

= Dictator novel =

The dictator novel ( Spanish : novela del dictador ) is a genre of Latin American literature that challenges the role of the dictator in Latin American society . The theme of caudillismo ? the régime of a charismatic caudillo , a political strongman ? is addressed by examining the relationships between power , dictatorship , and writing . Moreover , a dictator novel often is an allegory for the role of the writer in a Latin American society . Although mostly associated with the Latin American Boom of the 1960s and 1970s , the dictator @-@ novel genre has its roots in the nineteenth @-@ century novel *Facundo* ( 1845 ) , by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento . As an indirect critique of Juan Manuel de Rosas 's dictatorial régime in Argentina , *Facundo* is the forerunner of the dictator novel genre ; all subsequent dictator novels hearken back to it . As established by Sarmiento , the goal of the genre is not to analyze the rule of particular dictators , or to focus on historical accuracy , but to examine the abstract nature of authority figures and of authority in general .

To be considered a dictator novel , a story should have strong political themes drawn from history , a critical examination of the power held by the dictator , the caudillo , and some general reflection on the nature of authoritarianism . Although some dictator novels centre on one historical dictator ( albeit in fictional guise ) , they do not analyze the economics , politics , and rule of the régime as might a history book . The dictator novel genre includes *I , the Supreme* ( 1974 ) , by Augusto Roa Bastos , about Dr. Francia of Paraguay , and *The Feast of the Goat* ( 2000 ) , by Mario Vargas Llosa , about Rafael Leónidas Trujillo of the Dominican Republic . Alternatively , the novelist might create a fictional dictator to achieve the same narrative end , as in *Reasons of State* ( 1974 ) , by Alejo Carpentier , in which the dictator is a composite man assembled from historical dictators . The genre of the dictator novel has been very influential in the development of a Latin American literary tradition , because many of the novelists rejected traditional , linear story @-@ telling techniques , and developed narrative styles that blurred the distinctions between reader , narrator , plot , characters , and story . In examining the authority of leadership , the novelists also assessed their own social roles as paternalistic dispensers of wisdom , like that of the caudillo whose régime they challenged in their dictator novels .

= = Literary context = =

Literary critic Roberto González Echevarría argues that the dictator novel is ? the most clearly indigenous thematic tradition in Latin American literature ? , and traces the development of this theme from ? as far back as Bernal Díaz del Castillo ? s and Francisco López de Gómara ? s accounts of Cortés ? s conquest of Mexico . ? The nineteenth century saw significant literary reflections on political power , though on the whole the dictator novel is associated with the Latin American Boom , a literary movement of the 1960s and 1970s . For critic Gerald Martin , the dictator novel marks the end of the Boom and even ( as he says of Roa Bastos 's *I , the Supreme* ) ? the end of an entire era in Latin American history , the era which had stretched from Sarmiento 's *Facundo* in 1845 . " In the 1970s , many dictator novels focused on the figure ? of the aging dictator , prey to the boredom of a limitless power he is on the verge of losing . ?

= = Definition = =

Miguel Ángel Asturias 's *El Señor Presidente* ( written in 1933 , but not published until 1946 ) is , in the opinion of critic Gerald Martin , " the first real dictator novel " . Other literary treatments of the dictator figure followed , such as Jorge Zalamea 's *El Gran Burundún Burundá ha muerto* , but the genre did not gain impetus until it was reinvented in the political climate of the cold war , through the Latin American Boom .

The dictator novel came back into fashion in the 1970s , towards the end of the Boom . As Sharon Keefe Ugalde remarks , " the 1970s mark a new stage in the evolution of the Latin American dictator novel , characterized by at least two developments : a change in the perspective from which the dictator is viewed and a new focus on the nature of language . " By this she means that the dictator

novels of the 1970s , such as *The Autumn of the Patriarch* or *I , the Supreme* , offer the reader a more intimate view of their subject : " the dictator becomes protagonist " and the world is often seen from his point of view . With the new focus on language , Keefe Ugalde points to the realisation on the part of many authors that " the tyrant 's power is derived from and defeated by language . " For example , in Jorge Zalamea 's *El Gran Burundún Burundá ha muerto* the dictator bans all forms of language .

