

LUSO-HISPANIC RECORDINGS AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS*

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The Library of Congress began to gather contemporary Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian literature recorded on magnetic tape, when the Uruguayan poet Emilio Oribe passed through Washington in 1942. He recorded a then recently written poem entitled "Oda al cielo de la nueva Atlántida" dedicated to Archibald MacLeish, the poet who was Librarian of Congress from 1939 to 1944. A year later Andrés Eloy Blanco of Venezuela recorded "Píntame angelitos negros" and six other compositions. Around 1944 the Library set out to formulate a program to record North American poets reading selections from their own works. The Library's Hispanic Foundation (now called the Hispanic Division) decided to assemble a similar Archive of Hispanic Literature on Tape, heeding the words of Gabriela Mistral, the first Latin American to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature: "Poetry hushed and inert in books fades away and dies. The air not the printed word is its natural home. Recordings serve it well."¹

During its first decade many major Luso-Hispanic poets registered readings for the archive. Pedro Salinas contributed a reading of *El Contemplado* which was inspired by the sea surrounding Puerto Rico where the poet spent a year. Five years later, a phonorecord of this reading, issued jointly by the Library of Congress and the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, was played over the Puerto Rican radio on the day Salinas was buried. From all accounts this was a moving experience.

Additional figures who recorded during the first phase of the archive include the two Spanish poets who more than any others influenced Spanish poetics in the twentieth century: Juan Ramón Jiménez and Jorge Guillén. The latter received three major international awards during 1976–77—the Benet Prize in the United States, the Grande Premio de Italia, and the Premio Cervantes of Spain. When the Swedish Royal Academy was considering Jiménez for the Nobel Prize in 1956, the committee had to find a work published within the previous year. After an arduous search, his reading of *El Platero y yo* for the archive, published as a "talking book" for the Division of the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress, became the publication that made Juan Ramón eligible for the award.² Other literary figures who read selections for the archive during the first phase include Gabriela Mistral (her recording is the only

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one of hers extant, and has been issued by the Library as a phonorecord), Rafael Heliodoro Valle, Jaime Torres Bodet, Augusto Federico Schmidt, Dámaso Alonso, María de Villarino, Arturo Torres Rioseco, Pablo and Winett de Rokha, Gerardo Diego, Vicente Aleixandre, Leopoldo Panero, Alfredo Cardona Peña, and Eduardo Marquina, and others.

In 1958 the collection of recordings contained the voices of forty poets. In addition to readings at the Library of Congress, the Hispanic Foundation secured from 1950 onward the cooperation of United States public affairs and cultural officers in several countries who recorded prominent poets overseas. Through these programs Catalan poets were recorded in Barcelona, representing two generations of Catalan poetry. Five Haitian poets read selections in Port-au-Prince; three Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro; four Portuguese in Lisbon; and three Spanish poets in Madrid. Vicente Aleixandre, the 1977 Nobel laureate in literature, was in this last group and contributed a one-hour reading in 1950.

Gradually, scholars, educators, and librarians became aware of the potential of a collection such as the Library was compiling. At the same time it was realized that haphazard recording would not lead to a well-balanced collection. The Library developed a policy to form a representative archive of readings from the countries of the Luso-Hispanic world. The criteria for inclusion in the archive established by Francisco Aguilera, Curator of the Archive from 1943 to 1969, were based principally on recognition of a writer by critics, professors, award committees, the media, and the public.

The Hispanic Foundation, with the generous assistance of the Rockefeller Foundation, undertook a special project to record writers in Latin America. It was decided to also include prose readings for the first time. Himself a noted critic and poet, with an exceptional and broad knowledge of literature, Aguilera embarked on three acquisitions trips. The first *gira* took him to Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, and Peru, where he recorded on magnetic tape sixty-eight writers. Recording sessions were held at municipal radio stations or at United States Information Service (USIS) studios, where these were available. Aguilera made a special trip to Cuzco to record Andrés Alencastre, poet and scholar, who read in Quechua and also played the *queña*, the flute-like musical instrument of the Andes. Other important writers who recorded during this trip include the universally acclaimed writer Jorge Luis Borges; the most celebrated Afro-Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén; Miguel Angel Asturias, who later became a Nobel laureate; Rafael Alberti; Ángel Cruchaga Santa María; and César Miró. By 1959 the archive contained readings by 108 writers.³

Media reaction in Latin America to the first mission was so favorable and stimulated so much intercultural exchange that, with the continuing support of the Rockefeller Foundation, Aguilera undertook a second acquisitions trip in 1960, this time to Guatemala, Panama, and Mexico, enriching the archive with forty-four additional readings. Among those who recorded, one should mention Juan Rulfo; Agustín Yañez; Alí Chumacero; Ernesto Cardenal; Angel María Garibay, the noted Nahuatl scholar who read in Spanish and in Nahuatl; and Andrés Henestrosa, who read parts of his selection in Zapotec.

