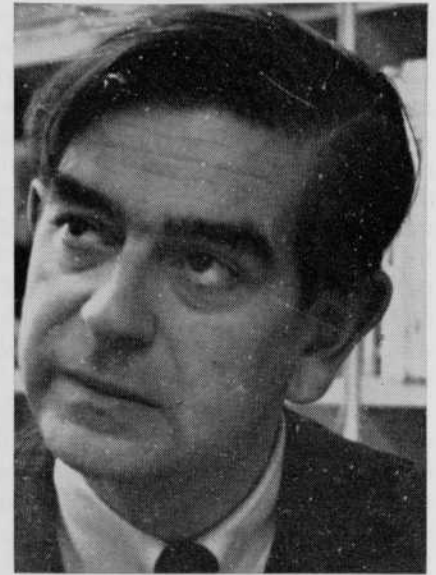


**ANTONIO FERRES**, born in 1924, worked as an assistant engineer until he decided to devote himself entirely to writing. His first book, *La piqueta*, deals with the life of workers newly arrived from the provinces to Madrid's suburban slum huts. In 1960, he finished *Los vencidos*, a book banned by Spanish censorship but later translated into Italian and French and soon to be printed in German and Dutch. Ferrer is now receiving the acclaim of critics in the United States.



**ANA MARIA MATUTE** was born in Barcelona in 1926, was ten when the civil war began. "I knew hunger, bombing, the struggle between brothers, violence, cruelty and death. The Spanish Civil War has marked the greatest part of the work of Spanish writers of my generation." She wrote her first novel at 17, her second, *The Abels*, was published in 1948, winning a national literary prize. Her novels and stories have won other awards since then and have been translated into seven languages.



**IGNACIO ALDECOA**, 39, burst into prominence with *The Splendor and the Blood*, a novel which takes place in the rough, arid Castilian countryside. "Waiting is made up of a vague sense of being forsaken," he wrote in this book, a thought which occurs frequently in the themes of his other narratives. During the past ten years he has written for Spanish magazines and newspapers—"60 bitter short stories and seven short novels," says his wife. The narratives have been collected into three books.

## SHOT-IN-THE-ARM FROM SPAIN

A visit by three major Spanish novelists is stimulating, edifying and unprecedented

**I**N OCTOBER and November three of Spain's foremost contemporary novelists visited the campus to speak in a lecture series sponsored by the department of modern languages. "I don't think OU's had anything like this before," says Dr. Lowell Dunham, chairman of the department. "The University may have had a visiting writer here at one time or another but never a series."

Happily, the unprecedented program turned out an unqualified triumph. But it couldn't miss, really. The stature of the guests assured its success. Ana Maria Matute, Ignacio Aldecoa and Antonio Ferrer are the leading voices of a new movement in Spanish literature. "These are top writers whose works have been translated into many languages—French,

German, Italian, Japanese," says Dr. Robert Vlach whose *Books Abroad*, OU's international literary quarterly, has followed the career of each author. "We have had no one on such a world-wide scale here before. Writers from Asia and Africa have visited us from time to time on State Department programs, but this is the first time OU has been host to authors of international renown."

Members of the generation who grew up as spectators to the Spanish Civil War, the three novelists write books of penetrating reality which are powerful protests to conditions in present-day Spain. "They have a bitter love for their country, and they criticize out of their love," says one critic.

Though their books are often cen-

sored by the government and are subjected also to a more subtle, insidious technique called *el silencio* in which any mention, any publicity is suppressed, despite these harassments they continue to write with force and conviction. Sometimes they must go outside Spain to have books published; sometimes they must endure censorship. Still they continue. "They are heroes to their countrymen," says Dr. Vlach. "The Spanish have a great pride and respect for them. The status of writers is different (in Europe) than it is here. In the United States, status is likely to be won by how much money a writer makes."

Each writer was on the campus for two days during which he met with classes and talked with professors and students in addition to the scheduled

lectures, each of which attracted a large audience made up not only of OU faculty and students but also teachers and students from state high schools, colleges and universities. "As one whose primary interest is in Spanish and South American literature, I found their visits a unique, wonderful opportunity to meet those who are writing what we are interested in," said Hugo Martines, instructor in modern languages. "It's tantamount to having a Carson McCullers or a Philip Roth or a John Updike on the campus. From every conceivable point of view, they gave us first hand information about a terribly complex country. They were able to tell us what's going on. They afforded us insights no one else can give."

Said Dr. A. M. de la Torre, professor of modern languages, "The personal contact with the younger generation of intellectuals in Spain was the most impressive and lasting benefit I shall derive. It was gratifying to meet these people who, in their own way, are making the best of a situation, are working against heavy odds, are trying to lay a foundation for a new Spain. Their protest against the Franco regime is outspoken in personal contact. It's something one isn't conscious of in their writing because of the censorship. You cannot know a writer simply through his writings. You must talk to him personally. This is not because of fear or lack of courage on the writer's part. They put it down, but they're censored as long as it is published in Spain. It's a tremendous revelation to talk with them, to have them bare their souls to you. It's gratifying to know that Franco must tolerate them to a degree."

Dr. James H. Abbott, associate professor of modern languages who was in charge of arranging the series, is delighted with the response. "Interest has greatly increased since the visits. It has been good for the department, both for the students and the faculty. We were quite fortunate in having writers of such prominence. Students are asking for more of the same from other countries."

A graduate student working toward a Ph.D. in 20th century Spanish liter-

ature praised the department for bringing such people here. "I spent several hours with each of them. Never having been to Spain, it was a great way to receive an eye-witness impression. One can't get the feel, the idea of the social and political situation by reading about it. And they were quite free in their talk. It was valuable to talk novels and writing with them. It was like having Hemingway and Faulkner for a visit."

Another student pointed out an additional value in meeting the three. "It established contacts from which other contacts can grow. I can think of nothing else in my career as important. They are sincere in wanting to communicate. It opens a terribly important avenue. Nothing will compare for a student. They were very vocal, expressive, articulate and had a great deal of information to give. They were humble, not caught up with themselves. They seemed to have no sense of their own importance."

The idea for such a series started in 1962 when Dr. Abbott took a sabbatical leave of absence, spending a year in Madrid. There he became acquainted with a number of contemporary Spanish writers. When he returned, he suggested that OU bring some of them to the campus either as visiting professors or as guest lecturers. As is so often the case, funds to finance such a visit couldn't be found, but it was learned that the Uni-

versity of Indiana through the Indiana Foundation had invited several Spanish writers to its campus for two-week periods this autumn. The chairman of the department of modern languages at Indiana, Dr. John Dowling, is a close friend of both Dr. Dunham and Dr. Abbott. He was contacted and arranged for the writers to spend two days in Norman. Through the generous financial support of an anonymous alumnus, the series was finally made possible. "The visits had a tremendous impact," says Dr. Dunham. "It gave the students a chance to talk with, see, interview the people they study in their classes—the people who create the language they are learning. The visits were a shot-in-the-arm for all of us."

Drs. Dunham and Vlach recommend strongly the continuation of such a visitation program in the future. "Such visits are invaluable," says Dr. Vlach. "To have them one needs money to finance them and some influence where it counts. Many important writers who visit America never get past the east coast. It would be helpful to have our elected representatives in Washington work for us in securing exchange visitors."

Dr. Dunham would like to see a writer in residence at OU also. "We have been investigating the possibility of such a program already, and we hope our investigation will bear fruit in the near future."



*A writer herself, Sra. Aldecoa, who accompanied her husband to the University, addresses a class in Spanish composition.*