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Doña Barbara: A Novel

Rómulo Gallegos

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Rómulo Gallegos is best known for being Venezuela's first democratically elected president. But in his native land he is equally famous as a writer responsible for one of Venezuela's literary treasures, the novel *Doña Barbara*. Published in 1929 and all but forgotten by Anglophone readers, *Doña Barbara* is one of the first examples of magical realism, laying the groundwork for later authors such as Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa.

Following the epic struggle between two cousins for an estate in Venezuela, *Doña Barbara* is an examination of the conflict between town and country, violence and intellect, male and female. Doña Barbara is a beautiful and mysterious woman—rumored to be a witch—with a ferocious power over men. When her cousin Santos Luzardo returns to the plains in order to reclaim his land and cattle, he reluctantly faces off against Doña Barbara, and their battle becomes simultaneously one of violence and seduction. All of the action is set against the stunning backdrop of the Venezuelan prairie, described in loving detail. Gallegos's plains are filled with dangerous ranchers, intrepid cowboys, and damsels in distress, all broadly and vividly drawn. A masterful novel with an important role in the inception of magical realism, *Doña Barbara* is a suspenseful tale that blends fantasy, adventure, and romance.

Hailed as "the Bovary of the *llano*" by Larry McMurtry in his new foreword to this book, Doña Barbarais a magnetic and memorable heroine, who has inspired numerous adaptations on the big and small screens, including a recent television show that aired on Telemundo.

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