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Chilean Literature

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CHILEAN LITERATURE

It is our pleasure to remark on this special issue of *Inti: Revista de literatura hispánica*. The title of the journal, "INTI", is translated into English as "sun" derived from the Quechua language. Quechua is the indigenous language of Native Americans living in the Andean regions of South America, and along with Spanish, is one of the official languages of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. This special issue of the journal, however, focuses on studies of recent Chilean literature, especially fiction and poetry, written during the last 30 years.

The Lehigh Valley Campus of Penn State University is a fitting sponsor of this journal, since the region is now home to several diverse communities with roots in Spanish speaking South America, Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. An increasing number of students from Hispanic families join our campus each year, bringing rich cultural traditions represented by the literature studies in this journal. The articles are published in Spanish and would yield a significant impact on global understanding of literature throughout the Spanish reading world.

Our campus is also dedicated to expanding global awareness of all our students, regardless of ethnicity or background, or ability in reading Spanish. So the breadth of interest in New World Spanish literature generally treated in this "Review of Spanish American Literature", and the depth of focus (particularly on Chilean literature) in this special issue are of particular interest to us. Many of our students study Spanish at the college level. One of the editors of this journal issue, Dr. Ana Figueroa, contributes continuously to our students' abilities in reading, writing, and speaking Spanish, as well as expanding their understanding of a wide range of Latino culture. It is our hope that undergraduate students and emerging scholars will be able to take advantage of studies such as this to stop and look through a window to the latest thinking and discourse about these important literary studies.

Of course, Chile has already been famous for writers of poetry and fiction during the twentieth century. In 1945, the first Latin American writer to win the Nobel Prize was a Chilean woman, Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957), known for her passionate lyrical poetry which draws upon the amazing natural landscape of Chile. Her works remain mostly available in Spanish. Of course, the Chilean giant in world literature was Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), who won the Nobel Prize in 1971. His monumental poetry and his writings about his own life, widely available in English, brought him world wide recognition during his lifetime and kept him solidly on any list of major literary figures. Certainly the most famous of Chilean writers today is the popular novelist Isabel Allende, whose *House of the Spirits*, *Of Love and Shadows* and *Eva Luna* have all been international bestsellers and remain

hugely popular in the United States.

The current volume, centered on the last 30 years of Chilean literature, recognizes the talent of a variety of Chilean writers, including those indigenous, women and homosexual voices who would not have been seen as part of the official “canon” in previous analyses of Hispanic literature. This volume can be regarded as truly groundbreaking, in the sense that the scholars who are presenting their analytical essays in this special edition of *INTI* also have different backgrounds and come from different global regions than previously. Finally, we should point out that this issue is also “modern” in the sense that, while the emphasis remains on conventional literary genres, narrative and poetry, it also includes new directions in literary theory which encompasses the “phenomenon” of literature as well as the texts themselves.

Let us conclude by recognizing the current marking of Chilean independence as a country. On September 18, 1810, Chile declared independence from French occupied Spain. Of course, the cultural roots and seeds of a national Chilean literature are much older, extending to the pre-literary past of the native peoples, and directly back to Spain, the mother country of the European conquerors and settlers. Penn State Lehigh Valley, in subvention of this volume, is proud to participate in a small way in the world-wide celebration of 200 years of this country’s independence and recognition of Chilean people’s modern literature.

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