

1
Con un abrazo de

VINTILA HORIA

AMD, 40, 2, 23

Handwritten signature

FUNDACIÓN



FUNDACIÓN

MIGUEL
DELIBES

Miguel Delibes

er. Luciano and Cesar symbolize the two antagonistic yet equally annihilating forces at play in contemporary society: revolution and passivity. Their lives end tragically when Cesar is shot after an argument and Luciano executed for his revolutionary activities. The ending shows the futility of their lives, doomed from the beginning, for theirs was a truly existentialist fate.

The author makes abundant use of flashbacks, dreams, and the subconscious in order to explain the innermost feelings of his characters. The influence of the contemporary Mexican novel can be detected in Chavez Alfaro's style. With *Trágame tierra*, Nicaragua enters the ranks of the great Latin American contemporary novel.

Sonja P. Karsen
Skidmore College

Poli Délano. *Los mejores cuentos de Poli Délano*. Alfonso Calderón, ed. Santiago. Zig-Zag. 1969. 201 pages.

Is it wrong to assume that a talented writer is he who succeeds in shedding new light on familiar materials? If not, this author's fourteen stories (with an introduction by the editor and two autobiographical indulgences by Délano himself) demonstrate how a newly illuminating vision can be *developed*. Délano, thirty-four, teacher of North American literature at the Universidad de Chile, has a few short-story collections to his credit as well as two novels, *Cero a la izquierda* (1966) and *Cambalache* (1968). In the present selection the greater number of stories—primarily about the poor, the lives of boxers or catch-as-catch-can heroes, and about the Chilean middle class—do not impress by any new, persuasive lighting of always the same Chilean scenery. Some of them please technically—"Knock Out," for instance.

Toward the end of the book, however, the materials begin to glow, as it were: the tendency to employ stylistic and structural clichés or to leave old wine in old bags gives way to a fresh power of persuasion. "Las lluvias" is an excellent story about middle class *noia* in Santiago preserving just the right degree of ambiguity to maintain one's interest. "¿Te durmiste?" successfully applies the cyclical structure to an account of a matrimonial crisis. These two are the best stories in the collection. Formally well managed but weak in substance is "Uppercut," about a prizefighter who discovered that prowess in the ring is no help in a street fight. In the remaining stories, the reader from time to

time comes across passages that take on a force quite unexpected in the otherwise unoriginal narrative. In "La frontera," there is the hilarious exchange between an adolescent, Pantruca, from a miserable *población*, and a bigoted, glib, and tactless "homemaker" whose grocery bag the kid offers to carry in an effort to make a little money. "Al caer la noche" reveals a certain grotesque charm. "Cuadrilátero" is a curious tale, although too sentimental, about an American worker who becomes a catch-as-catch-can wild man, called Orangután, in Mexico City.

All in all, the book is a not-very-memorable collection of stories; some of them seem to promise, nonetheless, that Poli Délano sooner or later will come up with a style and a vision more properly his own and more expressive of his potential talent.

Wolfgang A. Luchting
Washington State University

Miguel Delibes. *Parábola del naufrago*. Barcelona. Destino. 1969. 236 pages.

Delibes' "Parable of the Shipwrecked Man" is a symbolic and philosophical novel depicting man's struggles against a dehumanized society which has almost destroyed him. The novel gives insights into the psychology of protest, and shows some of the cruel repressive measures taken against those who dare to dissent. Parts of the novel are written as though dictated to a secretary; other parts represent the musings and hallucinations of Jacinto San José, a peaceful, timid worker, mentally ill from posting zeros in ledgers, whose doctor gives him treatments to "depersonalize" him in order to get his spontaneous reactions. In his drugged and distorted mind, Jacinto reviews his life and that of mankind in general. He sees himself entrapped by a fast-growing hedge which he had planted at Recuperation Center No. 15 from seeds given him by Don Abdón, his employer, because "the hedge is the defense of the timid." During his two months at the center he spends much time trying to cut, burn, or blast his way through the hedge, exulting in the perverse feeling that fire and destruction "free" him. He thinks of others worse off: the shipwrecked sailor drowning in a torpedoed ship; humans dying in gas chambers; the man immured alive because of dissent; his own fellow worker, Genaro Martín, degraded to the status of a dog for questioning publicly the "benefits" which the corporation gives the workers; other dissenters and their inhuman punishment. He does not cry out

