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Andrew T. Nadell Prize for Book Collecting | Collection Statement

Como un detective salvaje:
Gathering Small Press, Experimental, and Untranslated Latin American Literature

I trace the roots of my collection to two formative experiences. I grew up in a small town in rural Pennsylvania. As a book-loving child with dreams of travel, my surroundings often felt provincial, but I was fortunate to live near Bucknell University, for the school served as a bridge to the wider world. When I was fourteen, I visited Nicaragua on a Bucknell service-learning trip. We helped to roof a medical clinic, but mostly we sat and listened to people speak about their lives. I was by turns moved, perplexed, and horrified by what I heard. Nicaraguans shared stories of repression and terror, but also of love, creativity, and care. That year, in school, I had started to study Spanish, and the trip cemented my burgeoning interest in the language. Spanish opened a universe for me. I was entranced by all that the language enabled me to understand, even just partially, in moments of thrilling comprehension. Together, the new information and the new tongue were overwhelming. I felt ethically and aesthetically drawn to Latin America. I hungered for understanding. That hunger has propelled my academic and personal journeys ever since, and it is the beating heart of my book collection.

Before and during undergraduate school, I spent time in Guatemala, Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Colombia, studying, interning, traveling, and feeding my interest in *lo latinoamericano*. By the time I graduated from college, my Spanish was much improved, as was my knowledge of Latin American history and cultural politics, but I was not yet a book collector. I began to collect following a second experience—this time, immersion in a novel. When I was twenty-two, just after graduating from college, I read Roberto Bolaño’s *The Savage Detectives* in Natasha Wimmer’s translation. The novel captivated me. *The Savage Detectives* is a riotous celebration of that most cosmopolitan of capital cities, Mexico City. Bolaño spoke to me as a young person, as an idealist and a lover of writing. I read him in a moment of transition, just before a friend died in a sudden accident. Of all places, my friend died in Mexico City. I felt in the novel’s pages the vibrancy of youth, and, at the same time, the melancholy that comes with growing up, with witnessing loss, with aching for what could have been.

Bolaño took literature seriously. His writing teems with intertextuality, with allusions to competing schools of poetry, to canons real and imagined, to great novelists and novelists who only *think* themselves great. In *The Savage Detectives*, these references danced beyond the scope of my education. Once again, I found myself hungry for understanding. I wanted to immerse myself in Bolaño’s world of manifestos and writers and late-night poets, of radicals and criminals and queer people holding forth. I had read Latin American authors before, of course, but his work flipped a switch in me, turning me in a new direction. *The Savage Detectives* inspired my fascination with the underground and non-mainstream of Latin American literature, with experimentalism and counternarratives, the kinds of texts that blur genres, that center marginal and minoritarian populations, that take risks. I wanted to read the sorts of books that find their way into the pockets of university students and exiles, but perhaps not into the pages of the English-language press. I read widely in translation, drawing on the collections of public libraries and used bookstores, but I came up against dead ends: it is not that easy to find independent, small press, and experimental Latin American literature in the United States. If I wanted to read the kinds of books that so inspired Bolaño and his characters, I realized I would need to collect them on my own.

I began to build my collection with purpose when I returned to school for a master's degree in Latin American Studies. I started by purchasing Latin American books online and at sales from Tulane University's Latin American Library (LAL). Some were course texts assigned for literature and theory classes; others were based on recommendations from Latin American peers and professors or were spurred by my own unfolding research interests. I received a few books as gifts. These were titles I would never have found in English-language bookstores: books from Cuban presses, Mexican presses, Bolivian presses. I found gay narratives, feminist narratives, satires and laments. These texts offered me a productively destabilizing vantage on Latin American thought. They pushed my Spanish and my curiosity in new directions.

Moreover, as the books found their way to my shotgun apartment, I grew to cherish them as beautiful objects with their own histories, their own quirky materiality. Take two examples: my 1972 edition of the Colombian novel *La Cárcel*, by José Zárate Moreno, was shipped from Venezuela and arrived somewhat weathered, with photocopies of the seller's passport and even his fingerprints nestled between its pages. My copy of Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *Tres Tristes Tigres* is a special hardback edition, printed to celebrate the author's 70th birthday, its cover inlaid with lovely golden lettering.

When I returned to Latin America as a master's student, I visited bookstores and talked with booksellers. On their recommendations and through my own diligent explorations, I expanded my collection piece by piece. On a 2018 trip to Bogotá, I visited Librería Luvina, where I bought a pair of punk novels, *Vagabunda Bogotá* by Luis Carlos Barragán (2017) and *Opio en las nubes* by Rafael Chaparro Madiedo (1992). Neither has been translated into English. They are both genre-mashing works of edgy fiction from small presses, but Chaparro's book is an underground classic, while Barragán's was still new, just making a splash. I doubt I would have come across either one, much less that I would have thought to read them together, had I not spent time in that cramped but well-lit space, chatting with the store's owner, bonding over literature. Likewise, I spent two days at the International Book Fair of Bogotá (FILBo), perusing the stalls and displays, meeting publishers and authors, buying books and wishing I had the funds to buy more. I have taken books home from the dusty shelves of the used bookstores that line Calle Donceles in Mexico City, and others from a Spanish-language shop tucked into a strip mall in Miami. My aim has been to locate books from small and independent presses, books that are not translated into English, and books in speculative or atmospheric genres like science fiction and noir. I especially seek books by women and queer people. As my collection grows, the books speak to each other in constellations of meaning and resonance that make of the whole much more than the sum of its parts.

