

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-08135-2 - A History of Colombian Literature
Raymond Leslie Williams
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

A HISTORY OF COLOMBIAN LITERATURE

In recent decades, the international recognition of Nobel Laureate Gabriel García Márquez has placed Colombian writing on the global literary map. *A History of Colombian Literature* explores the genealogy of Colombian poetry and prose from the colonial period to the present day. Beginning with a comprehensive introduction that charts the development of a national literary tradition, this History includes extensive essays that illuminate the cultural and political intricacies of Colombian literature. Organized thematically, these essays survey the multilayered verse and fiction of such diverse writers as José Eustacio Rivera, Tomás Carrasquilla, Alvaro Mutis, and Darío Jaramillo Agudelo. Written by a host of leading scholars, this History also devotes special attention to the lasting significance of colonialism and multiculturalism in Colombian literature. This book is of pivotal importance to the development of Colombian writing and will serve as an invaluable reference for specialists and students alike.

RAYMOND LESLIE WILLIAMS is Distinguished Professor of Spanish at the University of California, Riverside. His scholarly work has been recognized in Colombia with the Order of San Carlos. His books include *The Twentieth-Century Spanish American Novel*, *The Modern Latin American Novel*, and *The Colombian Novel, 1844–1987*.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-08135-2 - A History of Colombian Literature
Raymond Leslie Williams
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-08135-2 - A History of Colombian Literature
Raymond Leslie Williams
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

A HISTORY OF COLOMBIAN LITERATURE

RAYMOND LESLIE WILLIAMS

University of California, Riverside



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-08135-2 - A History of Colombian Literature
Raymond Leslie Williams
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107081352

© Raymond Leslie Williams 2016

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2016

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Names: Williams, Raymond, editor.

Title: A history of Colombian literature / Raymond Williams [editor].

Description: Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2016. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015039557 | ISBN 9781107081352 (Hardback : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Colombian literature—History and criticism.

Classification: LCC PQ8161 .H48 2016 | DDC 860.9/9861—dc23 LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2015039557>

ISBN 978-1-107-08135-2 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Notes on contributors</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Preface</i>	xi
Introduction	I
PART I LITERATURE AND SOCIETY IN COLOMBIA	II
1 Colonial realities and colonial literature in “Colombia” <i>Michael Palencia-Roth</i>	13
2 Cosmography, ethnography, and the literary imagination of the New Kingdom of Granada <i>Elizabeth M. Pettinaroli</i>	54
3 Colombian poetry from the colonial period to <i>Modernismo</i> (1500–1920) <i>James J. Alstrum</i>	68
4 Reflections on the historiography of the Colombian novel: 1844–1953 and beyond <i>Kevin Guerrieri</i>	80
5 Modern Colombian poetry: from modernismo to the twenty-first century <i>James J. Alstrum</i>	92
6 The late twentieth-century Colombian novel (1970–1999) <i>Raymond L. Williams and Marina Nájera</i>	123
7 Twenty-first century fiction <i>Claire Taylor and Raymond L. Williams</i>	143

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
8	Colombian theater: staging the sociopolitical body <i>Lucía Garavito</i>	163
9	The Colombian essay <i>Héctor Hoyos</i>	198
PART II COLOMBIAN CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN REGIONAL CONTEXTS		213
10	Literature, culture, and society of the Magdalena River <i>Rory O'Bryen</i>	215
11	The highland region as seen by an outsider from the inside and an insider from the outside <i>Juan Carlos González Espitia</i>	238
12	Racial fictions: constructing whiteness in nineteenth-century Colombian literature <i>Mercedes López Rodríguez</i>	253
13	Literature and culture in Antioquia: between stories and accounts <i>Juan Luis Mejía Arango</i>	269
14	Colombian marginalized literatures <i>Valentín González-Bohórquez and Diana Dodson Lee</i>	287
PART III BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES		309
15	García Márquez as public intellectual <i>Gene H. Bell-Villada</i>	311
16	Women writers in Colombia <i>Claire Taylor</i>	322
17	Colombian queer narrative <i>Gina Ponce de León</i>	342
18	Extracting nature: toward an ecology of Colombian narrative <i>Mark D. Anderson and Marcela Reales</i>	363
19	Visions of nature: Colombian literature and the environment from the colonial period to the nineteenth century <i>Ana María Mutis and Elizabeth Pettinaroli</i>	406