for help, because the world has become deaf to human cries; his messages for help, tied to the legs of captured birds, will not be read, because the world is blind. In a world which does not see and hear, there cannot be understanding. Language will not help; it leads only to argumentation, hate, and killing. He discards his invented language, deciding to found a movement called Peace Through Silence. He pictures his employer, Don Abdón, as a Buddha-like figure with large breasts, "the most motherly father of all fathers," who gives insignificant benefits to the workers. Finally, after taking three more pills, Jacinto discovers that he is a sheep. When the firm's mowing machine cuts a hole in the hedge, he jumps up from the doctor's table and escapes to be a wild ram in the mountains.

For years to come, scholars will be discussing the symbolism in this powerful novel, a parable of modern life. It is no wonder that the author dedicated the work to Jacinto, the non-violent protagonist, who puts up such a heroic struggle against the "system."

J. Wesley Childers
Southern State College

Concha Lagos. *La vida y otros sueños*. Madrid. Nacional. 1969. 122 pages.

A collection of seventeen short stories dealing with everyday life in contemporary Spain, by a woman writer who has attained distinction in the field of lyric poetry. The hallmark of these stories is a keen sensitivity to detail, mood, and the passage of time. They are not dramatic or "spectacular," conveying instead a bittersweet irony and a warm affection for the poor and the humble, for children and animals. Much—perhaps too much—contemporary Spanish prose, from Camilo José Cela's first novel, *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, to Juan Goytisolo's latest opus, *Reivindicación del Conde Don Julián* (an explosive novel, by the way, and one that is going to be eagerly talked about in Spain and abroad for years to come) inclines toward truculence, a sort of neo-baroque grotesque, and a mixture of sex, blood, and death. These short stories by Concha Lagos are refreshingly different: calm, serene, often tender, occasionally ironic and funny. No great heroes or despicable villains appear in them. There is a strong undercurrent of continuity: life goes on, flowing above and around tragedy like a lazy river.

The last story, "Examen en la arena," is perhaps the best one. It deals with the problem

of identity, which appears in a veiled way, *en sordina*, in several other stories. Yet even when Concha Lagos deals with a modern theme she manages to subdue or ironize it by giving it a twist and injecting traditional or classical allusions. The surprise elements are not neglected, especially in the short but effective story, "La Sinforosa," in which the ambiguous yet detailed description of someone's gait and ornaments makes us imagine a beautiful woman, while the end, worthy perhaps of O. Henry, reveals we are dealing with a cow (or is it a mare?). On the whole, a highly successful book.

Manuel Durán
Yale University

Jorge Onetti. *Contramutis*. Barcelona. Seix Barral. 1968. 205 pages.

Two books by Jorge Onetti (son of underrated Uruguayan novelist Juan Carlos Onetti) precipitate two public distinctions. Granted, this is no longer uncommon in Spanish American literary circles. In 1967, Onetti *hijo* published *Cualquiercosario* (Editorial Arca, Montevideo), a mixed collection of mildly interesting and not-so-interesting short narratives that received the 1966 short-story award extended by Cuba's Casa de las Américas. Now, with *Contramutis*, a sort of novel, Onetti has garnered his second swatch of recognition: the book was a finalist in the Seix Barral Biblioteca Breve literary competition for 1968. (It actually appeared in '69.)

Contramutis deals with the activities of a subversive (anti-Focilón) group and follows the lives of a number of young activists, with special attention given to the fate of the story's protagonist, Lupo. Onetti leaves Lupo on page 186 ("*Aquí termina nuestra vida de Lupo.*") and passes on to other things. In fact, the entire action of the novel, like Lupo, is somewhat up in the air, unjelled. Experimental tricks with language fail to tie the whole experience down in one's mind. Sections of phonetically transcribed Spanish and a chunk of narration without paragraphs or punctuation do not, in the end, help out.

Judging Jorge Onetti's two books at close range (curiously, a segment of the first has been set down intact in the second), one is tempted to consider the possibility that if the father's literary worth is sorely underestimated, the son's value is being distorted in the other direction. Time will tell.

In the meantime, to shift deliberately to a more positive note, I would like to recommend, to readers fortunate enough to get their hands on a copy, an excellent and virtually

MIGUEL DELIBES