According to Raymond L. Williams , it was not until the 1970s , when enough Latin American writers had published novels dealing with military regimes , that " dictator novel " became common nomenclature . The most celebrated novels of this era were Alejo Carpentier 's *Reasons of State* ( 1974 ) , Augusto Roa Bastos 's *I , the Supreme* ( 1974 ) , and Gabriel García Márquez 's *The Autumn of the Patriarch* ( 1975 ) . He defines the dictator novel as a novel which draws upon the historical record to create fictionalized versions of dictators . In this way , the author is able to use the specific to explain the general , as many dictator novels are centred around the rule of a one particular dictator . Within this group he includes those novelists who took to task authoritarian figures such as Vargas Llosa 's *Conversation in the Cathedral* ( 1969 ) and Denzil Romero 's *La tragedia del Generalísimo* ( 1984 ) . He even includes Sergio Ramírez 's *¿ Te dio miedo la sangre ?* ( 1977 ) , a novel about Nicaraguan society under the Somoza dictatorship , which has been described as a " dictator novel without the dictator " .

= = Style and theme = =

The novelists of the dictator novel genre combined narrative strategies of both modern and postmodern writing . Postmodern techniques , constructed largely in the late 1960s and 1970s , included use of interior monologues , radically stream @-@ of @-@ consciousness narrative , fragmentation , varying narrative points of view , neologisms , innovative narrative strategies , and frequent lack of causality . Alejo Carpentier , a Boom writer and contributor to the dictator novel genre pioneered what came to be known as magical realism , although the use of this technique is not necessarily a prerequisite of the dictator novel , as there are many that do not utilize magical realism .

A predominant theme of the dictator novel is power , which according literary critic Michael Valdez Moses , in his 2002 review of *Feast of the Goat* , is linked to the theme of dictatorship : " The enduring power of the Latin American dictator novel had everything to do with the enduring power of Latin American dictators " . As novels such as *El Señor Presidente* became more well @-@ known , they were read as ambitious political statements , denouncing the authority of dictators in Latin America . As political statements , dictator novel authors challenged dictatorial power , creating a link between power and writing through the force wielded by their pen . For example , in Roa Bastos 's *I , The Supreme* , the novel revolves around a central theme of language and the power inherent in all of its forms , a power that is often only present in the deconstruction of communication . González Echevarría argues that :

Dr. Francia 's fear of the pasquinade , his abuse of Policarpo Patiño ... , [ and ] his constant worry about writing all stem from the fact that he has found and used the power implicit in language itself . The Supremo defines power as being able to do through others what we are unable to do ourselves : language , being separate from what it designates , is the very embodiment of power , for things act and mean through it without ceasing to be themselves . Dr. Francia has also realized that he cannot control language , particularly written language , that it has a life of its own that threatens him .

Another constant theme which runs throughout the Latin American dictator novel , which gained in importance and frequency during the Latin American Boom , is the interdependence of the Latin American tyrant and United States imperialism . In Mario Vargas Llosa 's *The Feast of the Goat* , for example , Trujillo faces serious opposition shortly after losing his material backing from the CIA , previously held for over 32 years in light of his anti @-@ communist leanings .

Gender is an additional overarching theme within dictator novels . National portraits in Latin America often insist on the importance of women ( and men ) that are healthy , happy , productive ,

and patriotic , yet many national literary treasures often reflect government rhetoric in the way they code active citizenship as male . Masculinity is an enduring motif in the dictator novel . There is a connection between the pen and the penis in Latin American fiction , but this pattern cannot be explained by machismo alone ? it is far more complex . According to Rebecca E. Biron , " where we find violent , misogynistic fantasies of masculinity , we also [ find ] violent social relations between actual men and women . " Many Latin American works " include characters who act out violent fictions of masculinity , and yet their narrative structure provides readers with alternative responses to misogynistic fantasies of masculine identity formation " .