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-08135-2 - A History of Colombian Literature
Raymond Leslie Williams
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

	<i>Contents</i>	vii
20	The intersections between poetry and fiction in two Colombian writers of the twentieth century: Álvaro Mutis and Darío Jaramillo Agudelo <i>Enrique Salas-Durazo</i>	431
	AFTERWORDS	455
21	Colombian literature: national treasure or fraud? <i>Darío Jaramillo Agudelo</i>	457
22	Colonial legacies and Colombian literature: postcolonial considerations <i>Elzbieta Sklodowska</i>	476
	<i>Index</i>	500

Contributors

JAMES J. ALSTRUM is a professor emeritus at Illinois State University. A former Fulbright scholar in Colombia, he is an authority on Colombian poetry, about which he has numerous publications, including several books.

MARK D. ANDERSON is an associate professor of Latin American Literature at the University of Georgia. He has published eco-critical studies on Latin American fiction and on the topic of the total novel in Latin America. His collaborator Marcela Reales is a doctoral student in Latin American literature at the University of Georgia.

GENE H. BELL-VILLADA is a professor of Latin American literature at Williams College. An internationally recognized authority on Gabriel García Márquez, he has also published books on Borges and other topics, as well as his own fiction.

LUCÍA GARAVITO is a professor of Latin American Literature at Kansas State University. A Colombian national, she has published on Colombian and Latin American theater, as well as gender topics.

VALENTÍN GONZÁLEZ-BOHÓRQUEZ teaches Latin American Literature at Biola University. A Colombian national, he has published on Roberto Bolaño and modern Latin American literature.

JUAN CARLOS GONZÁLEZ ESPITIA is an associate professor of Latin American Literature at the University of North Carolina. A Colombian national, he specializes in nineteenth-century Spanish-American literature, twentieth-century Spanish-American literature, and discourses of crime and sickness in nineteenth-century literary theory.

KEVIN GUERRIERI is the departmental chair and an associate professor at the University of San Diego. A former Fulbright scholar in Colombia,

Contributors

ix

he has published on Colombian literature and modern Latin American fiction.

HÉCTOR HOYOS is an assistant professor of Latin American Literature at Stanford University. A Colombian national, he has published on the contemporary Latin American novel, Colombian literature, visual culture, and critical theory.

DARÍO JARAMILLO AGUDELO is a Colombian writer from Antioquia who currently resides in Bogotá. He has published numerous volumes of poetry and books of fiction, as well as essays on cultural and literary topics.

DIANA DODSON LEE is an assistant professor of Hispanic Studies at Pepperdine University. Her work focuses on ecocriticism and violence in Latin America.

MERCEDES LÓPEZ RODRÍGUEZ is an assistant professor of Colonial Spanish American Literature at the University of South Carolina. A Colombian national, her research focus stems from a long-term interest in the representation of difference and the emergence of new cultural practices amid contexts of conflict in Latin America.

JUAN LUIS MEJÍA ARANGO is a Colombian academic who is currently serving as Chancellor of the Universidad EAFIT in Medellín, Colombia. He has published a book on the Antioquian writer Tomás Carrasquilla, as well as essays on a broad range of Colombian cultural topics.

ANA MARÍA MUTIS holds a PhD in Latin American literature from the University of Virginia. A Colombian national, she has published on eco-criticism and Colombian literature.

RORY O'BRYEN is a university senior lecturer of Latin American literature at the University of Cambridge. He has published on Post-Boom Latin American fiction, as well as nineteenth- and twentieth-century Colombian culture and history. He is one of the editors of the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*.

MICHAEL PALENCIA-ROTH is a professor of Comparative Literature and Spanish at the University of Illinois, Urbana. A Colombian national, he has published on the work of Gabriel García Márquez, Colonial Latin American literature, and Colombian literature.

ELIZABETH M. PETTINAROLI is an assistant professor of Spanish at Rhodes College, where she teaches and researches Colonial Latin American literature, eco-criticism, and Colombian literature. Her work focuses on the early modern Hispanic world in a comparative context.

GINA PONCE DE LEÓN is an associate professor of Latin American Literature at Fresno Pacific University. She has published articles and books on Colombian fiction, postmodernism, and gender issues.

