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Lugones, Leopoldo (1874-1938)

Born in a small town of Córdoba, Argentina, this journalist, politician and poet is one of the main representatives of Modernism in Latin America. His literary texts and political thinking went through distinctive phases, from experimentalism and cosmopolitanism to traditionalism and countryside nostalgias, from pure Modernism to Avant-garde, from socialism and libertarianism to militarism and fascism.

His first poem collection, *Las montañas de oro* (1897; Golden Mountains), employed free verse and a grandiloquent tone, revealing influences of Victor Hugo and Walt Whitman. The exquisitely refined vocabulary of *Los crepúsculos del jardín* (1905; Twilights of the Garden) presented him as a poet for the elite. *Lunario sentimental* (1909; Sentimental Lunar Almanac) brought him fame in Latin America and Spain; its inventive rhyme scheme (involving multiple words and causing the effect of a neologism) and metric diversity move beyond Modernism to avant-garde in its treatment of traditionally venerated themes, and the moon becomes a metaphor of man's sentimental, intuitive side. Short stories in *Las fuerzas extrañas* (1906; The Strange Powers) combined the fantastic with scientific elements from mathematics and astronomy, revitalizing the short story genre in Latin America.

Several of Lugones's texts celebrate the countryside and add to patriotic literature, such as the poems in *Odas seculares* (1910; Secular Odes). In 1916 he published *El payador* (The Folk Singer), a pivotal work for Argentine letters that canonized José Hernández's *Martín Fierro* as the emblematical national poem. At a time when gauchos

had virtually disappeared as a social group, and therefore presented no threat to the establishment, he traced the roots of Argentine literature back to gaucho poetry, affirming that national identity resided in the gaucho heritage.

Work by

Selected writings. Eds. Sergio Waisman and Gwen Kirkpatrick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Work about

Kirkpatrick, Gwen. *The Dissonant Legacy of Modernismo: Lugones, Herrera y Reissig, and the Voices of Modern Spanish American Poetry*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

Julieta Vitullo

Ingenieros, José (1877-1925)

This Italian born Argentinean was one of the main representatives of Positivism in Latin America. An eclectic personality, he graduated in medicine and pharmacy, and also practiced criminology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, teaching and literature.

In 1897, he edited the journal *La montaña*, of socialist, anarchist and libertarian tendencies, along with Leopoldo Lugones. After that, he postponed political activism to devote himself to his medical career. In 1903, he published part of his thesis on psychiatrics as the book *La simulación en la lucha por la vida* [The Simulation in the Struggle for Life]. There he combined his scientific and literary interests by describing the work of writers such as Shakespeare or Dante as studies in psychology, and by introducing his own case studies in a narrative manner.

El hombre mediocre [1913; *The Mediocre Man*] is one of his most celebrated essays on social psychology, and a sharp critique of then-president of Argentina Roque Sáenz Peña. Between 1915 and 1925, Ingenieros edited the book collection “La Cultura Argentina,” which included a non-traditional repertoire of texts that tried to link the country’s origins to socialism and the French revolutionary ideology of Jacobinism. The novelty of this collection lies in that the author incorporated immigrants as key actors in shaping Argentina’s national identity.

In his last years, Ingenieros participated in the progressive group “Claridad” and created the Latin American Union to oppose imperialism.

Work by

Las fuerzas morales. Barcelona: Linkgua, 2008.

Julieta Vitullo

Mujica Lainez, Manuel (1910-1984)

The aristocratic origins of this Argentine writer, journalist, biographer and art critic can be traced back to Juan de Garay, the founder of his native Buenos Aires. Mujica Lainez’s widely read collection of short stories *Misteriosa Buenos Aires* (1950; *Mysterious Buenos Aires*) covers a span of four centuries of the city’s history, starting with its initial foundation in 1536. Other novels with historical themes include *Don Galaz de Buenos Aires* (1938; *Don Galaz of Buenos Aires*) and *El escarabajo* (1982; *The Scarab*).

One of Mujica Lainez’s favorite settings is the European Renaissance. His most acknowledged novel, *Bomarzo* (1962; *Bomarzo. A Novel*, 1969), is set in sixteenth-

century Italy and narrated by the historical character Duke Orsini, an abject hunchback of perverse inclinations. Composer Alberto Ginastera adopted the tale to opera, performing it in Washington DC in 1967. The Argentine military government of the time censored its release in Argentina based on its sexual content and unconventional morals, despite Mujica Lainez's alliance with conservative governments.

In his job as a columnist for the traditional newspaper *La Nación*, he chronicled high-society and its decadence, attaining a reputation for frivolousness. His frivolity and extreme political conservatism has led some critics to dismiss the mastery and extraordinary precision of the Spanish language in his writings, as well as his treatment of noteworthy themes such as an exploration of desire and sexuality, and the incorporation of the queer into his fiction.

Work by:

The Wandering Unicorn. Trans. Mary Fitton. New York: Taplinger, 1983.

Julieta Vitullo

Rojas, Ricardo (1882-1957)

This prolific journalist, writer and educator born in Tucumán, Argentina, shaped the canon of national authors, institutionalizing not just Argentine literature but forging a definition of *argentinidad*, defining the essence of Argentina's national identity by celebrating patriotic symbols, customs and rituals. Most of his publications and institutional work at the University of Buenos Aires address this agenda. Living and working during the independence post-centennial, he was a protagonist of the so-called first cultural nationalism.

