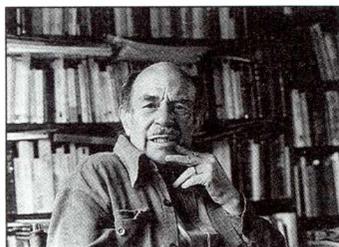


Edmundo Valadés and Eduardo Mata



Rogelio Cuellar

Edmundo Valadés



La Jornada's archive

Eduardo Mata

Some have several deaths and are reborn several times. Other unfortunates are always dead. Some wretches were never born in the first place. In turn there will be other men who will live forever and others still who will stay dead in life as well as in death.

Edmundo Valadés
"A Man is Walking"

The story is what counts

Edmundo Valadés, story writer, journalist and publisher, died at the end of November in Mexico City, at the age of 79. Considered the greatest promoter of the short-story form in Mexico, Valadés was noted for his interest in creating an arena for developing the work both of world-renowned storytellers and of the young writers to whom he gave his personal support and encouragement. The author dedicated much of his life to this work, founding *El Cuento* (The Story) magazine, which over the years became one of the most prestigious in its field.

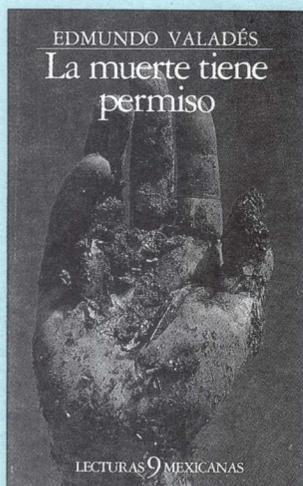
Valadés was born in 1915 in the city of Guaymas, Sonora. At the age of five, after his mother died, his father took the boy to live with an aunt in Mexico City. According to the writer Elena Poniatowska, the atmosphere in his aunt's house was rigid and devoid of affection, which may help account for Valadés' characteristic shyness.

From an early age he was interested in literature and writing. At first he thought his calling was poetry; he was still in secondary school when he devoted his first efforts to writing verses imitating such poets of the day as Díaz Mirón, Gutiérrez Nájera and Urbina. He later related that it was in this period that he got to know the poet and literature teacher Xavier Villaurrutia and showed him his verse; Villaurrutia, "with considerable intelligence and sensitivity, without hurting my feelings or discouraging me, let me see clearly that I was no poet..." (*La Jornada*, December 4, 1994). After that he dedicated himself to prose, discovering that the story was the means through which he could best express himself.

In 1939 he founded *El Cuento*, but the paper shortage and lack of other resources brought on by the Second World War caused the magazine to shut down after publishing five issues. Yet rather than giving up the idea, in 1964 he started the magazine up again and continued to publish it, with only a few interruptions, until his death.

While Valadés published renowned story writers from Mexico, other Latin American countries and around the world, he maintained a keen interest in the work of young authors. "He would write to those he didn't publish, expressing concern for them and their work, making corrections himself and returning the stories with suggestions for their improvement" (*La Jornada*, December 4, 1994). He considered the journal to be a "literary workshop," since by reading the material published in *El Cuento* writers learned new techniques, found themselves face to face with their own work, and improved it.

He believed the storytellers' art consisted of "making the dubious, the incredible, the impossible and the fantastic into something believable; to create real beings and worlds out of lies" (*El Financiero*, December 2, 1994). His own work reflected his ability to awaken the interest of readers who would remain hooked until the end. His story "Death Has Permission" became a classic of contemporary Mexican letters, side by side with such works as Juan Rulfo's "Pedro Páramo," Ricardo Pozas' "Juan Pérez Jolote" and "The Poisoned Water" by Fernando Benítez. First published in 1954, the book named after this story has



Death has permission

Edmundo Valadés

Up on the platform the engineers chatted with each other, laughing. They traded jokes, coarse ones with harsh punch-lines. Little by little they began to turn their attention to the people in the audience; they left off relating their good times and juicy tidbits about the girl who just started working at the gaming house they frequented. Their conversation turned now to these men, the collective-farm peasants gathered in an assembly down there in front of them.