ENRIQUE SALAS-DURAZO is an assistant professor of Latin American literature at Westminster College. He has published on the poetry and fiction of Roberto Bolaño as well as poet-novelists in Colombia and Mexico. His research interrogates the interactions between fiction and poetry.

ELZBIETA SKŁODOWSKA holds the title of Randolph Family Professor of Latin American Literature at Washington University in St. Louis. She has published on Latin American fiction, *testimonio*, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century Caribbean narrative, as well as poetics and politics of memory.

CLAIRE TAYLOR is a senior lecturer in Hispanic Studies, Culture, Languages and Area Studies at the University of Liverpool. Her research and publications have been in the areas of women's writing in Latin America, digital culture, and Latina(o) culture.

RAYMOND LESLIE WILLIAMS holds the title of Distinguished Professor of Latin American Literature at the University of California, Riverside. A former Fulbright scholar in Colombia, he has published on Latin American fiction and Colombian literature. His collaborator, Marina Nájera, is an advanced doctoral student at the University of California, Riverside.

Preface

A century before Nobel Laureate Gabriel García Márquez published his landmark novel *Cien años de soledad* (1967, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*), the first history of Colombian literature, written by José María Vergara y Vergara, appeared in print under the title *Historia de la literatura en Nueva Granada* (1867, *History of literature in New Granada*). This first history of the literature of “New Granada,” a keystone in the nation-building process in Colombia, was mostly about the Colonial literary tradition in the region called New Granada at the time, and not truly about the literature of the new nation *per se*. In a newly founded nation without a clear sense of exactly what its national culture might be considered to be, Vergara y Vergara’s book was as much a proposal for a national literary tradition as it was a literary history.

By the end of the century, during a period identified in Colombia as the Regeneration (“*La Regeneración*,” 1886–1909), an insistence on the key place of national literature and national culture led Colombians to refer to their capital, Bogotá, as the “Athens of South America.” The efforts to consolidate the literature of this region into a national “Colombian” literature was highlighted by Daniel Samper Ortega’s massive project to anthologize and historicize all Colombian writing in his *Selección Samper Ortega de Literatura Colombiana* (1935–7). These multiple volumes of Colombian literature, consisting mostly of poetry and essays and which included many political speeches, were mostly a collection of writings from the Colonial period. Thus, the actual literature representing the new nation was minimal. The efforts in Colombia to construct a national literature were accompanied in Latin America in general by attempts to write the first histories of Latin American literature, as has been outlined by Roberto González Echevarría and Enrique Pupo-Walker in *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*. They point out that the first history of Latin American literature was published in 1893 in the form of an anthology by Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo.

During the period of Ortega's anthology of national Colombian literature – the first three decades of the twentieth century – several histories of Colombian literature did appear in print. Thus, José Joaquín Ortega Torres published his *Historia de la literatura colombiana* in 1935, and later Antonio Gómez Restrepo came forth with his own authoritative *Historia de la literatura colombiana* in 1945. In the context of the genre of the novel, the most monumental of these histories was Antonio Curcio Altamar's encyclopedic study *Evolución de la novela en Colombia*, first published in 1957. Curcio Altamar was not versed in the skills of the New Criticism in vogue in the 1950s in the United States, nor had he learned how to carry out the French *analyse de texte*; he was not familiar with close reading. Nevertheless, he was a highly informed scholar, and this book was, by far, the most exhaustively researched and complete history of the Colombian novel yet to be seen. Since then, several histories of the Colombian novel have appeared in print, including Sebastián Pineda Buitrago's recent volume.

International reading of Colombian literature and the academic study of it had been focused, for more than a century, almost exclusively on the three canonical novels: Jorge Isaacs's *María* (1867, *María, A South American Romance*), José Eustacio Rivera's *La vorágine* (1924, *The Vortex*), and García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*. A considerable amount of scholarly work on these three works has been published by scholars in Colombia, Latin America in general, Europe, and the United States. As Latin American literature became increasingly a subject of academic study after World War II, broader studies on Colombia began to appear in print. Two pioneer foreign scholars during the 1940s and 1950s were Gerald Wade ("An Introduction to the Colombian Novel," 1947) and Kurt Levy (with an early 1950s study offering new light on Tomás Carrasquilla in the prestigious and high-circulation *Publications of the Modern Language Association*). Several articles and a book on the Colombian novel written by Seymour Menton have also been foundational work on the Colombian novel. Since then, scholars such as Donald McGrady, Michael Palencia-Roth, David William Foster, Roberto González Echevarría, Héctor Orjuela, Juan Gustavo Cobo Borda, Pablo Montoya, Malcom Deas, Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot, Juan José Hoyos, Betty Osorio, Karl Kahut, Alvaro Pineda Botero, Huberto Poppel, Fernando Ayala Poveda, Jaime Alejandro Rodríguez, Gerald Martin, Héctor Hoyos, James Alstrum, Raymond Souza, Jonathan Tittler, Luz Mery Giraldo, Isaias Peña, Gene Bell-Villada, and Ramón Illán Baca have contributed significantly to the study of different aspects of Colombian

