

MIGUEL DELIBES' *PARÁBOLA DEL NÁUFRAGO*: UTOPIA REDREAMED

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Ni retora ni diala, Daro Esta, todo into de
comprensa por la pala es una uta.¹

—jacintosanjósé

Utopia is ubiquitous. The dream of the earthly paradise, the Golden Age, the Millenium, or the land of Cockaigne has found literary expression thousands of times between Plato's *Republic* of the fourth century B.C. and Miguel Delibes' *Parábola del náufrago* of A.D. 1969. A 1973 study lists 317 utopian fantasies published in English between 1901 and 1971,² although in Spanish examples have been few indeed. "The utopian genre is not to be found in our literary history," says a recent Spanish critic.³ The genre has been remarkably constant in its preoccupations through the centuries, but altered attitudes toward the nature of progress in human affairs have resulted in changing intentions on the part of the creators of utopian worlds.

The *Republic*, Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Tomaso Campanella's *City of the Sun* (1623), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), and Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888)—to mention some of the prominent earlier examples—are all positive visions of the myth, although several reveal some satiric intent. The development of science and technology, together with the twentieth century loss of faith in the perfectability of human nature, caused utopian fantasy to move into a second phase in which the dream of utopia became a nightmare. Often referred to as anti-utopias, these include three notable examples that will be essential to our discussion: Eugene Zamiatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and George Orwell's *1984* (1949). *Parábola del náufrago*, itself an anti-utopia, is closely related to these three works. With the rapidity of change typical of the contemporary

world, still a third phase in the genre has developed without the second's yet having run its course. This anti-anti-utopia is a vision of the future that recognizes the possibility of a world similar in some respects to those so horrifyingly portrayed in *We*, *Brave New World*, 1984, and *Parábola del naufrago*, but which unblinkingly presents it positively, once certain humanistic ideals have been relinquished.⁴ The best known examples of this phase are B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two* (1948) and Aldous Huxley's *Island* (1962), the latter a curious about-face on the part of its author.⁵

Utopias, anti-utopias, and anti-anti-utopias have in common an explicit or an implied criticism of present societies and systems. They provide either future solutions to present problems or warnings of a negative future implicit in the present.⁶ Interestingly, both the major anti-utopias and those of the turn-about third phase seem to have their roots in Dostoevski's Grand Inquisitor of *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880).⁷ All utopias are totalitarian, and thus the central issue in the modern projections has been that of human freedom. In Dostoevski, the church (not Christianity) has done away with freedom in order to make men happy:

For now... for the first time it has become possible to think of the happiness of men. Man was created a rebel; and how can rebels be happy?

...

We have corrected Thy [Christ's] work and have founded it upon *miracle*, *mystery* and *authority*. And men rejoiced that they were again led like sheep, and that the terrible gift that had brought them such suffering, was, at last, lifted from their hearts.

...

Oh, the work is only beginning, but... we shall plan the universal happiness of man.... All that man seeks on earth... is someone to worship, someone to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all in one unanimous and harmonious ant-heap, for the craving for universal unity is the third and last anguish of men. Mankind as a whole has always striven to organize a universal state.

...

Oh, we shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us. And shall we be right or shall we be lying?... We shall show them that they are weak, that they are only pitiful children, but that childlike happiness is the sweetest

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of all. They will become timid and will look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen.⁸

The anti-utopian writers under consideration have created their negative imaginative worlds in the image of the Grand Inquisitor's view of man, while third-phase writers, having considered still further the problem of freedom, have accepted his philosophy that feeling free (through conditioning) is preferable to being free: "Today, people are more persuaded than ever that they have perfect freedom, yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet. But that has been our doing."⁹

Surprisingly, by leaving aside certain specifics, one can describe the happenings and preoccupations of all four of the novels that concern us (*We*, *Brave New World*, *1984*, *Parábola del naufrago*) with the same simple summary:

The reader is thrown immediately and without preamble into a strange deterministic world in which conformity to a totalitarian society headed by an authority figure who unites religion and the state in his person (the Well-Doer, Mustapha Mond, Big Brother, Don Abdón) is the greatest good. The novel is the portrayal of the protagonist's battle to maintain his own individuality in the face of overwhelming odds, against forces from without and weaknesses (the humanity) within. The battle is inevitably lost, and the author's negative prophecy about the future of human freedom and the destruction of the essential qualities that distinguish man from the animals is fulfilled.

All of these novels ask the question: Can man be so altered as to forget that he is human? Within the novelistic context, the answer is always yes, yet the social intent is to sound an alarm that may alert man to the directions in which he is moving so that the prophecy may be thwarted.

Each of the treatments of the theme portrays this transformation of man through a dehumanizing or evolutionary process that involves an inversion of accepted values. Thence come the slogans: "Freedom is slavery" (Orwell), "Order is freedom"¹⁰ (Delibes), "Love is the function of death" (Zamiatin).¹¹ In *We*, quite in keeping with the Grand Inquisitor, we find the following explanation of what has been done for the people and why:

What was it that man from his diaper age dreamed of, tormented himself for, prayed for? He longed for that day when someone would tell him what happiness is, and then would chain him to it. What else are we doing now? The ancient dream about a paradise.... Remember: there in paradise they know no desires any more, no pity, no love; there they are all-blessed. An operation has been performed upon their center of fancy; that is why they are blessed, angels, servants of God.¹²

In these worlds the greatest crime is thought because it is an expression of individuality rather than unanimity (in Orwell, "Thoughtcrime"; in Delibes, "No pensar la mosca" ["Thou shalt not think about the fly"]), and as a result their societies are without exception spied upon by guardians, controllers, thoughtpolice, and *celadores* [watchmen].