—Yes, we ought to lend them a hand. They need to be incorporated into our civilization; they should get a good cleaning on the outside and be taught to be dirty on the inside....

—You're just a skeptic. Not just that, you're putting in question all our efforts, the efforts of the Revolution itself.

—Bah! It's all useless. You can't help these types. They're pickled in alcohol and steeped in ignorance. Giving them land was pointless.

—You're too superficial and defeatist, *compañero*. The fault lies with us. We gave them the land, and then what? Now we're satisfied. And what about credit, fertilizer, new agricultural techniques, machinery; are they supposed to invent all that themselves?

The chairman smoothes his ample mustache, that facial flagpole continuously polished by his fingertips, looking out through his glasses, impervious to the engineers' verbal fencing. When the animal, earthen, piquant smell of the men arranging themselves on benches tickles his nose, he takes out a handkerchief and blows it loudly. He too was a man of the countryside. But that was long ago. Now all the city and his post have left him of all that is the handkerchief and the roughness of his hands.

Those below seat themselves with solemnity, with the concentration peasants employ when penetrating a closed place: the meeting hall or the church. They speak sparingly and the words they exchange tell of harvests, of the rains, of animals, of credit. Many have food bundles hanging from their shoulders, a sort of cartridge-belt against hunger. Others smoke, calmly and without haste, the cigarettes looking as if they had grown out of their hands.

Others, leaning on the side walls with their arms crossed over their chests, stand guard tranquilly.

The chairman rings his little bell and the sound dilutes the murmur of voices. The engineers begin. They talk about agrarian problems, of the need to increase production, to improve crops. They promise to help the peasants, they encourage them to state their needs.

—We want to help you, you can trust us.

Now it's the turn of those below. The chairman invites them to state their concerns. A hand goes up, timidly. Others follow. They begin to speak of their preoccupations: the water, the *cacique* [rural boss], credit, the school. Some are direct and to the point; others go in circles and don't manage to express themselves. They scratch their heads and turn in search of what they wanted to say, as if the idea had hidden itself in a corner, in the eyes of a fellow peasant or up above, where a lamp is hanging.

Over there, in one of the groups, there are whispers. They're all from the same village. They are worried about something serious. They consult with each other, deciding who should be the one to speak.

—I think Jilipe, he knows a lot....

—Wait, you, Juan, you spoke that one time....

Unanimity is not reached. Those mentioned wait to be pushed. An old man, who may be the patriarch, makes a decision:

—All right, it should be Sacramento this time....

Sacramento waits.

—Come on, put your hand up....

The hand goes up, but the chairman doesn't see it. Other hands are easier to see and get called on. Sacramento looks inquiringly at the old man. Another man, very young, puts his hand way up. Above the forest of hairy heads the five earth-brown fingers can be seen. The hand is discovered by the chairman. He calls on its owner.

—Go ahead, stand up.

The hand goes down when Sacramento stands up. He tries to find a place for his hat. The hat turns into a huge impediment, it grows, it fits nowhere. Sacramento is standing with it in his hands. Signs of impatience appear at the presiding table. The voice of the chairman issues forth, authoritarian, warning:

—Get on with it, you asked to speak and we're all waiting.

Sacramento fixes his eyes on the engineer seated at one end of the table. It looks like he's going to speak to him alone; that the others have disappeared and only the two of them remain in the meeting hall.

—I want to speak for the people from San Juan de las Manzanas. We came with a complaint against the Municipal President who makes a lot of problems for us and we can't take it any more. First he took the little plots of land away from Felipe Pérez and Juan Hernández because they were next to his land. We sent a telegram to Mexico City and nobody answered. In the congregation we talked about it and we thought the best thing would be to go to the Agrarian office, to get the land back. But the trips and the papers didn't work at all, and the Municipal President kept those little plots of land.

When Sacramento speaks his features don't change. You might think he was saying an old prayer, one he knows very well from beginning to end.