Finally, although my collection prioritizes books in the original Spanish, I reserve a place for books in translation, too. I subscribe to two presses, And Other Stories Press and Charco Press, that specialize in Latin American literature in translation. Through these subscriptions I collect cutting-edge translations. I consider the translations to be works of art that illuminate the original text as much as they reflect the translators' craft. I am glad to support presses bringing innovative Latin American literature to an English-speaking audience.

I picture this collection as an espaliered tree. I have shaped it with intention, but it remains a wild thing, subject to its own exuberant internal logic. How will it grow? Which branches will flower, and which will gnarl? I am eager to see where independent presses, Latin American book sellers, chance, and passion lead me. This, I suppose, is the joy of collecting: the collection is never finished, and so it is forever dynamic, a force that lives on my bookshelves, a companion that I attend with joy.

Joseph Hiller | Graduate Student | Department of Cultural Anthropology
Andrew T. Nadell Prize for Book Collecting | Annotated Bibliography

Annotated Bibliography

1. Bolaño, Roberto. *The Savage Detectives*. Translated by Natasha Wimmer. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

I read this book on the recommendation of a friend. ¡Mil gracias Chris! I have carried it with me across the country, through half a dozen moves and relocations. It was the first Bolaño novel I read, and it is still my favorite. The book is fractured and polyvocal. Characters and episodes from *The Savage Detectives* reappear in other Bolaño works, especially *Amulet* and *2666*. Throughout his oeuvre, Bolaño imagined an interlocking universe of poets, scoundrels, cowards, heroes, and lovers, spanning his native Chile, his beloved Mexico City, the Spain of his exile, and points beyond. I start with this entry, then, because *The Savage Detectives* had such an impact on my own reading and book collecting, but also to recognize the kind of expansive literary passion the novel enacts and conveys. I am aware that there is no small irony in the fact that I ground my collection of independent and small press Latin American literature in a book by Bolaño, who boomed in popularity around the time I first read *The Savage Detectives*, becoming one of the most widely read and translated Latin American authors of recent decades. However, despite his popularity, I still think of him as a writer of the marginal, both in style and in subject. He was experimental, daring, prolific, and perhaps above all, committed to the power and the possibility of prose and poetry. And as this collection will show, he was my entryway to a world of less well-known, untranslated Latin American literature.

2. Bolaño, Roberto. *Llamadas telefónicas*. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1997.

I own more books by Bolaño than I have space to list here, but *Llamadas telefónicas* is the only volume among them in the original Spanish. It is a compilation of short stories, many in an autofictional register, focused on Latin Americans living in Spain. It is fitting, I think, that I purchased it at a bookstore in Sevilla.

3. Herrera, Yuri. *Señales que precederán al fin del mundo*. Cáceres: Editorial Periférica, 2010.

Yuri Herrera was one of my professors at Tulane. I was fortunate to take two courses with him, the first on humor in Mexican literature, the second on theories of palimpsest. He is a brilliant and kind person. This slim novel is perhaps my favorite of his works. It follows a young woman's migrant journey from Mexico to the United States. At the same time, it is an allegory for the Aztec vision of the nine layers of Hell. Herrera's writing is famously inventive—in this novel he coins a verb, *jarchar*, etymologically derived from a verse form popular in medieval al-Andalus, the territory we now call Spain. He blends this neologism with regional and dialectical Mexican Spanish so deftly that I did not at first realize that he had invented one word while faithfully reproducing the cadences and spellings of others. How cool is that? This edition is from a new bookstore in Mexico City. On the cover is a photograph of a “Hierbería,” an herb store, called Sta. Muerte—St. Death.

4. Herrera, Yuri. *Signs Preceding the End of the World*. Translated by Lisa Dillman. London: And Other Stories, 2015.

Dillman's translation of Herrera's novel is masterful. Reading the two together illuminates them both. It is thanks to her translator's note that I know what Herrera was doing with *jarchar*.

5. Herrera, Yuri. *Kingdom Cons*. Translated by Lisa Dillman. Sheffield: And Other Stories, 2017.

Although this is the first novel Herrera published in Spanish, it is his third to be published in English translation. I found this edition in a bilingual bookstore in Oaxaca City, the summer before I studied palimpsests with him. Among other things, the novel is a play with the genre of narcocorrido—I think of it as a synesthetic palimpsest, the music just audible beneath the prose.

6. Chaparro Madiedo, Rafael. *Opio en las nubes*. Zaragoza: Tropo Editores, 2014.

This is one of a small handful of books I purchased from Luvina Librería, a fantastic independent bookshop in the La Macarena neighborhood of Bogotá, Colombia. Chaparro is a sort of cult figure now—he was a poet and a journalist who died young, of lupus. His novel follows addled characters with a blend of humor, despair, and compassion. The language is distinctive, repeating key phrases, song lyrics, and onomatopoeia—drip drip drip—with poetic sensory description and blunt dialogue. Certain chapters are narrated by a cat. It offers a mordant look at drug use, codependency, assault, and other heavy issues, but with an uncanny touch, making everything feel strange and fresh. Originally published in 1992, my edition is a republication that includes selections of the author's poetry and a forward from one of his friends.