The novels reduce the complexity of human life to uniformity and simplicity through thought control, through force, through drugs, and — ironically — through appeal to those emotional needs of man that are simultaneously being denied. Huxley's Helmholtz, comparing Shakespeare to the "feelies" of his society, says:

You can't make tragedies without social instability. The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get. They're well off; they're safe; they're never ill; they're not afraid of death; they're blissfully ignorant of passion and old age; they're plagued with no mothers or fathers; they've got no wives, or children, or lovers to feel strongly about; they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave. And if anything should go wrong, there's *soma*.¹³

Each society has its reconditioning center, its reclamation center, its Ministry of Love, its *refugio de recuperación* [rest home], intended to return the recalcitrant to the fold. Here the various protagonists are put to the test and suffer their interrogation, their persuasion, their torture, their transformation, and are defeated, though in the process (*Brave New World* excepted) their awareness of the defeat is also destroyed: Delibes' Jacinto literally becomes a sheep; Huxley's Savage commits suicide before the horror of the alternatives open to him; Zamiatin's D-503 is cured of his "disease"

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by a lobotomy; Orwell's Winston Smith learns, through torture, to love Big Brother.

As this discussion may have served to illustrate, the utopian novel is as restricted by its conventions as is the detective story, despite the former's more serious intentions. Indeed, these serious intentions may be at the root of the literary problem of the genre. Most utopian writers have been more committed to social and political ideas than to the art of fiction, and they have had difficulty in creating humanly convincing and complex characters. Instead they have been seduced by the need to create a completely new societal system and to work out a consistent hypothesis that results in a watertight world, but one devoid of human interest. Approaches to the problem of exposition have been mechanical and "instead of incarnating the good life dramatically, novelistically, the characters of utopia discuss it."¹⁴ A distressing number of these works are inert mixtures of social treatise and guided tour. Robert Liddell in his *Treatise on the Novel* says on this subject: "Novels are nearly always concerned with life as it is or has been lived, and only very exceptionally (and seldom satisfactorily) with life as it might be."¹⁵ The task of creating a consistent new world out of the imagination paradoxically requires too great a discipline and permits too great a degree of freedom. Robert Frost's comparison of writing free verse with playing tennis without a net comes to mind.

In the light of these considerations of the problem of the literary quality of utopian fantasies, it is instructive to be reminded that of the four works here under scrutiny, the two that have had the most impact (*Brave New World* and *1984*) are esthetically inferior to the other two.¹⁶ Neither Huxley nor Orwell seems much interested in anything beyond the consciousness-raising that was undoubtedly achieved. The horrendous closed systems of these worlds of the future are elaborated consistently and completely, but exposition is mechanical—even to the point of introducing chapter-length documents which are read aloud by one character to another in *1984*—and novelistic elaboration is largely absent; indeed, the writers demonstrate no awareness of the advances made by modern novelists. One has no questions upon laying down these books. They do stick in the mind (their notoriety makes this incontrovertible), but what one ponders is the ideological problem

posed, the problem of what they say rather than that of how they say it. The ideal of the inseparable nature of form and content to be found in the very finest works of art is omni-absent.

Pride of place among our four utopias belongs to Zamiatin's *We*, but it is little known and not readily available in many countries. Artistically it is much superior to the two already discussed and, unlike them, has a distinctive style appropriate to the material and to the changed world being depicted. The problem of language is more persuasively handled, and the sense of another reality seen through differently conditioned eyes is conveyed with an ingenious and effective use of fresh metaphor. This achievement is evident even through a translation from the original Russian that may be an awkward one.

Of the four novels, *Parábola del naufrago* alone intrigues the reader primarily as a work of art and only secondarily as a portrayal of a negative utopia. Only in this novel is the elaboration of the utopian world internalized in the protagonist, and only here does the complexity move from the world described by the novel to the elaboration of the novel itself.¹⁷ How Delibes achieved this end is our subject.

Jacinto San José, the protagonist of the novel, is, we are told by the narrator, "un hombre del montón . . . un hombre en serie" (p. 17) ["a man of the crowd . . . a mass-produced man"] who works — as does everyone else in his office — at adding sums by hand (a practice the meaning of which he unwisely questions) until he begins to get dizzy whenever he makes zeros. The boss and the company doctor send him to a solitary *refugio de recuperación* in the country. There he has been asked to plant seeds for a hedge to surround the *refugio*, but the hedge immediately spurts into violent and gigantic growth, encloses the cabin, and forces its way through doors and windows. Jacinto — nearly asphyxiated — struggles to contain it, to send messages attached to birds, to throw bottles with notes inside over the hedge: all to no avail. Finally, when he is in a dream-like state, the tendrils invade the orifices of his body. Meanwhile, long hair has begun to grow on his face, he loses the power of speech, and slowly he metamorphoses into a ram, which is what the doctor and company officials find, without surprise, when they arrive with a hedge-cutter. Jacinto is at last well, happy, and obedient, but can only make the sound "Baa!"