—So that was it, then he had a grudge against us and accused us of being trouble-makers. It was like we were the ones who took his land away. Then they came with the business of the accounts; the thing about the loans, *siñor*, that we were supposedly behind on. And the agent took his side and said we had to pay a whole lot of interest. Crescencio, he lives on the hill where the water gate is, he understands about numbers, so he figured the accounts and it wasn't true; they wanted to charge us too much. But the Municipal President brought some gentlemen from Mexico City who are very important and said that if we didn't pay they would take our land away. So like you could say, they forced us to pay what we didn't owe....

Sacramento speaks without emphasis, without premeditated pauses. It's as if he were plowing the land. His words fall like grain being sown.

—Then there's what happened with my son, *siñor*. The boy got mad. I was worried and I tried to stop him. He was drinking and it messed up his head. Acting with respect hadn't gotten me anywhere. So he went to see the Municipal President, to tell him it wasn't right.... They killed him in a low-down way; they say he was stealing one of the Municipal President's cows. They brought him back to me deceased, with his face blown away....

Sacramento's Adam's apple trembled. That was all. He continued to stand, like a tree which has sunk roots. Nothing more. He still stared at the engineer, the one sitting at the end of the table.

—Then the part about the water. Since there isn't much, because the rains barely came, the Municipal President closed the canal. And since the fields were going to dry out and the congregation would go through a bad year, we went to look for him; that he should give us just a little water, *siñor*, for our crops. And he spoke badly to us, since he gets angry at us for the slightest thing. He didn't get down from his mule, just to show us what he thinks of us....

A hand tugs at Sacramento's arm. A man from his village tells him something. Sacramento's voice is the only thing to be heard in the room.

—If all that wasn't enough, well as for the water thanks to the Virgin there was more rain and we halfway saved our crops, but then there was the business about Saturday. The Municipal President went out with his men, they're bad people, and they stole two girls from us: Lupita, the one who was going to marry Herminio, and Crescencio's daughter. They caught us by surprise; we were out working so we couldn't stop them. They made them go up the mountain and then they just left them there. The girls came back in bad shape because of the way they hit them, and we didn't even have to ask what happened. And people were really stirred up this time, because by now we were really fed up with being at the mercy of such bad authorities.

For the first time Sacramento's voice shook. There was a threat, a hatred, an ominous decision in it.

—And since nobody paid any attention to us, all the authorities we've seen and we don't know where justice has gone, we want to take some measures here. You —and now Sacramento looked at each one of the engineers, stopping with the chairman— who promised to help us, we ask your leave to punish the Municipal President of San Juan de las Manzanas. We ask your permission to carry out justice with our own hands....

All eyes turn to those on the platform. Mute, the chairman and the engineers look at each other. Finally they argue among themselves.

—It's absurd; we can't sanction such an unthinkable request.

—No, *compañero*, it's not absurd. What would be absurd is leaving this matter in the hands of those who have done nothing, who have refused to listen to these people. It would be cowardice to wait for our justice system to do justice; they won't ever believe in us again. I prefer to solidarize with these men, with their justice, which may be primitive but in the final analysis is justice, and to take the responsibility together with them. As far as I'm concerned we have no choice but to give them what they ask.

—But we are civilized people, we have institutions which we can't just set aside.

—This would be justifying barbarism, actions outside the law.

—And what acts outside the law are worse than the ones they are denouncing here? If we had been mistreated as they have, if we had been harmed half as much as they have, we would have killed already, we would have forgotten about a justice system that does nothing to intervene. I demand we put this to a vote.

—I agree with you, *compañero*.

—But these are some really tricky types; we ought to confirm what they say. And besides, we don't have the authority to grant a request like this.

Now the chairman speaks. The man of the country has come alive inside him. Once he has spoken there is no appeal.

—The meeting will decide. I take the responsibility.

He speaks to the crowd. His voice is a peasant voice, the same voice that must have spoken in the hills, mixed together with the land, with his people.

The proposal of the *compañeros* from San Juan de las Manzanas is put to a vote. All those who agree they should be given permission to kill the Municipal President, raise your hands....

All the hands go up. The engineers' too. There is not a single hand which isn't raised, approving categorically. Each finger signals immediate and direct death.

—The assembly gives permission to the people from San Juan de las Manzanas to do what they ask.

