

JUAN VICENTE MELO

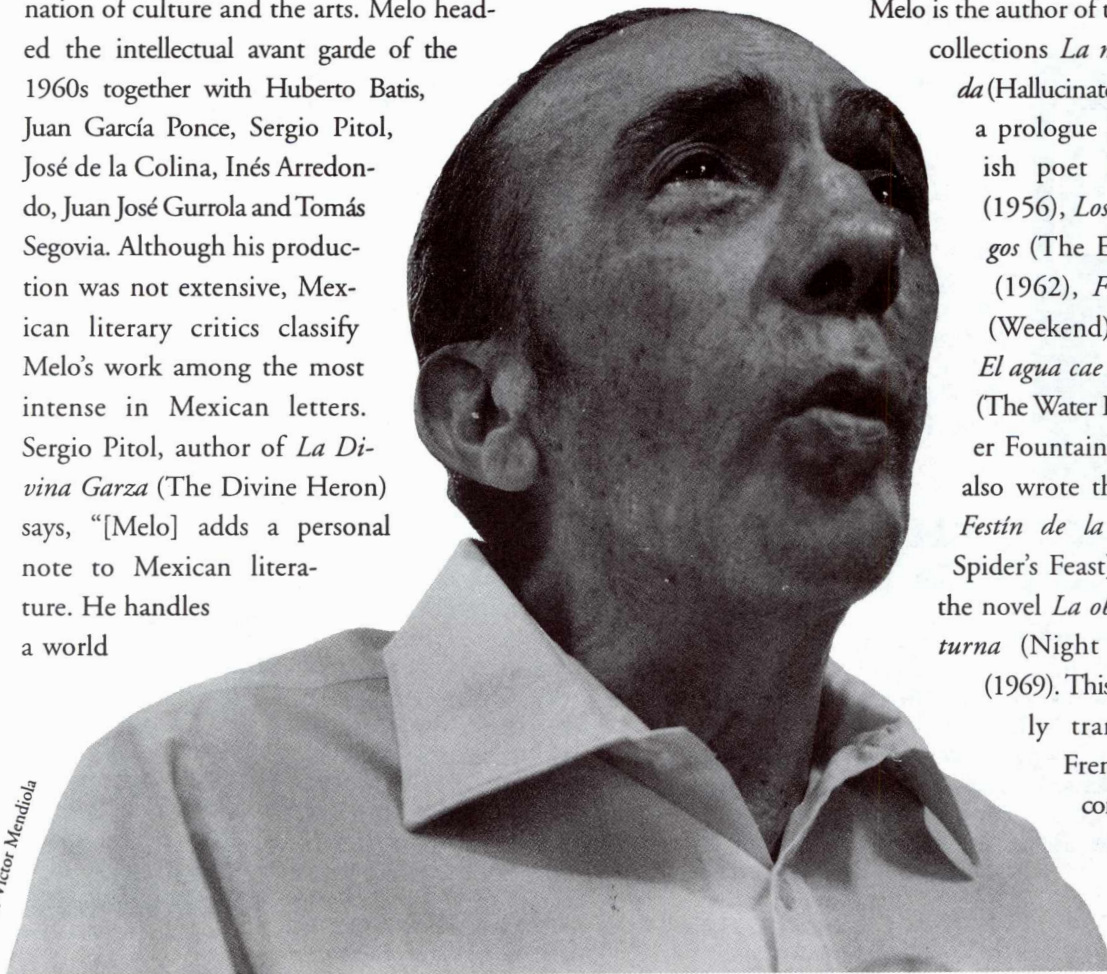
A Unique Writer

The writer and music critic Juan Vicente Melo Ripoll, considered one of the most original Mexican authors of the second half of the twentieth century, died in the city of Veracruz on February 11.

Born March 1, 1932, Melo graduated as a surgeon from the UNAM but abandoned medicine to devote himself to letters, music criticism and the dissemination of culture and the arts. Melo headed the intellectual avant garde of the 1960s together with Huberto Batis, Juan García Ponce, Sergio Pitol, José de la Colina, Inés Arredondo, Juan José Gurrola and Tomás Segovia. Although his production was not extensive, Mexican literary critics classify Melo's work among the most intense in Mexican letters. Sergio Pitol, author of *La Divina Garza* (The Divine Heron) says, "[Melo] adds a personal note to Mexican literature. He handles a world

exclusively his own, a world we might call rational delirium; a mixture of dream and reality, reason and unreason. His characters find themselves in ambiguous—very dreamlike—situations with language charged with individuality, the most appropriate, of course, for validating that dark world he traversed between reason and a run-away imagination."

Melo is the author of the short story collections *La noche alucinada* (Hallucinated Night) with a prologue by the Spanish poet León Felipe (1956), *Los muros enemigos* (The Enemy Walls) (1962), *Fin de semana* (Weekend) (1964) and *El agua cae en otra fuente* (The Water Falls in Another Fountain) (1985). He also wrote the long story *Festín de la araña* (The Spider's Feast) (1966) and the novel *La obediencia nocturna* (Night Obedience) (1969). This novel, recently translated into French, has been considered a classic of contemporary Mexican narrative.



La Jornada-Victor Mendíola

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He was also an outstanding cultural promoter. He founded *La Semana Cultural* (The Week in Culture), a supplement of the Veracruz newspaper *El Dictamen de Veracruz*; he was the editor of the magazine *La palabra y el hombre* (The Word and Man), published by the University of Veracruz; and was the director of the UNAM's cultural center Casa del Lago (The House on the Lake). He contributed to different magazines and cultural supplements like *Revista*

Mexicana de Literatura (Mexican Magazine of Literature), *Revista de la Universidad* (University Magazine) (UNAM), *La revista de Bellas Artes* (The Fine Arts Magazine), *Cuadernos del viento* (Notebooks of the Wind) and *Juglar* (The Juggler). Melo is also considered the precursor of music criticism in Mexico.

His book *La rueda de Onfalia* (Onfalia's Distaff), a novel he worked on for 25 years and had for some time resisted publishing because he felt that its ending was very abrupt, was at the printer when he died. Published by the University of Veracruz, many authors think that its appearance will be one of the literary events of 1996. **Wi**