Utopias are by nature futuristically fantastic, but the above plot summary makes clear that what we are dealing with here is a different sort of fantasy. As a result, the problem of verisimilitude will have to be resolved by novelistic means. The leap is accomplished externally by the title's announcement that the form is that of a parable, not that of a realistic tale, and internally by the novel's dream logic. A parable is by definition didactic and has biblical associations. In this case the central metaphor of the hedge is based on a line from the Bible (Job I:10): Satan says to the Lord, of Job: "Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land." The ironic use of this source, when in the novel the purpose of the hedge is to annihilate the protagonist, is underscored by the name given the dictator figure, Don Abdón, also to be discovered in the Bible: "They have over them as king the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon" (Revelations IX:11). His name in English is "destroyer."¹⁸

To an interviewer, Delibes first spoke of his "interest in interpreting my own dreams, getting up at midnight and hurriedly writing down my nightmares almost without opening my eyes. The only way to reconstruct dreams in detail is in this half-awake state in which dream and reality are mixed. The bad thing is that in that mutual interference one has a presentiment of, or actually looks into, the abyss of madness. I consider it a dangerous game."¹⁹ In several other passages Delibes refers to the novel as a *pesadilla* [nightmare], but then a specific dream reference—without the author's specifying *Parábola* at all—strongly suggests its importance for this novel:

I remember having skated as a child on the frozen Pisuerga River . . . and one of the nightmares that I have suffered since childhood has as its protagonist that companion who disappeared through the broken ice and was not able to find the opening again (my imagination made me see him submerged, pounding his head fiercely against the resistant layer of ice without finding the hole he had slipped through, while his lungs were bursting).²⁰

This personal nightmare of the author is highly suggestive of the *naufragio* [shipwreck] and the various deaths by asphyxiation that

are so central to the novel, its title, and its protagonist. Delibes had already used the image before in *Cinco horas con Mario* (1966).²¹

The novelist's hint that the work is a nightmare is extremely important, but it has not generally been grasped that the nightmare is that of the author, not that of the protagonist. Since the technical elaboration of the novel relates in every detail to this fact, one cannot decipher the code without it. Unlike *We*, *Brave New World*, and *1984*, *Parábola* demands much of the reader. If one does not know that the book narrates its author's dream, many of its events and its techniques will seem arbitrary. Some reviewers and commentators of the work have taken just this view.²²

Jacinto San José²³ is Everyman, and his company is Everyland, the world in microcosm, now. (Since Jacinto was born in 1924 and is 44 years old, the action takes place in 1968 — at the time the novel was "dreamed." Dreams take place in present time.) The characters of the novel are employees of Don Abdón, S.L., and these letters understood literally (Sociedad Limitada [Limited Society]) provide an insight of major importance into the interpretation of the invented world. Don Abdón is God, dictator (his year-end speeches resemble Franco's; his public swims, so enthusiastically applauded by the people, suggest Chairman Mao). He is the boss whom one may not question and, being hermaphrodite, both father and mother in one: "el padre más madre de todos los padres" ["the most maternal of all fathers"], while everything in the society bears his name: "La farmacia Don Abdón," "la Avenida Don Abdón," "Las hermanitas de Don Abdón" ["Don Abdón Pharmacy," "Don Abdón Avenue," "The Sisters of Don Abdón"], etc. The workers are treated as children, are punished as such, are made to write from dictation with quill pens on parchment, and may not think for themselves. The novel begins with a description of an employee who had been "degraded" for having questioned when "Las respuestas ya están dadas" ["The answers are already given"]. He is now a happy dog who can say only "Bow wow." This former man, named Genaro, had once vomited upon finding a fly in his stew, confirming Don Abdón's operating principle that the root of unhappiness is "el complejo racional de pensar la mosca" (p. 44) ["the rational complex of thinking about the fly"]. Genaro's fate is to be Jacinto's also, as we already know, but the punishment, à

la Dante or Gilbert and Sullivan, is made to fit the crime. Genaro becomes a dog who eats revolting things (César Fuentes' castrated testicles, Jacinto's vomit) without "pensar la mosca," and Jacinto, who loves birds and plants, and books about the sea, and is timid, is embraced by a hedge ("Para el tímido un seto" ["For the timid a hedge"]) to the point of asphyxiation in the manner of a sailor in a sunken ship; he is betrayed by the birds, and becomes a ram to be used for stud, although as a man, when asked by the doctor "¿Vida sexual ordenada?" Jacinto had answered "No gasto" (p. 57) ["Sexual life in order?" "I don't indulge"].²⁴

Obviously, the novelistic integration of all these strange happenings must be accomplished according to logical principles or a patterning imposed upon the material. In *Parábola*, two techniques provide the generating principles: dream logic and its concomitant literalization of metaphor. The latter begins in the text with the previously mentioned "Sociedad Limitada," but before that it is in fact in operation in the very conception of the work: the "dream of utopia" is made literally a dream.²⁵ The two techniques are thus seen to be intimately interrelated, since dream logic operates through association on a literal level. The timid are, as a consequence, turned into sheep, and he who dies like a dog is a dog. Only the dream format can transform the fantastic happenings into psychological reality and provide verisimilitude. A single fundamental literalization rules both the structure and the motifs of the novel. The word is *revolución*, and it is used here ingeniously in the sense of "re-evolve" or evolve backwards. As a result, "degradation" (demotion) of employees like Jacinto and Genaro²⁶ (who are considered, on another level, to be revolutionaries in the usual sense) is achieved by re-evolving them to a lower form of life at a *refugio de recuperación*. The parable is, of course, that unless man revolts more forcefully, he faces the destruction of civilization as a rational state. (One is reminded that the novel carries an epigraph from Max Horkheimer, author of *Eclipse of Reason*.)²⁷ *Parábola* means both parable and parabola, and this second meaning or image is the one allied to the word-play on revolution. It will be recalled that Jacinto became ill only when making zeros and that the implied reason for this is that employees are instructed that they are adding nothing but sums. The numbers represent nothing: "Ustedes no suman dólares, ni francos suizos,