Sacramento, who has calmly remained standing, finishes speaking. There is neither happiness nor pain in what he says. His expression is straightforward, simple.

—Well, thank you for the permission, because since nobody listened to us, since yesterday the Municipal President of San Juan de las Manzanas is deceased.

gone through over 18 editions. In 1961 he published *Antípoda* (Antipode), in 1966 *Las dualidades funestas* (The Fatal Dualities) and in 1980 *Sólo los sueños y los deseos son inmortales, palomita* (Only Dreams and Wishes Are Immortal, My Dear).

He also wrote essays and put together thematic anthologies, among them *La revolución de las letras* (The Revolution of Letters), *Los grandes cuentos del siglo XX* (The Great Stories of the 20th Century), *23 cuentos de la Revolución Mexicana* (23 Stories of the Mexican Revolution), *Con los tiernos infantes terribles* (With the Tender *Enfants Terribles*) and *La picardía amorosa* (Amorous Naughtiness). *El libro de la imaginación* (The Book of Imagination), published in 1970, became one of the best-known anthologies of this genre among Mexican writers. A devotee of Marcel Proust, in 1974 he came out with *Por los caminos de Proust* (Along the By-Ways of Proust), considered the best work on the subject written in the Spanish language. In the late 1980s he published a three-volume thematic anthology based on the magazine he edited, entitled *Los cuentos de El Cuento* (The Stories of *El Cuento*).

In addition to literature, Valadés worked as a culture journalist over the course of several decades. His articles appeared in a number of Mexican newspapers, and he also edited *Norte* magazine, which was published as part of the National Borders Program. In 1981 he was awarded the National Journalism Prize for his work in the dissemination of culture. A number of Mexican authors maintain that he deserved to receive the National Literature Prize, which he never won.

The writer's personal relations were always marked by his good-spiritedness, cordiality and the generosity with which he provided unconditional support to whoever needed it. His death orphaned many writers who found shelter for their dreams and fantasies in his publishing projects, as well as the freedom to give rein to the imagination, transforming it into literature.

A great musician

The internationally recognized Mexican conductor and composer Eduardo Mata died on January 4, when the small plane he was piloting to Dallas crashed; he had been on his

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Eduardo Mata on CD

Manuel M. Ponce: Música para piano y guitarra (Manuel M. Ponce: Music for Piano and Guitar), 1990 (new recording, published by Editorial Patria for the Anthology of Mexican Classical Music, Series One; the original recording was published by UNAM in 1974). Features María Teresa Rodríguez, piano, Alfonso Moreno, guitar, and the UNAM Philharmonic Orchestra.

Carlos Chávez, 1991 (new recording, published by Editorial Patria for the Anthology of Mexican Classical Music, Series Two; the original was recorded for RCA Victor in 1974). Features María Teresa Rodríguez, piano, with the London Symphony Orchestra and the New Philharmonic Orchestra of London.

Silvestre Revueltas: Música sinfónica (Silvestre Revueltas: Symphonic Music), 1989 (new recording published by BMG-Ariola and the National Council for Culture and the Arts; the original version was published by RCA in 1976). Performance by the New Philharmonic Orchestra of London.

Carlos Chávez: Sinfonías completas (Carlos Chávez: The Complete Symphonies), 1992 (new recording published by Vox Vox; the original recording was published in 1981 by the same company). Performance by the London Symphony Orchestra.

Iberia, 1981, published by Telarc. Performance by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra (DSO).

Gershwin, 1981, published by RCA. Performance by the DSO.

Ravel: Bolero, 1981, RCA. Performance by the DSO.

Strauss: Muerte y transfiguración (Strauss: Death and Transfiguration), 1982, RCA. Performance by the DSO.

Ravel: Mamá la oca (Ravel: Mother Goose), 1983, RCA. Performance by DSO.

Mussorgsky-Ravel: El cuadro de una exposición (Mussorgsky-Ravel: Pictures at an Exhibition), 1983, RCA. Performance by the DSO.

Prokofiev: El lugarteniente Kijé (Prokofiev: Lieutenant Kijé), 1984, RCA. Performance by DSO.