The third acquisitions mission in 1961 included trips to Ecuador, Colom-

bia, and Venezuela, adding forty-two more writers to the archive. Jorge Icaza, Eduardo Carranza, Jorge Gaitán Durán, José Caballero Bonald, and Andrés Holguín read selections, among many others. Writers also continued recording at the studios of the Library of Congress. Octavio Paz visited the Library in 1961 and read one and a half hours of poetry and essays. Pablo Neruda came in 1966 as a special guest of the international P.E.N. Clubs. He recorded for the Library a large portion of his famed epic poem, "Alturas de Macchu Picchu." Other writers who recorded during this fourth phase include Rómulo Gallegos, Camilo José Cela, Homero Aridjis, Alberto Girri, Gustavo Sainz, and Ana María Matute.

There were 232 authors in the archive by 1972. Francisco Aguilera and this writer prepared *The Archive of Hispanic Literature on Tape: A Descriptive Guide*, which contains biobibliographic and critical information on these authors, as well as a complete listing of their selections recorded for the archive.⁴ Since the appearance of the guide, 144 additional authors recorded for the Library. Carlos Fuentes, who spent a year as a fellow of the Woodrow Wilson Center, Smithsonian Institution, contributed a one-hour selection from the book he was writing at the time, and which was published in 1976 under the title *Terra nostra*. It was awarded the prestigious Rómulo Gallegos Prize on 1 August 1977. José Donoso taped a long chapter from the *Obsceno pájaro de la noche*. Juan Goytisolo read a moving monologue about his reaction to the death of Franco, a few days after the *caudillo's* death. Julio Cortázar, who was honored at the Fifth Oklahoma Conference on Writers of the Hispanic World, read selections from his short stories *Historias de cronopios y de famas* at the University of Oklahoma in Norman for the archive in 1975. Mario Vargas Llosa, who in turn was the subject of the Sixth Oklahoma Conference, also recorded in Oklahoma in March of 1977.

The Library of Congress Field Office in Rio de Janeiro and the USIS agreed in 1974 to record prominent Brazilian writers for the archive. The first ones to be added in this new phase were João Cabral de Melo Neto, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Vinícius de Moraes, Rachel de Queiroz (recently elected member of the Academia Brasileira de Letras, the first woman member), and Henriqueta Lisboa. The archive includes, as of the end of 1977, fifty Brazilian writers, forty-four of whom were recorded in Brazil in the last three years. A number of essayists and historians also read selections from their works and recorded interesting commentaries, such as José Honório Rodrigues, Vianna Moog, Gilberto Freyre, Pedro Calmon, and Austregésilo de Athayde. Brazil forms the largest single group at the moment; latest additions include Jorge Amado and José Cândido de Carvalho.

Programs involving the active participation of USIS personnel and studios were developed during the last two years in other countries. In Mexico City, José Emilio Pacheco, Alvaro Mutis, Demetrio Aguilera Malta, Carlos Montemayor, Carlos Solórzano, and Elena Poniatowska read selections from their works. In Montevideo, with the assistance of the cultural affairs officer of the USIS, recordings by Amanda Berenguer, Washington Benavidez, José Pedro Díaz, Carlos Maggi, and Enrique Estrázulas were acquired for the collection. In Caracas, with the cooperation of the Centro Venezolano-Americano and the USIS, a major program of recording writers was started at the end of July 1977. Alfredo Silva

Estrada became the first Venezuelan poet to record for the archive in this new phase, followed by Raúl Gustavo Aguirre, and twelve others.

The Center for Inter-American Relations in New York also started to assist the Library in these endeavors. Manuel Puig, José Bianco, and Jorge Arbeleche read selections from their work and made extensive commentaries on literature at the studios of the Center. At the Library, the acquisitions during Fall 1977 included the Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea, and Gabriela García Márquez. The author of *Cien años de soledad* made a surprise visit to Washington accompanying President Torrijos of Panama who came to sign the Panama Canal treaties on 7 September 1977. García Márquez read the last chapter of his latest novel, *El otoño del patriarca*.

The Cuban historian Manuel Moreno Fraginals came to the United States to lecture at Yale University and to attend the 7th National Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association in Houston. He was interviewed for the archive. The first Portuguese to record for the archive in over two decades was Alberto de Lacerda in November of 1977.

The Hispanic Division maintains reference copies of the tapes, cassette copies, as well as complete notebooks of each author containing the texts and transcriptions. A number of researchers have used these materials for papers and theses. Harvey Johnson, University of Houston, and John Fein, Duke University, evaluated the initial 158 Spanish-language recordings in the archive. They stated that by choosing both well-known authors and those just beginning their careers, the library has compiled a panorama of the best in Hispanic literature.⁵ The archive presents an important source for research, as the spoken word provides a new dimension in the relationship between the writer and his work. Many writers preceded their readings with introductions and commentaries; others decided to depart from the printed text, or to read from unpublished works. So far seven writers have asked to record for a second time, as they developed new styles and plunged into different genres that they wished to preserve on tape. For linguists the archive provides dialect samples and speech patterns from many countries and different regions within given countries, emphasizing the distinctive features of articulation and intonation patterns.