ni kilovatios-hora, ni señoritas en camisón; ¿me comprende? Ustedes suman *sumandos*" (p. 35) ["You are not adding dollars, or Swiss francs, or kilowatt hours, or girls in nightgowns, do you understand? You are adding addends"]. The image of the circle becomes the dominant association of the work, and it can be the encircling arms of a wished-for father or mother—or the arms of Don Abdón (who encompasses both parents in one), the coil of the snakes of Laocoön, the stifling hedge, zero, evolution, the human head—and finally the collars that both Genaro and Jacinto wear in their animal state. The depersonalization represented by all of this is depicted by Delibes by means of the invention of a mythical animal, the *egocero*. Its head hanging on the wall of the *refugio* obscurely bothers Jacinto to the point that he digs a trench to bury it. It is doubtless an earlier "degraded" employee of the company reduced to "ego zero." Indeed, Genaro is killed during the action of the novel and his head kept for study, while Jacinto in Don Abdón's presence is disturbed by consciousness of the weight of his head.²⁸

Parábola contains three distinct narrative modes, two of them omniscient in the author's words and one similar to stream-of-consciousness or *monólogo interior*. The first omniscient mode is characterized by written-out punctuation and appears whenever the story of Genaro is being told. Delibes himself has said that he used this technique "to distort logic (in this case grammar), such distortion being the key to nightmares."²⁹ This is surely only a partial explanation, since why the technique relates only to Genaro is left unanswered—and will not be answered here. However, we suggest that such "dictation" relates to the dream form of the novel in that it literalizes "dictator," evokes the association of the novelist-dictator of the dream, and is, in fact, a variation on the second narrative manner of the work: that of a similarly omniscient voice that is differentiated from the first by a curious and unnecessary repetition of grammatical subjects and onomatopoeic reproduction of sounds. (Jacinto's *auto-diálogos* also exhibit this characteristic, but less insistently.) It is likely that the purpose of this technique is to reproduce aural dream images. Whatever the explanation, Delibes' comment about "romper la lógica" as the key to dreams surely applies here too. Another result of the technique is the trivialization (degradation) of the protagonist, since the

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effect is humorous. (It is his name that is most often repeated unnecessarily.) The novel is a phantasmagorical, funny tragedy, its anti-heroic hero — pathetic, foolish, frightened — cast in the image of the common man at the mercy of forces with which he himself cooperates. Delibes is a master at handling serious matters lightly, but expressively. In *Un año de mi vida* he speaks of this: "Every day I admire writers with a sense of humor more. It's probably because there are so few. But to write about grave problems I do not consider gravity essential. Italian neo-realism showed us real wounds presented with a smile. That's talent."³⁰

The action of the novel does not move chronologically, but by means of a series of scenes in present time which are then gradually led up to and clarified by flashbacks. The novel is without chapter divisions, the changes of time and place — or the changes from omniscient view to auto-dialogue — providing the only breaks. The linking of these consecutive sections is most original and — as might be expected — is another aspect of dream verisimilitude. It is routine for characters in stream-of-consciousness novels — in the manner of Carmen in Delibes' own *Cinco horas con Mario* — to associate in a seemingly arbitrary (but psychologically meaningful) way. In *Parábola* the technique — true to the dream format — becomes dream-of-consciousness, moving the associative play from the character's to the narrator's mind. The author's free associations are the ties that bind the seemingly unrelated sections together. Usually the associations are thematically related. The most casual mention of the word "head" in one section will lead, in the next, into the problem of the *egocero* on the wall; Jacinto watering his potted plants at home will be the transition to the watering of the hedge at the *refugio*; the trench Jacinto is digging under the hedge and in which he buries the *egocero* head will suggest the burial of the headless Genaro.³¹ These associations, their psychological value aside, are also an effective device for minimizing structural fragmentation in a work whose action moves freely from place to place and from forward-moving present to multiple scenes in a past that lacks a firm chronology. In *Cinco horas con Mario*, Delibes had used the biblical quotations in a related way to serve both as associative "bases" and as a means of dividing the work into units.

The dream association of *Parábola* merits considerably more analysis than can be given here. Obscurities and doubts about its consistency and functioning still remain, especially in the latter part of the novel when the protagonist also dreams. Moreover, the functioning of the device seems tenuous in the earlier sections when omniscient narration of the past or description of characteristics of the company and the society are being presented. Once this material is laid out, both the narrator and the protagonist (talking to himself) associate to it, sometimes within sections rather than at the junctures.³² It must be kept in mind that a “dreamed” novel will necessarily complicate the problem of narrative voice because characters are projections of the author’s psychology while apparently projecting their own.

One of the major achievements of the later novels of Delibes is the authenticity and color of the colloquial language spoken by his protagonists. This characteristic first appears in full flower in *Diario de un cazador* (1955) and its sequel *Diario de un emigrante* (1958), of which their author says: “The real protagonist of my ‘Diaries’ is the word, the language.”³³ Delibes’ discovery of characterization through language has been incorporated in all of his subsequent work. Both Carmen of *Cinco horas con Mario* and Jacinto of *Parábola* are convincing as characters largely through their colloquial language and equally popular modes of thought. In all four of the works just mentioned the author has conceived the novel so that each character may “speak” intimately: on the diary page, to a dead husband, to another self in the mirror. Stream-of-consciousness in Delibes is, therefore, always a form of silent dialogue and not the expression of pre-speech levels of consciousness attempted by some other users of the technique. Delibes has said of Lorenzo, the protagonist of the *Diarios*: “It’s possible that I will offer this character the opportunity to grow old with me.”³⁴ Whether Lorenzo appears in person again or not, the word continues to be his creator’s protagonist.³⁵