Strauss: El burgués gentilhombre (Strauss: The Bourgeois Gentleman), 1985, RCA. Performance by the Canadian National Arts Center Orchestra.

Copland: Sinfonía número tres (Copland: Symphony No. Three), 1986, published by Angel. Performance by DSO.

Bach: Los brandenburgueses (Bach: The Brandenburg Concertos), volumes I and II, 1988, published by Peerless. Performance by the Solistas de México.

Obras de Manuel de Falla y Julián Orbón (Works by Manuel de Falla and Julián Orbón), 1989, published by Olympia. Features Todd Joselson, piano, with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Holst: Los planetas (Holst: The Planets), 1987, published by Pro-Art. Features chorus and DSO.

Sibelius: Sinfonía número 2 (Sibelius: Symphony No. 2), 1987, Pro-Arte. Performance by DSO.

Tres Héroes (Three Heroes), 1988, Pro-Arte. Performance by DSO.

Tchaikovsky: 1812, 1988, Pro-Arte. Performance by DSO.

Rachmaninoff: Concierto para piano número 3 (Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 3), 1989, Pro-Arte. Features Vladimir Viardo, piano, and the DSO.

Stravinsky: El pájaro de fuego (Stravinsky: The Firebird), 1989, Pro-Arte. Performance by DSO.

Danzas Sinfónicas (Symphonic Dances), 1989, Pro-Arte. Performance by DSO.

Mahler: Sinfonía número 2 (Mahler: Symphony No. 2), double album, 1989, Pro-Arte. Features Sylvia McNair, soprano, Jard Van Nes, alto, and the DSO.

Ravel: Bolero, 1990 (new recording, published by RCA, including the 1981 and 1983 versions). Performance by DSO.

El sombrero de tres picos (The Three-Cornered Hat), 1991, Pro-Arte. Features Lourdes Ambriz, soprano, and the DSO.

Stravinsky: Petroushka, 1991, Pro-Arte. Performance by DSO.

Stravinsky: La consagración de la primavera (Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring), 1991, published by Dorian. Performance by DSO.

Estévez: La cantata criolla (Estévez: Creole Cantata), 1992, Dorian. Performance by the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela.

Shostakovich: Sinfonía a Leningrado (Shostakovich: Leningrad Symphony), 1992, Dorian. Performance by DSO.

Un panorama americano (Panorama of the Americas), 1992, Dorian. Performance by DSO.

Prokofiev: Cantata Alexander Nevsky (Prokofiev: Alexander Nevsky Cantata), 1993, Dorian. Features Mariana Paunova, contralto, and the DSO.

Schumann: Concierto para piano y orquesta (Schumann: Concerto for Piano and Orchestra), 1993, Dorian. Features Iván Moravec, piano, and the DSO.

Revueltas: Redes (Revueltas: Networks), 1993, Dorian. Features the Latin American Quartet and the Simón Bolívar Symphonic Orchestra of Venezuela.

Respighi: Festival Romano (Respighi: Roman Festival), 1993, Dorian. Performance by the DSO.

Orbón: Tres versiones sinfónicas (Orbón: Three Symphonic Versions), 1994, Dorian. Performance by the DSO.

Chausson: Sinfonía Opus 20 (Chausson: Symphony Opus 20), 1994, Dorian. Performance by the DSO.

Falla: La vida breve (Falla: Short Life), 1994, Dorian. Features Marta Senn, mezzo-soprano, Fernando de la Mora, tenor, Cecilia Angel, mezzo-soprano, and the Simón Bolívar Symphonic Orchestra of Venezuela.

Jongen: Sinfonía concertante para órgano y orquesta (Jongen: Symphony Concerto for Organ and Orchestra), 1994, Dorian. Features Jean Guillou and the DSO.

Orff: Carmina Burana, 1994 (new recording, published by RCA; the 1981 original was also published by RCA). Features Barbara Hendricks, soprano, John Aler, tenor, chorus and the London Symphonic Orchestra.