The most obvious use of this material will be in literature and language courses. A new dimension can be added when in discussing the work of a writer, his voice reading his own work is heard by the students. This experience allows the student to explore the rich gamut of ethnic expression in listening to the incomparable recording by Nicolás Guillén reading "Sóngoro cosongo" or "Canción del bongó"; or to the selections in the Indian languages, in Catalan, or those from the *nordeste* in Brazil. In addition to Spanish and Portuguese, French, Catalan, Nahuatl, Quechua, and Zapotec, as well as English are represented. In June 1977 a trilingual young Costa Rican poet, Eulalia Bernard, read selections of her work for the archive in Spanish, English, and Creole.

Historians, social anthropologists, and sociologists could also make use of these materials by concentrating on the subject matter. For example the tapes of Jorge Icaza, Rómulo Gallegos, Juan Goytisolo, Jorge Amado, Gilberto Freyre,

can be utilized for sociopolitical content. A number of essayists, political figures, and historians have also contributed readings or interviews, or both, among them Fernando Belaúnde Terry, Leopoldo Zea, Juan José Arévalo, Jaime Benítez and Alfredo Palacios. Major historians who appear in the archive include Arturo Capdevila, Pedro Calmon, José Honório Rodrigues, Pedro Grases, Austregésilo de Athayde, Vianna Moog, and Alberto Miramón. Interviews of Julio Cortázar, Juan Goytisolo, Mario Vargas Llosa, Jorge Luis Borges, and Enrique Anderson Imbert shed light on stylistic intricacies and aesthetic concerns of major figures in Ibero-American literature.

Other items of interest, not specifically part of the archive, are a three-hour conversation between Pedro Salinas and Jorge Guillén and a five-hour discussion by Miguel Angel Asturias, recorded in Paris by a graduate student. There is a small collection of recorded speeches, dialogues, and reminiscences by such figures as Francisca Sánchez (companion of Rubén Darío), Asturias, Mistral, Jimenez, and others. These materials are also located in the Hispanic Division and are available for consultation. Four records have been published by the Library from the Archive of Hispanic Literature on Tape: *El Contemplado*, by Pedro Salinas (HPL-1); *Gabriela Mistral Reading Her Own Poetry* (HPL-2); *Two Colombian Poets: Eduardo Carranza and Germán Pardo García* (HPL-3); and *Readings by Julio Cortázar* (HPL-4).⁶

At the end of July 1978 the archive contained tape recordings by 376 authors, almost all the outstanding Luso-Hispanic literary figures of the last thirty-five years, representing several literary generations and many genres. In May 1978, at the Third Conference of Inter-American Women Writers at the University of Ottawa, Canada, ten Ibero-American women writers recorded readings for the archive. One of these was Carmen Conde, recently elected the first woman member of the Spanish Academy of Letters.

In addition to prose and poetry, the theater, the essay, history, and philosophy are also included in the archive. Five Nobel Prize winners are represented, over 85 percent of the authors included have won national or international literary awards, and several served at one time as chief executives of their countries. With the generous assistance of the USIS cultural and public affairs officers in many countries, the Centro Venezolano-Americano, the Library of Congress Field Office in Rio de Janeiro, and the many academics and critics who have given freely of their time and invaluable advice, the archive will continue to grow. As Francisco Aguilera stated, "in time, as a result of 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 between the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula."⁷

NOTES

1. Francisco Aguilera, "Iberian and Latin American Poetry on Records," *Library of Congress Quarterly Journal* 14, no. 2 (Feb. 1957).

2. Conversation with Francisco Aguilera and Graciela Palau de Nemes, University of Maryland, at the Library of Congress, 28 February 1968.
3. See *Voces de poetas y prosistas ibéricos y latinoamericanos en el Archivo de Literatura Hispánica en Cinta Magnética de la Fundación Hispánica* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1960).
4. Francisco Aguilera and Georgette M. Dorn, *The Archive of Hispanic Literature on Tape: A Descriptive Guide* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1974); on sale by the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, stock number 3013—0006.
5. Aguilera and Dorn, *The Archive*, p. x.
6. These can be obtained from the Music Division, Recorded Sound Section, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540, for \$6.50 each, plus \$.50 for postage. There is no postage charge on orders for three or more records. All orders must be prepaid in checks or money orders. Tape or cassette copies of the recordings may also be purchased in accordance with an agreement worked out with the initial authors who recorded for the archive in 1942–44. After ten orders have been filled for each author, written permission must be obtained from the author or his literary executor, before additional orders can be filled. Tapes or cassettes may only be sold to nonprofit institutions and individuals who under no circumstances will use the materials for commercial purposes. Persons wishing to purchase copies of the tapes may obtain a cost estimate from Georgette M. Dorn, Specialist in Hispanic Culture, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540. The division also maintains a current file of author's addresses which will be furnished upon request.
7. Aguilera and Dorn, *The Archive*, p. x.