The central personage is masculine in all of Delibes’ work except *Cinco horas con Mario* in which the title character is dead but nevertheless the focus of the novel and is directly addressed throughout. Language reminiscent of Lorenzo’s, therefore, moves to the feminine, Carmen and Mario being equally central to the work. Carmen’s language may be the link between Lorenzo’s and

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Jacinto's, but the latter is Mario's counterpart. The two men incarnate similar themes in their respective novels, but yet they are, as men, almost opposites in relation to the problem. Mario is presented obliquely through another person. He does not appear, but he is the positive element in the novel; he is taken seriously; he struggles and achieves a certain amount of good; and, although he fails, his son does not bear his name for nothing. For Jacinto, there is no hope. His sons will literally be sheep. He has been ineffectual and timid, unwilling to offend anyone, secretly in emotional need of the paternalism of the organization, and an accomplice in his own silencing. He has even been prominent in the movement called "Por la mudez a la paz" ["Peace through silence"] (one is reminded of those billboards in Spain reading "25 años de Paz," "30 años de Paz" ["25 Years of Peace," "30 Years of Peace"], etc., with all that they imply), and has even invented an ingenious language called *Contracto* which reduces the number of syllables in words because it is words that get people in trouble, according to Jacinto. *Contracto* is presumably meant to be the contrary of Esperanto; the *esperanza* [hope] has been removed. Indeed, Jacinto is the president of the society for peace through silence, but unfortunately the word *presidente* in *Contracto* has been reduced to *preso* [prisoner].³⁶

Mario is an intellectual, while Jacinto is the common man, who, when trapped by the hedge, imagines a series of deaths by asphyxiation and feels that "Otros están peor" ["Others are worse off"]. Those others are Dick, Heinrich, Pepe, and Iván. Not for nothing is the novel dedicated to its own protagonist—with his name appearing in both Spanish and Russian. But Mario and Jacinto represent the same problem in two incarnations, and the seed of *Parábola del naufrago* is clearly sown when in *Cinco horas* a mourner says of Mario: "He's not just a dead man; he's a drowned man."³⁷ Unlike Mario, however, Jacinto shares the responsibility for his fate. As he puts it: "¡Te han suicidado!" (p. 228) ["They've killed you by your own hand!"].

Cinco horas con Mario takes place in Spain at the time of the novel's composition, its characters are recognizable as Spaniards, its social problems are Spanish ones, and the portrayal of the world of the novel is realistic. *Parábola del naufrago* takes place in an undefined place, the society and the characters of the novel

are without nationality, and the novel is a parable from which a message is to be drawn, while the events of the work are fantastic. José Domingo, in a long review of *Parábola* in *Insula*, expresses this complaint: "Instead of a parable, narration of an imagined happening, from which one deduces through comparison or similarity an important truth or moral lesson, why has not Delibes given us a 'novel', a major novel, the novel of the 'drowning man' of our social reality, about that man who lives beside us, who may be we ourselves?"³⁸ The answer to the question is that Delibes had already written that novel in *Cinco horas con Mario*. *Parábola del naufrago* is its universalization.

It has been our intention to illustrate that, despite the closeness with which *Parábola* continues the conventions and traditions of the utopian novel, it also is a strikingly original work in its own right and represents a far greater contribution to the art of the novel than do the other anti-utopian novels used here for purposes of comparison. *Parábola* is, moreover, entirely consistent with, and a natural development of, its author's own earlier works. If its nearest relative is *Cinco horas con Mario*, its subject has other clear antecedents. The exploration of the problems of loneliness, reason, violence and charity is a development of themes whose examination began long before and will continue in novels published after *Parábola*. The theme of *Las guerras de nuestros antepasados* (1975) is rooted in "Papa's war"³⁹ of *El príncipe destronado* (1973), and Pacífico Pérez of *Las guerras* is plainly a blood brother to Jacinto San José. Indeed, the later novel explores the problem of violence in ways that grow naturally out of Jacinto's failed "revolution."⁴⁰

Since *Parábola* redreams utopia, it will inevitably bear dream-logical relationships to whatever works Delibes is acquainted with that can arise in his sleeping subconscious⁴¹ since "the *condensation* of . . . memories . . . in a dream operates like a magnet gathering together out of the whole reservoir of past and present-day experiences all those pertinent to the magnet."⁴² Source study of such a work is intriguing indeed, and Delibes has made full use of his technique's possibilities. The biblical echoes have already been mentioned, as well as the general utopian considerations, but there is much more. The year prior to the publication of *Parábola*, Delibes made a trip to Czechoslovakia, an experience that produced his non-fiction *La Primavera de Praga*. The book and the trip are

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intimately related to the 1969 novel. The Russian invasion while *Primavera* was in press produced a note to the reader at the beginning of the book in which Delibes speaks of the use of force in metaphors similar to those used in the novel (see note 21), and the essay has much to do with the problems of an "estado-padre" ["paternalistic state"] like that found in Prague—or in Don Abdón, S. L. One of the chapters bears the title "La evolución de la revolución" ["The evolution of the revolution"], and the word *evolución* occurs with unnatural frequency, just as it does in *Parábola* where it can mean "circle." Perhaps more revealing still is the admiring reference to the Czech Kafka⁴³ whose parable-like works often deal with the threatened, ineffectual individual in an inhumane and mysteriously authoritarian world. His *Metamorphosis*, at least, with its transformed (degraded) protagonist and its portrayal of the problem of mutual responsibility, seems clearly echoed in the unreal world of *Parábola*. Eugène Ionesco's *Rhinocéros* is even more plainly a dream source for the novel. The protagonist of the play, Bérenger, has similar problems and a great deal in common with *Parábola*'s Jacinto, the society with which they are in conflict is similar, and the metamorphosis into animals is due to similar causes. The matter of the rhinoceros heads in the last act of Ionesco's play is strikingly similar to the *egocero* head in *Parábola*. If Kafka's influence is general, this one is quite specific.

