 Venezuelans, one Ecuadorian, and one Chilean read selections for the Archive: Carlos Augusto León, Jorge Carrera Andrade (Ecuador), Juan Liscano, José Ramón Medina, Fernando Paz Castillo,

Rafael Pineda, Ramón Díaz Sánchez, Guillermo Meneses, Arturo Usler Pietri, Pedro Pablo Bar-nola, Manuel Eduardo Hübner (Chile), and Augusto Mijares.

An extemporaneous discussion between two Chilean historians, Francisco Antonio Encina and Leopoldo Castedo, recorded in Santiago some time after the Library's representative had visited Chile, was incorporated into the Archive in 1961. The following writers have read selections from their works in the Library's own Recording Laboratory between 1951 and the present: Augusto Federico Schmidt and Alfredo Cardona Peña, 1951; Rafael Heliodoro Valle, 1952; Dámaso Alonso, 1953; María de Villarino, Arturo Torres Rioseco, and Jorge Guillén, 1956; Guillermo de Torre, 1958; Salvador de Madariaga, 1959; Jesús Flores Aguirre, José A. Balseiro, and Rómulo Gallegos, 1960; Octavio Paz, Alfredo Pareja y Diezcanseco, and Eunice Odio, 1961; Eugenio Florit, 1962; Fausto Soto, 1963; Camilo José Cela, 1964; Alberto Girri, 1965; Homero Aridjis and Pablo Neruda, 1966; Nicanor Para, Jorge Carrera Andrade, and Philippe Thoby Marcelin, 1970; and Walmir Ayala, 1971. The last authors to read selections as of this date were Mario Romero and Gustavo Sainz in 1972.

The languages represented in the Archive are Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, French, Zapotec, Náhuatl, and Quechua, the language of the old Inca Empire. A special trip was made to Cuzco during the first mission to record Dr. Andrés Alencastre, the well-known Quechua scholar, who has revitalized Quechua as a literary instrument. It should be pointed out that the four Portuguese and five Brazilian poets, although excellent, do not adequately represent the major literary trends of the last 30 years in Brazil and Portugal. It is hoped that in years to come the Library may record the voices of additional literary figures, especially from the Portuguese-speaking world.

This collection of literary recordings is unique not only for its considerable size but also for its scope. The choice of different kinds of authors – the promising as well as the established – resulted in a balanced selection. Although prose is well represented, particularly in the case of such better known novelists as Rómulo Gallegos, Jorge Icaza, Juan Rulfo, Augusto Roa Bastos, Camilo José Cela, Eduardo Mallea, Agustín Yáñez, and Manuel Gálvez, the collection is even richer in poetry. Future generations will indeed be grateful for the opportunity to hear Gabriela Mistral, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Pedro Salinas, Pablo Neruda, and Jorge Luis Borges, to cite only a few of the luminaries.

The Library was fortunate to be able to record almost all of the major Spanish poets who developed under the guiding light of Juan Ramón Jiménez. This towering literary personality provided a unifying influence for the poets who emerged between World War I and 1950 and whom Pedro Salinas once called “a generation born under a lyrical star.” This brilliant and diverse group includes Jorge Guillén, one of the most accomplished poets; Rafael Alberti, with his Gongorean imagery; Gerardo Diego, the individualist; the father of ultraism, Guillermo de Torre; the incisive critic and lyric poet Dámaso Alonso; the romantic regionalist Leopoldo Panero; and, of course, Pedro Salinas, with his carefully cultivated colloquial style and his playful vision.

Ten Catalan poets also read selections from their works for the Archive. They were Clementina Arderiu, Agustí Bartra, J. V. Foix, Tomás Garcés, Josep Maria López Picó, Marià Manent, Carles Riba, Josep Maria de Sagarra, Joan Teixidor, and Ramón Xirau. Their writings add the Catalan cultural heritage to the variety of Iberian literature represented in the Archive.

The Cuban Nicolás Guillén read several of his Afro-Cuban poems, which constitute perhaps one of the most outstanding examples of Afro-Antillean poetry. The eight Haitian poets run the whole gamut of contemporary Haitian poetry: surrealism, indigenism, lyricism, and negritude.

The Mexican writers in the Archive form perhaps the most diversified group, including such outstanding poets as Octavio Paz and Homero Aridjis, along with such masters of the novel as Juan Rulfo and Agustín Yáñez, essayists and scholars of the caliber of Daniel Cosío Villegas and Edmundo O'Gorman, and Angel María Garibay, the world-famous specialist in Náhuatl literature and philology.

In 1962 Professors John M. Fein of Duke University and Harvey L. Johnson, formerly of Indiana University and now at the University of Houston, evaluated 158 Spanish-language readings from the Archive. They stated that by choosing both well-known authors and those just beginning their careers, the Latin American, Portuguese, and Spanish Division has assembled a panorama of the best in contemporary Hispanic literature. There are a few gaps to be filled among the great names. If there are certain risks in selecting younger writers, these are compensated amply by the opportunity to hear some who undoubtedly will be the leaders of the next generation. The collection as a whole constitutes a mine of valuable raw material. For linguists, the Archive provides dialect samples from many countries, emphasizing the distinctive features of articulation and intonation patterns.

In time, as a result of the planning and preparation undertaken by the Library of Congress, the Archive of Hispanic Literature on Tape will indeed fulfill Gabriela Mistral's expectations. It will liberate poetry and prose from the limitations of the printed word and add a new dimension to cultural interchange in the New World and the Iberian Peninsula.

Francisco Aguilera