= = Historical context = =

= = = Dictators in Latin American history = = =

Since independence , Latin American countries have been subject to both right and left @-@ wing authoritarian regimes , stemming from a history of colonialism in which one group dominated another . Given this long history , it is unsurprising that there have been so many novels " about individual dictators , or about the problems of dictatorship caudillismo , caciquismo , militarism and the like . " The legacy of colonialism is one of racial conflict sometimes pushing an absolute authority to rise up to contain it ? thus the tyrant is born . Seeking unlimited power , dictators often amend constitutions , dismantling laws which prevent their reelection . Licenciado Manuel Estrada Cabrera , for example , altered the Guatemalan Constitution in 1899 to permit his return to power . The dictators who have become the focus of the dictator novel ( Augusto Roa Bastos 's I , the Supreme , for instance , is based on Paraguay 's dictator of the early nineteenth century , the so @-@ called Dr Francia ) do not differ much from each other in terms of how they govern . As author González Echevarría states : " they are male , militaristic , and wield almost absolute personal power . " Their strong @-@ arm tactics include exiling or imprisoning their opposition , attacking the freedom of the press , creating a centralized government backed by a powerful military force , and assuming complete control over free thought . Despite intense criticisms leveled at these figures , dictators involved in nationalist movements developed three simple truths , " that everybody belonged , that the benefits of Progress should be shared , and that industrial development should be the priority " . Epitácio Pessoa , who was elected President of Brazil in 1919 , wanted to make the country progress regardless of whether or not Congress passed the laws he proposed . In particular , during the Great Depression , Latin American activist governments of the 1930s saw the end of neocolonialism and the infusion of nationalist movements throughout Latin America , increasing the success of import substitution industrialization or ISI . The positive side @-@ effect of the collapse of international trade meant local Latin American manufacturers could fill the market niches left vacant by vanishing exports .

In the twentieth century , prominent Latin American dictators have included the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua , Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay , and Augusto Pinochet in Chile , among others . As an outside influence , United States interference in Latin American politics is controversial and has often been severely criticized . As García Calderón noted as far back as 1925 : " Does it want peace or is it controlled by certain interests ? " As a theme in the dictator novel , the link between U.S. imperialism and the power of the tyrant is very important . Dictators in Latin America have accepted military and financial support from the United States when it suited them , but have also turned against the United States , using anti @-@ American campaigning to gain favour with the people . In the case of Trujillo , " Nothing promises to reinvigorate his flagging popularity more than to face up to the Yankee aggressor in the name of la patria . "

= = = Los Padres de la Patria = = =

In 1967 during a meeting with Alejo Carpentier , Julio Cortázar , and Miguel Otero Silva , the Mexican author Carlos Fuentes launched a project consisting of a series of biographies depicting

Latin American dictators , which was to be called *Los Padres de la Patria* ( The Fathers of the Fatherland ) . After reading Edmund Wilson 's portraits of the American Civil War in *Patriotic Gore* , Fuentes recounts , " Sitting in a pub in Hampstead , we thought it would be a good idea to have a comparable book on Latin America . An imaginary portrait gallery immediately stepped forward , demanding incarnation : the Latin American dictators . " Vargas Llosa was to write about Manuel A. Odría , Jorge Edwards about José Manuel Balmaceda , José Donoso about Mariano Melgarejo , and Julio Cortázar about Eva Perón . As M. Mar Langa Pizarro observes , the project was never completed , but it helped inspire a series of novels written by important authors during the Latin American literary boom , such as Alejo Carpentier , Augusto Roa Bastos , Gabriel García Márquez , and Mario Vargas Llosa .