One can only surmise which true utopian novels were part of Delibes' reading experience, but *Un año de mi vida* reveals the catholicity of his tastes in literatures other than Spanish.⁴⁴ One feels secure in finding the source of "Orden es libertad" in Orwell's "Freedom is slavery," and perhaps that of *Contracto* in the official language "Newspeak" of 1984, despite the far greater sophistication and novelistic interest of Delibes' version. The world of *We*, peopled by numbers rather than men and women, might well be echoed in the *sumadores* of *Parábola*, and the green wall that surrounds the society of Zamiatin's novel and the birds (i.e., freedom) that fly there are most suggestive of Jacinto's hedge and its inhabitants. One is even tempted to ponder Huxley's Savage, who is sent to an island with a bag of seeds and is seen there from helicopters, as the possible source for Jacinto's lot at the *refugio*. But the only fact the reader can be sure of is that the sheep in the shadow of the Grand Inquisitor and the Utopian tradition were familiar to the

author of *Parábola del naufrago*, and that he found the ideal form in which to recast that tradition and contribute to it on an artistic level not often previously achieved in the genre.

NOTES

¹ "Neither rhetoric nor dialectic, Darío Esteban, any attempt at comprehension by means of the word is a utopia." The original is in the artificial language *Contracto*. Miguel Delibes, *Parábola del naufrago* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1969), p. 160. Future references to the work will be made parenthetically in the text.

² Richard Gerber, *Utopian Fantasy: A Study of English Utopian Fiction since the End of the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1973), pp. 143-162.

³ "Nuestra historia literaria no alberga el género utópico." Jorge Molina Quirós, *La novela utópica inglesa: Tomás Moro, Swift, Huxley, Orwell* (Madrid: Editorial Prensa Española, 1967), p. 10.

⁴ B. F. Skinner argues this case in his *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971), an essay which, in addition to echoing the iconoclastic Nietzsche of *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (1886), echoes the ideas put forth in minimally fictional form in his own novel *Walden Two* (1948).

⁵ One is at first puzzled by Huxley's change of perspective, particularly since the non-fiction *Brave New World Revisited* (1958) expresses in essay form the same negative views that are implicit in the 1932 novel. The explanation may perhaps be found in the "Foreword" to a later edition of the early novel: "If I were now to rewrite the book, I would offer the Savage a third alternative. Between the utopian and the primitive horns of his dilemma would lie the possibility of sanity [in a community where] science and technology would be used as though... they had been made for man... Religion would be the conscious and intelligent pursuit of man's Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immanent Tao or Logos... and the prevailing philosophy of life would be a kind of Higher Utilitarianism, in which the Greatest Happiness principle would be secondary to the Final End principle" (New York: Bantam Books, 1953), pp. ix-x. This clearly describes the world of *Island* and explains its genesis and its revealing relationship to *Brave New World*.

⁶ We cannot agree with F. L. Polak in his vast and useful study that "in the negative utopia the goal is to show that the possibility under consideration is as *undesirable* as it is *unavoidable*" (*The Image of the Future*, trans. by Elise Boulding, Vol. II [New York: Oceana Publications, 1961], p. 29). The "warning" seems to be a part of all of them, and there would be no point in sounding an alarm in the face of the inevitable. In any case, the parable form of Delibes' novel makes the work didactic by definition.

⁷ Robert C. Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 91, 97-98, 129, 130, 133-134.

⁸ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. by Constance Garnett (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), pp. 309-315, 316, 317-318.

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⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

¹⁰ "Orden es libertad." *Parábola del naufrago*, *passim*. Hereafter quoted phrases that are much repeated in the novel will not be located or noted.

¹¹ The entire malevolent world of 1984 is, in fact, one of these reversals which are characteristic of all three phases of utopian literature. The wittiest and most ingenious use of this technique is undoubtedly that of Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), in which crime merits commiseration and illness punishment.

¹² Eugene Zamiatin, *We*, trans. by Gregory Silboorg (New York: Dutton, 1924), p. 200.

¹³ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Bantam Books, 1953), p. 225.

¹⁴ Elliott, p. 110. Chapter 6 considers this general problem at some length.

¹⁵ (London: Jonathan Cape, 1947), p. 55. Quoted by Gerber, p. 120.

¹⁶ Richard Gerber, p. 123, considers *Brave New World* and 1984 to be the finest of the twentieth-century English examples—and he may be right. It should be mentioned at this point that George Kateb's *Utopia and Its Enemies*, one of the most important books on utopian thought—written by a political scientist who perceptively takes into account the fictional treatments of utopia—does not admit 1984 to the category of anti-utopian novel because its world is malevolent rather than benevolent (2nd ed. [New York: Schocken Books, 1972], pp. 235-236). We do not make this distinction since we consider it primarily a matter of how an author makes his negative statement about the "perfect" world being portrayed, and by whom the world of the novel is perceived as perfect. Huxley, in *Brave New World*, has created a regimented but hedonistic society—we might call it a warm anti-utopian—which depends for its effect on evoking the reader's repugnance at such a world. Orwell, on the other hand, has created a malevolent power structure and a cold anti-utopia, choosing overt rather than covert means of persuasion. One society maintains itself—to put it in terms of behavioral psychology—through positive reinforcement (reward), the other through negative (punishment). Readers of this study will note that *Parábola del naufrago* combines the two methods. For a related matter, see note 11.