7. Barragán, Luis Carlos. *Vagabunda Bogotá*. Colección lince. Medellín, Colombia: Angosta Editores, 2017.

This book is physically beautiful, as are all books published by Angosta Editores, an independent press cofounded by Héctor Abad Faciolince and based in Medellín. The jacket is a calm yellow patterned with dots of different sizes, like the Milky Way, while each chapter opens with a delicate drawing. The narrative itself is out of this world—the protagonist receives a scholarship to the Uranus Space Station. As in *Opio en las nubes*, there are moments of stream of consciousness riffing, there is a cat, there is a trans character, and I bought it upon the recommendation of the owner of Librería Luvina.

8. Carvajal, Estefanía. *Niebla en la yarda*. Colección Ébano. Medellín, Colombia: Angosta, 2017.

Another Angosta Editores publication, this one is just as beautiful as *Vagabunda Bogotá*. The design is stunning, featuring barbed wire, maps, and matte black pages between sections. This book, unlike most in my collection, is nonfiction, but it is creative nonfiction, something akin to Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. Carvajal tells the stories of three Colombian men who are condemned to prison sentences in the United States. Two were extradited from Colombia while one was arrested in the United States. Carvajal tells their stories with verve and style.

Colombians make up the second-largest international population in the U.S. federal prison system, yet very little about these people's experiences is available in English. I like the book so much I nominated it for the Latin America in Translation Series at the UNC-Duke Consortium for Latin American Studies, Duke University Press, and UNC Press. I found this one at FILBo.

9. Abad Faciolince, Héctor. *El olvido que seremos*. Madrid: Alfaguara, 2017.

This is a memoir and an elegy for the author's father, who was murdered by paramilitaries in reprisal for his medical and social work. It is a moving and artful work. I include it in my collection because of Abad's importance to Colombia's literary scene. This book may have been published in Madrid, but Abad is a foremost sponsor of young writers in his hometown of Medellín. Further, his other works include a speculative dystopia novel, *Angosta* (see Wish List). I purchased this book online while living in New Orleans.

10. Ospina Pizano, María. *Azares del cuerpo*. Colección Laguna continental. Bogotá: Laguna Libros, 2017.

I love this collection of interlocking short stories, especially the first story, a tale about a demobilized former FARC guerrilla, a woman adapting to life in Bogotá after years of fighting in the countryside. Part of the story's conceit is that the narrator is writing a memoir, to be published by an NGO. We see the initial draft of her memoir with edits from the NGO's director—lines are crossed out or replaced, notes added, colloquialisms substituted with more formal words. It is an innovative and compelling technique. We get two stories at once, the "truth" and its revisions. In this way Ospina offers a complicated feminist critique of the demobilization process. Themes of birds run through the six stories (birds are a theme in *Opio en las nubes*, too). I bought this book after a long conversation with booksellers at the Laguna Libros stand at FILBo. Recently I was excited to learn that a translation is forthcoming in July 2021 from Coffeehouse Press.

11. Hernández, Claudia. *Slash and Burn*. Translated by Julia Sanches. Sheffield: And Other Stories, 2020.

Claudia Hernández is a quietly daring Salvadoran author. I first read her short stories in a class with Yuri Herrera. I remember seeing her novel *Roza, Tumba, Quema* at FILBo, but by that point I had already maxed out my budget, and so I was unable to purchase it then. Imagine my delight when I received this translation of that same novel with my And Other Stories subscription. The themes of her work dovetail with those of María Ospina Pizano. They both focus attention on women's experiences as combatants and in the aftermath of civil conflict, and they both experiment formally. Hernández's novel follows three generations of Salvadoran women, but she never uses their names, only referring to them by their relations, with terms like "second oldest daughter." This technique reflects the kinds of anxiety and paranoia that mark (post)conflict El Salvador—where the use of proper names remains dangerous, implicating—but it also continually reaffirms the mutual interdependence of women making lives together despite precarity and violence.

12. Castellanos Moya, Horacio. *El arma en el hombre*. Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 2001.
13. Castellanos Moya, Horacio. *La sirvienta y el luchador*. Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 2011.

Horacio Castellanos Moya is a Honduran-born Salvadoran author who was forced into exile for many years. His writing is hypnotic and distinctive, inspired by the antinationalist disgust of Thomas Bernhard. Having devoured many of his books in translation, I sought him out when I had the opportunity to visit the fabled Calle Donceles in Mexico City, home to dozens of used bookstores. These are palaces of the written word, each distinct, all chaotic in their own way. I was elated when I found these two works, as neither has been translated into English. Castellanos Moya's great theme is violence and memory. Though standalone novels, *El arma en el hombre* and *La sirvienta y el luchador* are also two pieces of a four-part epic that explores the aftermath of Central America's dirty wars with grim humor and caustic honesty. *El arma en el hombre* tells the story of a man nicknamed Robocop for his killing prowess, a former soldier who finds himself recruited by one armed group after another, culminating with the U.S. government. *La sirvienta y el luchador* is a sort of noirish mystery that digs into the nexus of death, suffering, fear, and complicity that stalked Central America in the 1980s. Castellanos Moya and Claudia Hernández should be read together, I think.