Preface

xiii

literature. Noteworthy recent books on Colombian literature per se are Héctor H. Orjuela's *Historia crítica de la literatura colombiana: literatura colonial* (three volumes, 1992, Critical History of Colombian Literature), María Mercedes Jaramillo, Angela Inés Robledo, and Flor María Rodríguez Arenas's *¿Y las mujeres? Ensayos sobre literatura colombiana* (2001, And the women? Essays on Colombian Literature), and Sebastián Pineda Buitrago's *Breve historia de la narrativa colombiana: Siglos XVI–XX* (2012, Brief History of Colombian Narrative). In terms of more postcolonial approaches to culture and society in Colombia, recent important contributions have been Joana Rappaport's exploration of indigenous Colombian intellectuals, *Intercultural Utopias: Public Intellectuals, Cultural Experimentation, and Ethnic Pluralism in Colombia* (2005), and Lesley Wylie's ground-breaking work *Forgotten Frontier: A Literary Geography of the Putumayo* (2013).

The region covered in this history, identified today as the Republic of Colombia, has undergone several name changes over the centuries. During the Colonial period it was identified as the Nuevo Reino de Granada (thus, "New Granada"), and in the republican period it was called Colombia (including Ecuador and Venezuela, 1819–30), Nueva Granada (1832–57), the Confederación Granadina (1857–63), Estados Unidos de Colombia (1863–86), and República de Colombia (1886 to present). For the sake of simplicity, in this volume we will tend to use "New Granada" for the Colonial period and "Colombia" since 1810. As one contemporary social scientist, Harvey Kline, has affirmed, perhaps more than any other country in Latin America, Colombia has frustrated outsiders who try to understand and explain it. In some ways, he notes, Colombia does not exist except in popular myth, academic reification, and the assemblies of international organizations.

I would like to extend a special thanks to the Fulbright Commission in Colombia, whose grants over the early years of my research on Colombian literature were key to my learning this field and about this nation, as well as my initial publications on the Colombian novel. More recently, the Faculty Senate from the University of California, Riverside, has provided supporting funds for my research in Colombia.

I would also like to thank individuals who, over the years, have contributed directly or indirectly to my understanding of Colombia. The list of individuals who have contributed to my understanding of Colombian literature would be too long to attempt to make here and would lead to inevitable oversights. A short version of this list would include John S. Brushwood (who introduced me to the Colombian novel in 1973),

Germán Vargas, Juan Luis Mejía, Darío Jaramillo, Otto Morales Benitez, Belisario Betancur, Néstor Madrid-Malo, David William Foster, R. H. Moreno-Durán, and Gabriel García Márquez. More recently, Kevin Guerrieri provided valuable insights in the formulation of this book plan. In graduate seminars, several former graduate students (all faculty today) have contributed to my knowledge of the Colombian novel over the years, including Elzbieta Sklodowska, Guillermo García Corales, Gina Ponce de León, Amarilis Hidalgo de Jesús, Sandra Garabano, Mark Anderson, Enrique Salas-Durazo, and Diana Dodson-Lee.

Several graduate student research assistants provided efficient and valuable research for this project, including Diana Dodson-Lee, Judith Cervantes, Juan Pablo Bustos, Stefanie Márquez, and Melissa Barragán. Editorial assistants Marina Nájera and Brigitte Flores provided efficient and always good-willed support for this project, and their work was significant. Last but not least, I thank mentors Chris Kostman, Alfredo Mirandé, and Walt Lamp for their ongoing support, as well as the sage advice that kept me more than healthy enough to keep reading and writing. I have greatly appreciated Ray Ryan's interest, support, and patience.