Listing provided by Galerías Margolin and Francisco Vidargas
Originally published in La Jornada.

way to Texas to make some recordings. An outstanding promoter of modern music, including that of Mexican composers, he had distinguished himself as this country's most world-renowned conductor.

Eduardo Mata Asiain was born in 1942, in Mexico City. At the age of 15 he entered the National Conservatory of Music, where he made the decision to devote himself to music full-time. Nevertheless, he left the conservatory and enrolled in the Composing Workshop of Carlos Chávez, one of this century's most important Mexican composers and a primary influence on his development as a composer and director.

He expressed his admiration for Chávez, as well as for Silvestre Revueltas, both by continually including their works in his repertoires and in his statement on being admitted to the National College in 1984: "The existence of Chávez and Revueltas is virtually a miracle; both are originals, both are deeply Mexican. Through them our serious music acquired a certificate of naturalization in the concert of contemporary Western culture...."

When he was 22 he obtained his first position, as director of the Guadalajara Symphonic Orchestra; during the same period he was invited to be a resident artist at the Berkshire Music Center festival. From 1966 to 1975 he conducted the Philharmonic Orchestra of the National University of Mexico, which under his baton experienced the most brilliant era in its history, due to the quality of its performances and the prestige it gained in the university community and among the public at large.

During this period Mata decided to devote himself to conducting, putting aside his work as a composer. Yet he left a legacy of more than a dozen works, among them the *Trio for Vaughan Williams*, for clarinet, cello and percussion (1957); his *Piano Sonata* (1960); *Improvisations for Piano* (1961); *Arias on a 16th-Century Theme* (1964); and *Symphony Number 3* for winds and obbligato horn (1966). Regarding the work of composing music, Mata recalled the lessons of his teacher Carlos Chávez: "His method centered on preparing us to dissect the classics, so we could imitate them later on. He said it was almost impossible to teach people how to compose; that all we can do is exhaustively analyze the classics so as to try to emulate them, and on that basis produce work of our own.... He forced us to use our imaginations to the fullest, and when we reached a moment of freedom he would tell us: do what you like. There was an easy flow of creativity" (*El Financiero*, January 9).

On the other hand, Mata regretted not having deepened the appreciation of Mexican musicians' work in order to incorporate it into his own language as a composer. He noted that, like others of his generation, his search for a language of his own was oriented towards Europe and the United States, rejecting the nationalist current which was dominant in Mexico. He attributed this, however, to the fact that musicians in training were not encouraged to look to their own country. "We were told: study the great masters, because that is the dynastic path of Western music. But they never told us: study Chávez or Revueltas" (*El Financiero*, January 9).

His international career as a composer began in 1974, when he debuted with the London Symphony. Three years later he was named artistic director of the Dallas Symphonic Orchestra, a position he held until 1993, alternating with invitations to lead more than 100 different orchestras in the United States, Europe, Japan, Australia and Latin America. In 1989 and '90 he was the principal guest conductor at the Pittsburgh Symphony, and in October of 1994 he was named principal conductor of the Italian Radio-Television Symphonic Orchestra of Rome, with which he was scheduled to perform eight concerts this year.

It was characteristic of Mata to choose varied and rather unorthodox repertoires. The clarinetist Robert Kolb remembers that "he always defended his programs tooth and nail; they were unorthodox, featuring uncommercial or little-known music.... He was never inclined to make artistic concessions, and he never accepted the game of seeking easy success through conducting well-worn, hackneyed works from the popular repertoire" (*Reforma*, January 5).

Sixteen years of work with the Dallas Symphony bore witness to an extraordinary effort. This was manifested in the musical as well as administrative improvement of the symphony, the construction of a magnificent concert hall and the production of 29 records featuring a varied repertoire, as well as critical acclaim, including a Grammy nomination. This period included eleven world premieres, approximately 500 consecutive sold-out concerts, and several highly successful world tours.

Remaining unfinished are a series of recordings, invitations to conduct orchestras in various parts of the world, as well as the planned extension of his work with the Solistas de México (Soloists of Mexico) group, which he founded. Above all, Eduardo Mata bequeathed us the example of a man whose work represented Mexico musically, around the world ❧

Elsie Montiel
Assistant Editor.