14. Levrero, Mario. *La máquina de pensar en Gladys*. Colección Laguna clásica. Bogotá: Laguna Libros, 2018.

This is a collection of offbeat stories, some more surreal than others, by the Uruguayan Mario Levrero. Like *Azares del cuerpo*, I found this book at the Laguna Libros stand at FILBo. I do not have space to include it in this annotated bibliography, but I also own a Levrero novel in translation, *Empty Words* (translated by Annie McDermott, *And Other Stories*, 2019). *And Other Stories* has another Levrero novel in translation forthcoming, but these stories remain untranslated.

15. Colanzi, Liliana. *Nuestro mundo muerto*. Colección Laguna Continental. Bogotá: Laguna Libros, 2016.

This is a collection of short stories by Bolivian writer Liliana Colanzi. It is another FILBo find. The book's cover is graced with gestural artworks, dark brushstrokes in the shape of pointing figures. Her work is like this, too: brooding, ominous, with touches of horror and the fantastical. Colanzi's work has been translated into English for Dalkey Archive Press. I am glad to know this—Dalkey Archive Press is named for the novel by the Irish author Flann O'Brien, and his work, especially the surreally unsettling *The Third Policeman*, reminds me of Colanzi's.

16. Osorio Lizarazo, José Antonio. *Barranquilla 2132*. Colección Laguna clásica. Bogotá: Laguna Libros, 2018.

Although this book was reissued by Laguna Libros in 2018, it was originally published in 1932. It is a fascinating novel, a science fiction time travel story about a newspaperman reanimated two hundred years in the future. It offers a disorienting reading experience, as all visions of the future from nearly 90 years ago are bound to do. The speculations about technology are a hoot: Osorio Lizarazo envisions instantaneous newspaper printing as a revolutionary development. What

would he think of the internet? Once again, I thank the wonderful people at Laguna Libros for showing me this book. I do not think it has been translated into English. Overall, I would love to see more Latin American science fiction translated into English. If science fiction helps us to imagine potential futures—or to fear potential dystopias—then I think we would all benefit from a more diverse set of visionary renderings. What does the future look like from Colombia, from Guatemala, from the Caribbean?

17. Yoss. *Super Extra Grande*. Translated by David L. Frye. Brooklyn: Restless Books, 2016.

Yoss's writing is an example of Latin American science fiction in translation. He is a metal-loving Cuban marine biologist, and his novel is an intergalactic sex romp. It is great fun. I adore the way that Yoss imagines outer space as a deeply Cuban zone. His writing is a kind of Caribbean-futurism in the ecstatic mode of classic space exploration science fiction.

18. Indiana, Rita. *La mucama de Omicunlé*. Cáceres: Editorial Periférica, 2015.

Like Yoss, Rita Indiana imagines a technological future for the Caribbean, but her vision is far more dystopian. Her novel tackles themes of racism, plague, militarism, and environmental catastrophe, but it also moves back in time to think about twentieth-century avant garde art and dictatorship, and even further back, to the era of Spanish conquistadores, slavery, and maroons. One of the protagonists is a transgender sex worker who travels in time and space. What is freedom, the novel asks, and how do we obtain it? Indiana is a musician, in addition to being a writer, and she is a major figure in the Dominican Republic art scene. This book is a trip; it is heady, sometimes nihilistic, sometimes giddy, politically astute and aesthetically challenging. I picked it up on a recommendation from the booksellers at the Editorial Periférica stand at FILBo. I knew I wanted to read something by Indiana, but I did not know where to start. This was the bookseller's suggestion, and I am grateful for it.

19. Indiana, Rita. *Tentacle*. Translated by Achy Obejas. Sheffield: And Other Stories, 2018.

The titles are completely different, but this is a translation of *La mucama de Omicunlé*. The name *Tentacle* comes from the part of the book's plot that centers on a sea anemone. I was particularly excited to receive this book through my subscription to And Other Stories Press, as I found the Spanish-language original so fascinating, and I admire Achy Obejas's own writing—she is a Cuban American who writes in both Spanish and English, in addition to her work as a translator. I saw Obejas speak at Tulane and afterwards we chatted. It is always a treat to meet a writer, to put a face and voice to their words on the page.

20. Alemán, Gabriela. *Poso Wells*. Translated by Dick Cluster. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2018.

This novel was inspired by a 1904 H.G. Wells story about blind men who live in Ecuador. The Ecuadorean writer Gabriela Alemán took this premise and ran with it, crafting an allegorical tale about patriarchy and politics in modern-day Guayaquil. I purchased this book after Alemán gave a reading at Garden District Book Shop in New Orleans. She was kind enough to sign the book with a dedication.

21. Alemán, Gabriela. *Body time*. Quito Planeta, 2003.

Gabriela Alemán may be Ecuadorean, but this novel is set in New Orleans, where she once lived. It is a fairly realist novel, but with a punk spirit. I loved reading about New Orleans in Spanish. I received this book from Tulane's Latin American Library (LAL)—occasionally the librarians need to make more space in their stacks, and so they give away or sell duplicates or damaged copies of books to graduate students and community members.

22. Alemán, Gabriela. *Álbum de familia*. San Juan: Trbalis, 2016.

This is my third and most cherished work by Gabriela Alemán, a collection of short stories published by a Puerto Rican feminist press. Two editors from the press visited Tulane and discussed their work, and I had the chance to meet them after their talk. Gabriela Alemán attended, too. The press gifted me this book, and then Alemán dedicated it to me and to my partner, who attended as well. I was humbled and touched by their generosity.