= = Development of the genre = =

= = = Forerunners = = =

Both Domingo Faustino Sarmiento 's *Facundo* and José Mármol 's *Amalia* , published in the nineteenth century , were precursors to the twentieth century dictator novel ; however , " all fictional depictions of the Latin American ' strong @-@ man ' , have an important antecedent in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento 's *Facundo* , a work written as a sociological treatise " . *Facundo* is an indirect critique of Juan Manuel de Rosas 's dictatorship , directed against the actual historical figure , Juan Facundo Quiroga , but is also a broader investigation into Argentine history and culture . Sarmiento 's *Facundo* has remained a fundamental fixture because of the breadth of its literary exploration of the Latin American environment . In *Facundo* , Sarmiento criticizes the historical figure Facundo Quiroga , a provincial caudillo , who like Rosas ( dictator of Argentina from 1829 to 1853 ) was opposed to the enlightened ideas of progress . After returning from exile , Sarmiento worked to reinvent Argentina , eventually becoming president himself from 1868 to 1874 . Sarmiento 's analysis of Facundo Quiroga was the first time that an author questioned how figures like Facundo and Rosas could have maintained such absolute power , and in answering this question , *Facundo* established its place as an inspirational text to later authors . Sarmiento perceived his own power in writing *Facundo* as " within the text of the novel , it is the novelist , through the voice of omniscience , who has replaced God " , thereby creating the bridge between writing and power that is characteristic of the dictator novel .

Set in post @-@ colonial Buenos Aires , *Amalia* was written in two parts and is a semi @-@ autobiographical account of José Mármol that deals with living in Rosas 's police state . Mármol 's novel was important as it showed how the human consciousness , much like a city or even a country , could become a terrifying prison . *Amalia* also attempted to examine the problem of dictatorships as being one of structure , and therefore the problem of the state " manifested through the will of some monstrous personage violating the ordinary individual 's privacy , both of home and of consciousness . " In the early twentieth century , the Spaniard Ramón del Valle @-@ Inclán 's *Tirano Banderas* ( 1926 ) acted as a key influence on those authors whose goal was to critique power structures and the status quo .

= = = Classic dictator novels = = =

*El Señor Presidente* is a 1946 novel by Guatemalan Nobel Prize @-@ winning writer and diplomat Miguel Ángel Asturias . Although the novel does not explicitly identify its setting as early twentieth @-@ century Guatemala , Asturias was inspired by the 1898 ? 1920 presidency of Manuel Estrada Cabrera for his title character . This novel explores the nature of political dictatorship and its effects on society , and is an overtly political novel in which Asturias denounces Latin American dictators . By keeping time and place ambiguous , Asturias 's novel represents a break from former narratives , which until this point had been judged on how adequately they reflected reality . Asturias 's distinctive use of dream imagery , onomatopoeia , simile , and repetition , combined with a

discontinuous structure consisting of abrupt changes of style and viewpoint , sprang from surrealist and ultraist influences . Furthermore , it made early use of a literary technique that would come to be known as magic realism . The President went on to influence a generation of Latin American authors , becoming an early example of the " new novel " and a precursor to the Latin American literary boom .

Jorge Zalamea , *El gran Burundún Burundá ha muerto* ( " The Great Burundún Burundá is Dead " , 1951 ) . For Keefe Ugalde , " *El gran Burundún Burundá ...* occupies an important midway point in the evolution of the dictator novel " and Peter Neissa emphasizes " its cultural and political importance and subsequent influence on dictator narratives . " More broadly , Martin describes this " remarkable Colombian novelette " as seeming to contain " the seeds of García Márquez 's mature style . " The book describes the ( fictional ) dictator " Burundún 's rise to power , selected events during his regime , and a description of his funeral . " It is at this funeral that it is revealed that the body of the dictator is absent , and has somehow been replaced by or transformed into " a great big parrot , a voluminous parrot , an enormous parrot , all swollen , inflated and wrapped in documents , gazettes , mail from abroad , newspapers , reports , annals , broadsheets , almanacs , official bulletins . "

Enrique Lafourcade 's *King Ahab 's Feast* ( *La Fiesta del rey Acab* , 1959 ) portrays the fictional dictator César Alejandro Carrillo Acab , and opens with what Claude Hulet describes as an " amusingly ironic , tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek note in preface " which declares that " This is a mere work of fiction . ... Indeed , no one is unaware that neither the United Nations , nor the Organization of American States , permits the continued existence of regimes like the one that serves as pretext to this novel . " As Hulet observes , Lafourcade 's " powerful and razor sharp satire " is directed " presumably against the Trujillo regime and others like it . "

Alejo Carpentier 's , *Reasons of State* ( *El recurso del método* , 1974 ) , is a synthesis of several historical figures from Latin American , most prominently Gerardo Machado , dictator of Cuba . This fictional character , in his bid to be refined , spends half of his life in Europe , perhaps reminiscent of Sarmiento 's dichotomy of civilization and barbarism . This novel is tragicomic in nature , the only novel by Carpentier to combine elements of both tragedy and comedy .