Rojas' first effort to define his homeland was present in *En el país de la selva* (1907; In the Country of the Forest), a hybrid combination of novelized history, classic fables and folkloric legends, and accounts of regional landscapes and traditions. His best-known essays are *La restauración nacionalista* (1909; The Nationalist Restoration) and *Eurindia* (1924), where he makes a diagnosis of Argentine history by examining the mix of indigenous, Spanish, and Creole roots, alert to the increasingly "contaminating" influence of the newly arrived immigrants.

His *Historia de la Literatura Argentina* (1917-1922; History of Argentine Literature) was the first attempt to build a literary canon. That work of compiling, characterizing, interpreting and appraising an enormous corpus of national authors accorded Rojas his most enduring legacy.

Work by:

San Martín: Knight of the Andes. Trans. Herschel Brickell and Carlos Videla. New York: Cooper Square, 1945.

Work about:

Chanady, Amaryll. "Ricardo Rojas's *Eurindia*: The Contradictions of Inclusive Models of Identity." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 34 (2000): 585-604.

Julieta Vitullo

Malvinas / Falklands War Literature

The 1982 war between Argentina and Great Britain for sovereignty over a group of islands located 480 miles northeast of Cape Horn was the only war in which Argentina participated during the twentieth century, and the only one that involved civilians. Most Argentines supported the military confrontation at this moment, just as the dictatorial,

genocidal regime that started it underwent its deepest crisis of legitimacy. No previous event in Argentine history had lent itself to such consensus between the military and civil society based on a sense of national belonging and identity. Eventually, Argentina's defeat brought with it a victory insofar as it spelled the end of the dictatorship, and paved the way for a return to democracy.

Not only did the war leave about 900 Argentines dead (more than 600 career and conscripted soldiers died in the conflict and around 300 survivors committed suicide), it also left many unresolved questions soon to be addressed by a rich corpus of novels, short stories and poems. The texts reviewed in this article are representative of those fictions that have managed to elude nationalist prerogatives and the idea of the "just cause" that permeate political discourses, testimonies or historical essays.

The first literary intervention on the subject was Jorge Luis *Borges's poem "Juan López y John Ward," (1982; "Juan López and John Ward," 1982) published in the Argentine newspaper *Clarín* two months after the war's end, and reprinted immediately in Britain's *The Times*. A good example of Borges's transcendental vein, the poetic voice tells the story of two soldiers, presumably one Argentine and one British, whose paths crossed because they lived in a "strange time" when the arbitrary division of the world into countries was auspicious for war.

Written before the surrender, the novel *Los pichiciegos: visiones de una batalla subterránea* (1983; *Malvinas Requiem: Visions of an Underground War*, 2007), by Rodolfo E. Fogwill, introduces the story of the *pichis*, a group of soldiers who desert the war by building an underground society of survival. Fogwill proposed a way of narrating the war that cancels any possibility of telling it as an epic and emphasizes the

interconnection between the kidnappings and disappearances that were taking place in the continent under military rule, and the war in the islands. The novel worked as a kind of tuning fork to determine the tone that many later texts would maintain. Several works obviate an epic narrative by telling stories of survival, mocking nationalist prerogatives and dismantling the very idea of national identity. Examples of such approaches include: Osvaldo Lamborghini's *nouvelle La causa justa* (1983; *The Just Cause*); Rodrigo Fresán's short stories "El aprendiz de brujo" and "La soberanía nacional" (1992; *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and "National Sovereignty," 2000); Marcelo Eckhardt's *El desertor* (1993; *The Deserter*); and Jorge Stamadianos's *Latas de cerveza en el Río de la Plata* (1995; *Beer Cans in the Río de la Plata*, 1998).

Ex-combatants also wrote about their experiences. The first of several collections of testimonies, later turned into a movie, was Daniel Kon's compilation *Los chicos de la guerra* [1982]. It popularized the use of the expression "children of the war," in allusion to the young age of the soldiers who participated in the conflict.

The longest, most encompassing Argentine novel written on the subject is Carlos Gamerro's *Las Islas* (1998; *The Islands*). With the vertiginous rhythm of a thriller, it tells the story of Felipe Félix, a hacker and ex combatant whose life keeps revolving around the Falklands long after the war has come to an end, because national history and politics, at least in the world that the novel creates, always go back to those islands.

Other important novels about the Falklands conflict include Martín Kohan's *Dos veces junio* (2002; *June Twice*) and Raúl Vиейtes' *Kelper* [1999]. Due to the large number of works and the international fame of some of the authors, this corpus

constitutes a major contribution to both war literature in general and Spanish American literature dealing with the recent past of state terrorism and violence.

Work about:

Foster, David William. "Argentine Sociopolitical Commentary, the Malvinas Conflict, and Beyond." *Violence in Argentine Literature: Cultural Responses to Tyranny*. Ed.

David W. Foster. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995. 13-57.

McGuirk, Bernard. *Falklands - Malvinas. An Unfinished Business*. Seattle: New Ventures, 2007.

Julieta Vitullo