¹⁷ On this subject, Delibes himself has said (speaking of two groups of contemporary Spanish novelists): "En el primero, a mi ver, la preocupación estética—estilística—domina sobre la ética y, en el segundo, a la inversa. Esta voluntad de estilo—o de perfección—puede más, creo yo, que las similitudes" ["As I see it, in the first group esthetic—stylistic—concerns take precedence over the ethical, and in the second the reverse is true. This interest in style—or in perfection—can accomplish more, in my opinion, than similitudes"], *Un año de mi vida* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1974), p. 20.

¹⁸ This information casts some doubt on the various extant attempts to "read" the pseudo-palindrome of the name. The operation of multiple elements is suggested, however, by the author's reaction to a comparison of Don Abdón's name with that of Samsa, protagonist of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. After admitting that this "tal vez operó en mi subconsciente" ["may have operated in my subconscious"]. Delibes adds that Kafka is a similar *capicúa* [palindrome] (*Un año de mi vida*, p. 64), thus gently correcting the critic's suggestion. While there would be little logic in relating Don Abdón—the "villain" of the piece—to the protagonist of *Metamorphosis*, both Kafka and Don Abdón are "authors" of metamorphoses

within the context of dream logic with which Delibes will be shown to be thoroughly familiar. Such a reading may, however, be over-elaborate—despite the likelihood that there is indeed a relationship between Kafka's work and *Parábola*. Delibes' own comments about his fiction have tended to be remarkably uncomplicated—if seriously meant—and have confused critics. Their apparent confirmation of simplistic interpretations has hampered the acceptance of more valid readings of such works as *El camino* and *Mi idólatrado hijo, Sisí*. In the case of Don Abdón (and perhaps in the others), it is probable that the author is merely keeping his own counsel—as is the custom of major artists.

¹⁹ "Afán de destripar mis propios sueños, levantándome a media noche y redactando apresuradamente mis pesadillas casi sin abrir los ojos. La única manera de reconstruir los sueños con detalle es en este estado de semivigilia, en que sueño y realidad se entremezclan. Lo malo es que en esa mutua interferencia uno presente, más bien se asoma, al abismo de la locura. Lo considero un juego peligroso." *Un año de mi vida*, p. 68.

²⁰ "De niño recuerdo haber patinado sobre el Pisuerga helado... y una de las pesadillas que sufro desde la infancia está protagonizada por aquel compañero que desapareció entre el hielo roto sin que pudiera volver a aflorar (mi imaginación me inducía a verle sumergido, dándose terribles testarazos contra la resistente capa de hielo sin encontrar el hueco por donde se deslizó, en tanto sus pulmones estallaban.)" *Ibid.*, p. 109.

²¹ (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1966), p. 24. The metaphor is even used by Delibes in a note to the reader in *La Primavera de Praga* (Madrid: Ediciones Destino, 1968), p. 9, in reference to the peoples who through history "vieron sus voces sofocadas por el inhumano argumento de la fuerza" ("found their voices stifled by the inhuman argument of force"). It is worth noting in this context that a nightmare is "usually characterized by a feeling of suffocation and helplessness," according to Leland E. Hinsie and Robert Jean Campbell, *Psychiatric Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 500.

²² *Cinco horas con Mario* has suffered similar critical confusion concerning the question of whether the unreliable narrator committed adultery or not. To leave the matter in doubt is not to recognize the generative principle of the work. Without the act of adultery there would be no monologue and no novel. The dream plays the same role in *Parábola*.

²³ His name relates to his love of plants and his timidity or *mansedumbre* in the manner in which Galdós uses the name José in *El amigo manso* and *Fortunata y Jacinta* in reference to the *mansedumbre* of San José.

²⁴ The role of love and sex in human life is portrayed—though not well—in *We*, *Brave New World*, and *1984*, but is largely absent from *Parábola*. The reason has to do with the protagonist's views about the danger of bringing children into a world in which "devoras o te devoran" ["dog eat dog"] (p. 46). Children hardly appear at all in Delibes' novel, while in the other three examples the state's production, conditioning, and control of children is thoroughly explored. The loosening of family ties—or the redefinition of family—has been a characteristic of many utopias (of all three types), from Plato's *Republic* to Huxley's *Island*.

²⁵ The metaphoric use of "dream" or "nightmare" in utopian fantasies and in the critical literature about them is a constant. See, for example, M. Hillegas' *The Future as Nightmare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); M. Mead, "Towards More Vivid Utopias," *Science*, 126 (1957),

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957-961; C. Walsh, *From Utopia to Nightmare* (London: Harper and Row, 1962). However, in the works themselves creative use of the concept has been unimpressive. Gerber (p. 99) informs us that William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890) is the only well-known dream utopia. Even there, however, the device is entirely unimaginative: the author tells us he had a dream which he will relate to us and then does so, entirely ignoring the characteristics of dreams in the telling. The mere claim that unrealistic happenings are a dream is, of course, a crude attempt to make the reader accept the incredible. It is one of many simplistic solutions to the problem of having to speak of things one cannot reasonably be thought to have witnessed because they take place in another space/time continuum. Bellamy's *Looking Backward* merely uses the Rip Van Winkle solution, and once H. G. Wells had invented *The Time Machine* (1898) it was never idle for long, although Wells himself made no use of it in his *A Modern Utopia* (1905).