23. Monterroso, Augusto. *El eclipse y otros cuentos*. Madrid: Alianza, 1995.

This book is a delight. I found it in a Spanish-language bookshop in Miami. I was spending the summer studying Haitian Creole, living in a rented room in a mostly Cuban and South American neighborhood of the city. For me, Miami is Latin America in microcosm. Take the bookshop's location: it is in the same outdoor mall as a Colombian bakery, a Peruvian restaurant, and a taco spot, down the street from a Cuban restaurant called El Palacio de Jugos. Monterroso was a Honduran-born author of microrelatos, or microfictions, some as brief as a single line. (I have committed one of his most famous to memory: "Cuándo despertó, el dinosaurio todavía estaba allí.") It is perfect, then, that this book is tiny in size, maybe 4 inches by 3 inches, and only 63 pages long. It fits in a chest pocket.

24. Quiroga, Horacio. *Anaconda*. Madrid: Alianza, 1994.

This book is from the same store and the same series of tiny publications as *El eclipse y otros cuentos*. However, rather than microfictions, it is a novela, originally published in 1921 by the Uruguayan explorer, playwright, and scientist Horacio Quiroga. It is a story of Amazonian exploration told from the vantage of the snakes who oppose human encroachment. It reads a little bit like Poe, with touches of horror and the grotesque.

25. Caceres Romero, Adolfo. *Los golpes: cuentos*. La Paz: Editorial Los Amigos del Libro, 1983.

I obtained this book from the Tulane LAL sale, after it was withdrawn from circulation. On the cover page, the book bears the slogan "NO LEER LO QUE BOLIVIA PRODUCE ES IGNORAR LO QUE BOLIVIA ES." It is an unabashedly left-wing, anti-colonial collection of short stories. The title means "The Coups D'État." I am fascinated by the publisher, Editorial Los Amigos del Libro, which as far as I can tell, is now a bookstore in Cochabamba. Its Facebook page still bears the motto, "No leer lo que Bolivia produce es ignorar lo que Bolivia es."

26. Zárate Moreno, Jesús. *La cárcel: novela*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1972.

This is a brilliant midcentury Colombian novel that receives too little attention today. I came across it in Tulane's LAL, but decided I wanted to own my own copy, as my master's thesis focused on prison reform in Colombia, and I knew I wanted to return to this novel repeatedly. Indeed, I ended up writing a chapter of my thesis about the novel. (My in-process PhD dissertation research expands on that master's project). *La cárcel* takes place entirely in a Colombian prison. It is an extended meditation on guilt, responsibility, and harm, written in the form of a diary. The writing is deeply philosophical and erudite. By the end, the plot is overtaken by figures of the dead—Zárate prefigures academic interest in spectrality and haunting, and he does so with careful attention to the prison experience. I found the book bewitching. As I mentioned above, I purchased the book from a Venezuelan seller, I think from eBay, and it arrived with a startling amount of information about this man: his passport photo, his address, his name, his fingerprints, his date of birth. I got the impression that this information was part of the customs and border control requirement—I have never seen anything else like it, but then again, I have not received any other shipments from Venezuela.

27. Cabrera Infante, Guillermo. *Tres tristes tigres*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1999.

This novel is a love letter to pre-Revolutionary Havana nightlife, written with a hefty dose of levity and wit, tempered by mourning for the loss of that world. Cabrera Infante was originally a supporter of the Cuban Revolutionary project, but after a film his brother made about Havana nightlife was banned, he, too, was barred from publication, and he ultimately went into exile, to London. *Tres tristes tigres* has been compared to James Joyce's *Ulysses*. It is a masterwork. There is an especially delightful section in which Cabrera Infante parodies the styles of famous Cuban writers like Nicolás Guillén, Lydia Cabrera, and Alejo Carpentier, imagining how they would describe Trotsky's murder in Mexico City.

28. Carpentier, Alejo. *La consagración de la primavera: novela*. México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1978.

Alejo Carpentier is a challenging writer, his style famously baroque and complex. This late novel is a sort of ode to Stravinsky's ballet, *The Rite of Spring*. It is imbued with the spirit of revolution, with Carpentier's passion for music, and with the history of the twentieth century, from Europe to the Caribbean. He follows a dancer and a communist organizer as their biographies intersect with war, revolution, exile, and escape. *La consagración de la primavera* is not as widely praised as Carpentier's earlier novels, and perhaps for this reason it has not been translated into English. Then again, perhaps it has not been translated into English because it is one of his most adamantly pro-Cuban Revolution works. I purchased the novel online, for Yuri Herrera's course on palimpsests. Carpentier was a musicologist, and his love of music shines through the novel, from its structure to its voice. I found my copy of this novel in a bookstore on Calle Doncelles, and it bears a handwritten dedication:

*Para el noble y querido amigo Octavio, esta tarea de viaje.
Navidad de 1978.
– Samuel*

29. Carpentier, Alejo. *El reino de este mundo*. México D.F.: Lectorum, 2013.

Originally published in 1949, this novel is a history of the Haitian Revolution, told in the style Carpentier named *lo real maravilloso*. Carpentier melds fantastical elements with historical fealty. The effect is extremely compelling. For Carpentier, the history of the Caribbean—and indeed, the modern world—cannot be told without attending to Haiti, to the legacy of the slave trade, and just as crucially, of revolutionary action. He believed in the profound creative potential of cultural and social exchange, of mixture and meeting. I purchased this novel new online.