Augusto Roa Bastos 's *I , the Supreme* ( *Yo , el Supremo* , 1974 ) is a fictionalized account of the nineteenth @-@ century Paraguayan dictator José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia . However , it is also a historical account , making use of real documents and accounts of people who knew Francia . Roa 's portrayal of a despot in Latin American fiction is distinguished " not only by the quantity of detail lavished on him , but by his remarkable capacity to seem at one moment a person , at another an embodiment of contradictory elements not usually associated with a single person , let alone a powerful tyrant " . Its title was derived from the fact that Francia referred to himself as " *El Supremo* " or " the Supreme " . Making use of non @-@ traditional writing techniques , the novel is composed of separate discourses with their own distinctive styles , and the demarcation between them is often blurred . Gerald Martin claims that Roa Bastos 's novel " was more immediately and unanimously acclaimed than any novel since *One Hundred Years of Solitude* , and critics seemed to suspect that its strictly historical importance might be even greater than that of García Márquez 's fabulously successful creation . "

Gabriel García Márquez 's *The Autumn of the Patriarch* ( *El otoño del patriarca* , 1975 ) details the life of an eternal dictator , " *el macho* " , a fictional character who lives to be over 200 years old . The book is divided into six sections , each retelling the same story of the infinite power held by the archetypal Caribbean tyrant . Márquez based his fictional dictator on a variety of real @-@ life autocrats , including Gustavo Rojas Pinilla of his Colombian homeland , Generalissimo Francisco Franco of Spain ( the novel was written in Barcelona ) , and Venezuela 's Juan Vicente Gómez . One of the key characters of the novel is the Indian General Saturno Santos , who devotes himself to " inscrutable service to the patriarch . " In this novel , García Márquez proposes an interesting contradiction : " that Latin America 's patriarchs owe their most intimate support to their victims of longest standing ; and that America 's revolution is inconceivable without the Indian " . Illustrating the importance of the Indian in Latin America is all the more prudent given that García Márquez 's home country , Colombia , is distinguished as literarily not recognizing the Indian populations which are

very much alive today .

Luisa Valenzuela 's *The Lizard 's Tail* ( *Cola de lagartija* , 1983 ) is set in the period after Juan Perón 's return to Argentina in 1973 , when the Argentine president was heavily influenced by the sinister éminence grise José López Rega . The novel deals specifically with themes surrounding the nature of male @-@ female relationships during this regime of military oppression . The novel 's title is a reference to an instrument of torture that was invented in the Southern Cone .

Tomás Eloy Martínez 's *The Perón Novel* ( *La novela de Perón* , 1985 ) uses a mixture of historical facts , fiction , and documents to retell the life story of Juan Domingo Perón , " dramatizing the rivalries within the ranks of Peronism " . This allowed the author to construct an intimate portrait of Perón rather than an historically accurate one . This method of analyzing Perón , that delves into his early history and family upbringing to theorize the motivation for his actions later in life , can be linked to Sarmiento 's similar analyses of Facundo , and through him , Rosas .

Gabriel García Márquez 's *The General in His Labyrinth* ( *El general en su laberinto* , 1989 ) is a fictionalized account of the last days in the life of Simón Bolívar . Bolívar , also known as the Great Liberator , freed from Spanish rule the territory that would subsequently become Venezuela , Bolivia , Colombia , Peru , and Ecuador . However the character of the General is not portrayed as the glorious hero that traditional history has presented ; instead García Márquez develops a pathetic protagonist , a prematurely aged man who is physically ill and mentally exhausted .