²⁶ The case of César Fuentes is interesting in this light. He is the fourth—the others being the *egocero*, Genaro, and Jacinto—of the "degradations" (literal and metaphorical) of the novel, and like Jacinto he shares responsibility for his own fate. He throws a brick that is tied to his scrotum while trusting the pranksters to cut the string in time. His manhood is as effectively destroyed as is that of Genaro and Jacinto when they are given new *empleos* [jobs] as a dog and a sheep. The dream format then makes it possible for the effects of the castration to be those of folklore and bad jokes (beardlessness and a high voice) rather than realistic medical effects. The dream also operates in this fashion when Jacinto's entire life (his novelistic one, exemplified with the reproduction of lines scattered through the earlier part of the novel) "flashes before his eyes" (pp. 214-217) just before his death (i.e., transformation).

²⁷ The problem of reason as a uniquely human attribute is almost always in play in utopian fantasies. In some it symbolizes man's distinction from the animals and is seen as positive; in others, rationalism is depicted as the essential characteristic of the insanely "perfect" utopian worlds, human emotion having been exiled. In *Brave New World* emotions are controlled by drugs, and in *We* D-503's hairy hands are seen by him as proof of his other (sick) self, of his primitive or animal urges—these intended to be viewed positively by the author as evidence of the natural (and therefore of the buried humanity struggling to escape from the yoke of reason). In Delibes, the transformation into an animal is the metaphor of the destruction of reason, and represents still another perspective on the problem. In general, however, reason is portrayed positively in utopias (*vide* Swift's "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" in *Gulliver's Travels*), negatively in anti-utopias, and positively again in anti-anti-utopias. Needless to say, the concept of evolution (forward, this time) is a part of the notion of human perfectability (or the lack of it) in almost all utopias, both before and after Darwin. Richard Gerber (p. 18) considers E. Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871), a work filled with evolutionary concepts, to be the starting point for the modern development of utopian fiction.

²⁸ Genaro's name was probably chosen by the dreaming author because the dried blood of the martyred Saint Januarius, still kept in a bottle, is said to liquefy if placed near a bust thought to contain his head. "Severed head" is the associative key.

²⁹ "Para romper la lógica (en este caso la gramática) que es la clave de las pesadillas." *Un año de mi vida*, p. 91.

³⁰ "Cada día admiro más a los escritores con sentido de humor. Será porque escasean. Pero para exponer problemas graves no juzgo imprescindible la gravedad. El neorrealismo italiano nos mostró auténticas llagas con la sonrisa en la boca. Eso es el talento." *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

³¹ Variations of the first example are frequent. The last two are found respectively on pp. 48 and 184. Some further examples are: *pozo*, p. 36; *albóndigas/cero*, p. 50; *tumbarse*, pp. 71-72; *bola/biceps*, p. 94; *palabras*, p. 97; *tendido*, p. 109; *mañana*, pp. 122-123; *barrera*, p. 134; *cristales/ ojo de cristal* (plus *cabeza*), p. 187.

³² Compare pp. 148 and 172, on the first of which the author (line 4), after using the word *bracea*, thinks of Don Abdón swimming and on the second of which Jacinto's word *nadar* causes him to react similarly (line 26). Comparable examples are the *biceps/bola* associations: narrator, p. 130; character (with identical words), p. 183.

³³ "El verdadero protagonista de mis 'Diarios' es la palabra, el lenguaje." "Prólogo" to *Obra completa*, Vol. II (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1966), p. 13.

³⁴ "Es posible que yo ofrezca a este personaje la oportunidad de envejecer conmigo." *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁵ For a different perspective on the matter of language in the novel see John W. Kronik, "Language and Communication in Delibes' *Parábola del naufrago*," *The American Hispanist* (September, 1975), 7-10.

³⁶ This reduction process is in operation in other areas throughout the novel. It is a metaphoric expression similar to that of the enclosing circle and the re-evolution that operates so ingeniously; even nature cooperates when the echo of his cries, coming back to Jacinto, reduces them to a single syllable such as he will himself be able to utter as a sheep.

³⁷ "No es un muerto; es un ahogado." *Cinco horas con Mario*, p. 68.

³⁸ "¿Por qué en lugar de una 'parábola,' de narración de un suceso fingido, de que se deduce, por comparación o semejanza, una verdad importante o una enseñanza moral, no nos ha dado [Delibes] una 'novela,' una extensa novela, la novela del 'naufrago' de nuestra realidad social, de ése que vive a nuestro lado, que acaso somos nosotros mismos?" *Insula*, 277 (December 1969), 7.

³⁹ "La guerra de Papá." (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1973), p. 154 *et al.*

⁴⁰ Jacinto's *pacifismo* (*Parábola del naufrago*, p. 30), in the light of *Las guerras de nuestros antepasados* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1975), would seem as clearly to be the seed of Pacífico Pérez as Mario's being an *ahogado* leads to Jacinto's *naufragio*.

⁴¹ We do not claim Delibes literally dreamed the novel. He has merely portrayed the novel's action and world as that of a nightmare, basing his experiment on a real interest in the functioning of the dreaming mind. All fiction is fiction. Just as a dream is a subconscious symbolic condensation of the basic significant elements of the dreamer's life, a parable is a conscious symbolic representation of universal truths.

⁴² Hinsie and Campbell, p. 224.

⁴³ *La Primavera de Praga*, p. 85.

⁴⁴ Delibes' admission speech to the Spanish Royal Academy contains the following words: "los mundos de pesadilla imaginados un día por Huxley y Orwell han sido prácticamente alcanzados" ["the nightmare worlds imagined one day by Huxley and Orwell have been virtually achieved"], S.O.S. (*El sentido del progreso desde mi obra*), (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1976), p. 44.