30. Lezama Lima, José. *Paradiso*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1988.

José Lezama Lima's novel is among the most erudite and demanding I have read. He was a gay man and his book is at times profoundly erotic. After its publication in 1968, he was isolated in post-Revolutionary Cuba—Che Guevara and Fidel Castro's vision of "the new man" was not compatible with Lezama Lima's art or his self-presentation. Reinaldo Arenas, another gay Cuban writer (but one who fled the island with the Mariel Boatlift), was a friend of Lezama Lima's, and he insists that this is among the best works ever to be published in Spanish. The Argentine Julio Cortázar agreed with Arenas on this, if on little else.

31. Suarez, Karla. *Havana Year Zero*. Translated by Christina MacSweeney. Edinburgh: Charco Press, 2021.

This is a new release from Charco Press, hot off the presses. I have not yet had a chance to read it. I list it here because I am excited to see how Karla Suarez—a young contemporary Cuban author—describes Havana, and how her vision will differ from or converge with that of authors like Carpentier, Lezama Lima, and Cabrera Infante.

32. Gravina Telechea, María F. *Lázaro vuela rojo*. La Habana, Cuba: Casa de las Américas, 1979.

I purchased this book of poetry from Tulane's LAL. Gravina Telechea won the Casa de las Américas Prize with this book. She was Uruguayan, and she fled the dictatorship and dirty war in her country, living in exile at the time of her book's publication, but I know little else about her. Her book was printed in Cuba. I adore the book itself: its design is pure 1970s, with a zany multi-colored grid gracing the front and back cover. At the same time, I am very moved to think about how Gravina Telechea published these poems even as her peers and friends were suffering disappearance and other state violence. She dedicated the book to Haroldo Conti, "disappeared at the hands of the Argentine military."

33. Benedetti, Mario. *Cotidianas*. México, D.F.: Siglo XXI Editores, 1979.

Like Gravina Telechea, Benedetti was a Uruguayan poet forced into exile by military dictatorship and repression. I obtained this book from Tulane's LAL, too. I am glad to have two works of poetry by two Uruguayans from the same year—1979. This book is just as aesthetically interesting as *Lázaro vuela rojo*. It is a faded purple and extremely narrow and thin, a design

well-suited to Benedetti's poems, with their short lines. I imagine this book slipping into someone's back pocket, or maybe fitting snugly inside a jacket, near a beating heart.

34. Chikangana, Fredy. *Kentipay Llattantutamanta (El colibrí de la noche desnuda): cantos, años 1995/2008*. Colección Casa de las lenguas. Bogotá: Ediciones Catapulta, 2008.

In my collecting, I focus on works in Spanish, but let me be clear that I know there are many, many more Latin American language, from Brazilian Portuguese to Haitian Creole to the dozens upon dozens of indigenous language spoken throughout the hemisphere. Because I have studied Creole, I own a small number of books in that language (a dictionary, a translation of the New Testament, and two novels), and going forward, I would love to build up that part of my collection. I have not studied any indigenous languages of the Americas, but I am interested in them. When I studied abroad in Ecuador, I had the opportunity to learn a few words of Quichua. This book is a collection of poetry. It is bilingual, in Spanish and Quechua (a language related to Quichua). I purchased it following a special event at FILBo, a reading by numerous indigenous poets.

35. Cheng-han. *A que tú te dejas*. Bogotá: Ediciones Catapulta, 2012.

This is a detective novel I purchased at FILBo. The publisher of Ediciones Catapulta, Edgar Melo Acosta, was selling books informally, accepting cash in hand. Afterwards, I looked him up online and found a blog post about his press, from the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo*. Apparently, this is Ediciones Catapulta's business model—Melo Acosta attends literary events in Bogotá and sells his inexpensively printed books directly to readers. I can find nothing about the book's author. Cheng-han is a mystery to me.

36. Uribe Sánchez, Sara María. *Antígona González*. Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca: SurPlus Ediciones, 2014.

This is a haunting, elegiac, genre-crossing work of poetry and prose by the Mexican author Sara Uribe. It is a lament for victims of femicide and a reworking of Sophocles's play, *Antigone*. Part of the text is comprised of headlines and snippets of stories from what is called *la nota roja*, the often graphically violent coverage of murders and crime that circulates in Mexican newspapers. Uribe appropriates these words and inscribes them with new meaning. Uribe was the keynote speaker for a Latin American Studies graduate student conference I helped to organize at Tulane. It was an honor to meet her. She is an academic herself, and in her speech she spoke about the relationships between memory, justice, and art with sensitivity and insight.

37. Uribe Sánchez, Sara María. *Abroche su cinturón mientras esté sentado*. México, D.F.: Secretaría de Cultura, Dirección General de Publicaciones: Río Lejos, 2017.

Uribe gifted me this collection of her poetry as a thank you for inviting her to our conference. I am very grateful for her gift. Her poems, like her work in *Antígona González*, are experimental and allusive. She plays with found text, with assemblage and juxtaposition, with collage. My edition was published with the support of the Mexican Secretary of Culture.