Mario Vargas Llosa 's *The Feast of the Goat* ( *La fiesta del chivo* , 2000 ) recounts with " gruesome detail and dramatic intensity " the last days of the tyrant and dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo of the Dominican Republic , as he becomes infuriated that , despite being a long @-@ standing ally of the United States because of his anti @-@ communist stance , he is no longer in favour with the U.S. administration who have withdrawn their backing on discovering his extensive human rights violations . Following several interwoven storylines ? those of Trujillo , his assassins , and the daughter of a man who once served in Trujillo 's inner circle of advisers , Urania Cabral ? this novel reveals both the political and social environment in the Dominican Republic , past and present . The story opens and closes with Urania 's story , effectively framing the narrative in terms of remembering and understanding the past and its legacy for the present .

= = = ' Not quite ' dictator novels = = =

Latin American novels that explore political themes , but that do not centre upon the rule of a particular dictator , are informally classified as ? not quite dictator novels ? . For example , *Libro de Manuel* ( *A Manual for Manuel* , 1973 ) , by Julio Cortázar , is a postmodern novel about urban guerrillas and their revolutionary struggle , which asks the reader to examine the broader societal matters of language , sexuality , and the modes of interpretation . In *The Time of the Butterflies* ( 1994 ) , by Julia Álvarez , tells the story of the Mirabal sisters , whom patriotism transformed from well @-@ behaved Catholic débutantes to political dissenters against the thirty @-@ year dictatorship of the Trujillo régime in the Dominican Republic . The novel sought to illuminate the officially @-@ obscured @-@ history of the deaths of the Mirabal sisters , not to determine what happened to them , but to determine how the Mirabal sisters happened to the national politics of the Dominican Republic . In the mock @-@ diary ? *Intimate Diary of Solitude* ? ( third part of *El imperio de los sueños* 1988 ; *Empire of Dreams* , 1994 ) , by Giannina Braschi , the protagonist is Mariquita Samper , the diarist who shoots the narrator of the Latin American Boom in revolt against his dictatorial control of the fictional narration . Moreover , in Braschi 's most recent work ? *United States of Banana* ? ( 2011 ) , the Puerto Rican prisoner Segismundo overthrows his father , the King of the United States of Banana , who had imprisoned him for more than a hundred years in the dungeon of the Statue of Liberty , for the crime of having been born . The story of *Distant Star* ( 1996 ) , by Roberto Bolaño , begins on 11 September 1973 , with the coup d ' état by General Augusto Pinochet against Salvador Allende , the President of Chile . The writer and professor of literature Raymond Leslie Williams describes the aforementioned novels as not @-@ quite @-@ dictator @-@ novels , which are reminiscent of the genre for being ? acutely and subtly political fiction ? that addresses themes different from those of the dictator novel , which cannot be divorced

from the politics of the stories , and so each ? can be read as a meditation on the horror of absolute power ? .

= = Legacy = =

Although it is difficult to establish the exact origin of the dictator novel in the nineteenth century , its intellectual influence spans Latin American Literature . Most of the novels were written in the middle years of the twentieth century , and each has a unique literary style that employed techniques of the ? new novel ? , by which the writer rejected the formal structure of conventional literary realism , arguing that ? its simplistic assumption that reality is easily observable ? is a narrative flaw . As a genre , the dictator novel redefined the literary concept of ? the novel ? in order to compel the readers to examine the ways in which political and social mores affect their daily lives . Therefore , the regional politics and the social issues of the stories yielded to universal human concerns , thus the traditional novel ? s ? ordered world view gives way to a fragmented , distorted or fantastic narrative ? in which the reader has an intellectually active role in grasping the thematic gist of the story . Additional to the narrative substance , the novelists redefined the formal literary categories of author , narrator , character , plot , story , and reader , in order to examine the etymological link between ? author ? and ? authority ? , wherein the figure of the novelist ( the author ) became very important to the telling of the tale . In the dictator novels , the writers questioned the traditional story @-@ teller role of the novelist as the ? privileged , paternal figure , as the authoritative ? father ? , or divine creator , in whom meaning would be seen to originate ? , and so , the novelists fulfilled the role of the dictator .