38. Zapata, Luis. *El vampiro de la colonia Roma: las aventuras, desventuras y sueños de Adonis García*. México, D.F.: Debolsillo, 2016.

I love this book. It is a classic of gay Mexican fiction, originally published in 1979. The novel is a first-person monologue from a gay man and occasional sex worker in Mexico City, told with idiosyncratic grammar—nothing is capitalized, and Zapata uses no periods, just spaces, paragraph breaks, and question marks to sustain the flow of voice. It is dazzling and laugh-out-loud funny. I read it for Yuri Herrera’s course on humor in Mexican literature. It would be a difficult job to translate this book, but I hope someone does so someday—I imagine there would be a broad audience for this book in English. My edition is an inexpensive paperback with a very cheesy image of a shirtless man and a “Best Seller” seal on the front, but something about this design feels right. It looks like the sort of book one could buy in a box store checkout line, and in the novel, the narrator, Adonis García, recalls with fondness how the bathrooms in downtown Mexico City department stores were the best sites for gay cruising.

39. Saldaña París, Daniel. *En medio de extrañas víctimas*. Mexico, D.F.: Sexto Piso, 2013.

This is a book I purchased on Yuri Herrera’s recommendation. It has been translated into English, by Christina MacSweeney for Coffee House Press (2015), but I am glad to own the original Spanish. Saldaña París is a risk-taking writer, unafraid of the gross, the foul, the embarrassing. His narrator is a young man caught up in inertia and passivity who gradually finds himself tugged into situations beyond his control. The denouement is an unforgettably surreal sequence, replete with time travel and a grand scatological flourish. I purchased it new online.

40. Revueltas, José. *The Hole*. Translated by Amanda Hopkinson and Sophie Hughes. New York: New Directions Publishing, 2018.

This is an atomic bomb of a novella. Revueltas was a leading figure of the Mexican literary scene. A dedicated leftist, he was kicked out of at least two Communist parties for his antiauthoritarianism and unorthodoxy. The Mexican government arrested and imprisoned him multiple times; they accused him of being the intellectual instigator of the student protests that the PRI government repressed in 1968, in the massacre of students at Tlatelolco. While Revueltas was in prison, he wrote *The Hole*, a single searing paragraph composed between February and March of 1969. It is a cynical, profane, entrancing text. Bolaño certainly read Revueltas. Hopkinson and Hughes worked together on the translation of this edition, and it is excellent. I purchased it new from a local bookstore, as soon as it was out.

41. Agustín, José. *Se está haciendo tarde (final en laguna)*. Contemporánea. México, D.F.: Debolsillo, 2007.

This is a classic novel of the Mexican counterculture, originally published in 1973. Agustín was a part of the literary and artistic movement called *la literatura de la Onda*, or “the literature of the Wave,” which sought to break with inherited literary norms, rejecting rigidity and decorum for a looser, franker style, and focusing on marginal figures: drug users, outcasts, criminals. Like *The Hole*, portions of *Se está haciendo tarde (final en laguna)* were written in Lecumberri Prison. Indeed, Agustín wrote screenplays, too, including for a 1976 film based on *The Hole*.

42. Poniatowska, Elena. *De noche vienes*. México: Ediciones Era, 2015.

Poniatowska is the grand dame of Mexican letters. In my estimation, however, she has not received the international recognition that her work merits. Her oral history of the events at Tlatelolco, *La noche de Tlatelolco* (1971), remains a pathbreaking text, and a politically courageous one: she published the work when Mexico remained shrouded in terror and uncertainty about what had happened, when many leftists were still forced into exile or hiding. While her other writings are too extensive to cover here, I bring up *La noche de Tlatelolco* because it stands in such contrast to her story collection, *De noche vienes*, which was originally published in 1979. Her fiction, like her nonfiction and reportage, is feminist and attuned to issues of power, but here she issues her critiques with levity and with humor. The title story was made into a film, *De Noche Vienes, Esmeralda* in 1997 by Mexican director Jaime Humberto Hermosillo. I purchased this edition new from a bookstore in the Colonia Roma neighborhood of Mexico City.

43. Poniatowska, Elena, José Agustín, and Eduardo Galeano. *Ay Jonás qué ballenota y otros dos / Galeano, Eduardo,; 1940-2015. ; Ciudad de México*. Di sí a la lectura : antología de cuento, relato o viñeta; México, D.F.: Plaza y Valdés, 1992.

I found this book—really, more of a pamphlet—at a shop on Calle Donceles. It is a collection of three stories, one by Poniatowska, one by Agustín, and one by the Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano, printed for the 1992 International Book Fair in Frankfurt, Germany. Hilariously, someone taped a cutout from another book to the first page, an advertisement for Oswalt Kolle’s *Tu Marido, Ese Desconocido*, which translates as “Your Husband, That Stranger” (except that the Spanish rhymes). Based on the brief description that follows, it seems that Kolle’s book offers “precise and modern” advice for new wives, in the realms of “basic, physical, psychic, and sexual knowledge.” I imagine that Poniatowska, a dedicated feminist, and Agustín, a countercultural critic of domestic normativity, would chuckle at this collision of their stories with such a how-to guide for wifely accommodation.

44. Rivera Garza, Cristina. *The Iliac Crest*. Translated by Sarah Booker. Sheffield: And Other Stories, 2018.

Cristina Rivera Garza is among the most important of contemporary Mexican authors. Her works explore gender, history, borders, literary form, and the possibilities of narrative. This is the first book of hers I read, and my copy is a bit dog-eared: I took it with me when I backpacked a portion of the Appalachian Trail. At Duke, I am an organizer of a graduate student working group for the study of gender and sexuality in Latin America and the Caribbean, and this role gave me the opportunity to invite Rivera Garza, together with her translator, Sarah Booker (a graduate student in Romance Studies at UNC Chapel Hill), and their editor at The Feminist Press, Lauren Hook, for a conversation about “Translation as Feminist Collaboration,” which I moderated. The link to the recording of that event is available here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yME--tT2Ew

45. Rulfo, Juan. *Pedro Páramo*. Colección popular. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1981.

My collection is not focused on canonical works of Latin American literature, as I prefer, instead, to collect works that are under-recognized and hard to find. However, I do make a few exceptions to this, such as the Carpentier novels mentioned above and the García Márquez novel listed below. Reading these works helps me to make sense of many of the other texts in my collection. Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* is an absolute classic, one of the greatest novels of the twentieth century. A mysterious and ghostly reflection on violence and memory, Rulfo's novel, originally published in 1955, still feels fresh, timeless, and rich. Rivera Garza is one of Rulfo's literary descendants—indeed, her work can be transparent in its homage to his legacy, as in her 2016 work, *Había mucha neblina o humo o no sé qué*, the title of which is a quote from *Pedro Páramo*. My edition of this novel is budget paperback printed by the Mexican Fund for Economic Culture. I found it, to my surprise, at a thrift store in the United States.

46. Bernal, Rafael. *El complot Mongol*. México, D.F.: Joaquín Mortiz Editorial, 2011.

Originally published in 1969, this is a gem of Mexican noir. Rafael Bernal set his Cold War detective story in an imagined Mexico City Chinatown, rife with Soviet and CIA espionage, post-war political chicanery, and other intrigue. His narrator, Filiberto García, is a hardboiled, foulmouthed antihero inhabiting a world of trenchcoats, shadows, and moral grays. I purchased this novel new online.

47. Subcomandante Marcos, and Paco Ignacio Taibo II. *Muertos incómodos: falta lo que falta*. Narradores contemporáneos. México, D.F.: J. Mortiz, 2005.

This is a “four hand novel,” co-written by the master of contemporary Spanish-language detective fiction, Paco Ignacio Taibo II, and the Zapatista leader Subcomandante Marcos. They write alternating chapters. The book offers a stinging critic of Mexican politics and neoliberalism, a view into the operations of Zapatista Autonomous Communities in Chiapas, and a rollicking mystery story to boot. I am struggling to remember where I purchased this book—I think it was in Oaxaca, partway through a trip from Guatemala City to Mexico City, but I cannot say with certainty.

48. Coordinadora Juvenil por la Equidad de Género. *Yo también decidí abortar*. Quito: Ecuador.

When I was 20 and 21, I studied abroad in Quito, Ecuador. I interned with the feminist youth collective that published this book, a collection of first-person testimonies about experiences with abortion. My copy is coming loose at the binding. I smile every time I see it, remembering the time I spent with the activists who collected these stories.

49. García Márquez, Gabriel. *Crónica de Una Muerte Anunciada*. Venezuela, 1983.

With Alejo Carpentier and Juan Rulfo, Gabriel García Márquez was a pioneering figure in the development of magical realism and other fantastical Latin American genres of writing. Reading his classic novels, *Love in the Time of Cholera* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, was a formative experience for me as a fan of world literature. I own many of his books, but this one, a

slim novella, is the first I attempted to read in Spanish. I purchased the book in a shop in Mérida, Venezuela. I had just finished an internship in the city of Barquisimeto, and I was traveling independently before returning to the United States. This was before I was serious about book collecting; I was only looking for something to read on an intercity bus. The edition I found is a strange one. There is no publisher information listed, only a small note with the author's name and the date, 1983. The cover is a faded orange with a rough drawing of a body covered in a sheet stained by a perfect red circle. When I looked up the cover of the first edition (from 1981), I did a double take: the drawing on my copy is an imitation of the photograph on the first edition's cover, down to the placement of the sheet, the bloodstain, and the body's missing right shoe.

50. Belli, Gioconda. *El País de Las Mujeres*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2014.

Gioconda Belli is among the most renowned of Nicaraguan writers. She was a member of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) that deposed the dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle in 1979, and she played key roles in the early years of the Sandinista government. She is an ardent advocate for women's rights. This book is an agile satire and a feminist utopia, with echoes of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*. Belli imagines a country in which the "Party of the Erotic Left" takes power and sends men home, leaving the public sphere for women to occupy. This book is from a shop in Sevilla.

I first heard Belli's name when I was fourteen, on the trip to Nicaragua I describe above. As I compiled this list, I realized hers is the only Nicaraguan book in my collection. I hope to remedy this (see Wishlist), but for now, I have decided to end my annotated bibliography with her novel. I see a sort of symmetry here. With Belli, I come full circle from the experience that motivated my interest in Latin American worlds in the first place: from Nicaragua and back to Nicaragua again.