

COMMEMORATIVE  
EDITION

# FABIÁN DOBLES

100<sup>TH</sup>  
*anniversary of his birth*



THE STORIES OF  
TATA MUNDO

  
EDITORIAL  
UCR

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Fabián Dobles was born on 17 January 1918 in the small country town of San Antonio de Belén, Costa Rica, the seventh child of the local doctor. After attending a rural school, also high school in San José, he studied law at the Universidad de Costa Rica in San José. While still at university he began to gain a reputation as a poet and storyteller by his success in Central American literary competitions.

In 1943 his first novel, *Aguas turbias*, written in the Costa Rican vernacular, was chosen to represent Costa Rica in the Latin American competition for novelists, promoted by the publishers Farrar and Rinehart in association with the Panamerican Union. This book, together with *Ese que llaman pueblo* (1942), was highly praised by Martin Erickson in his article 'Trends in South American Literature', which appeared in *Intellectual Trends in Latin America* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1945): 'Fabián Dobles is an accomplished writer with more than ordinary ability at plot construction . . . [his novels] have interest beyond the localness of their scenes, and their social significance is certainly as apparent as that of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Tobacco Road*.'

Fifty years later Dobles is described in *Contemporary Short Stories from Central America* (University of Texas Press, 1994) as 'one of Central America's outstanding writers', and he is frequently referred to in similar publications as a major figure in Costa Rican literature. And yet as a left wing intellectual he had to struggle to survive as a writer during a period of significant social and political change in Costa Rica. His fusion of social realism and poetically expressed, classically resonant epics has not always appealed to the authorities. Consequently Dobles has had to

make his living in a wide range of jobs in education, industry, commerce, agriculture, journalism and publishing. Though this has restricted the time available for writing, it has greatly enriched the experience on which he draws for his fiction, and provided him with a deep understanding of Costa Rican popular traditions and of the intricacies of the language.

In 1993 the University of Costa Rica and the National University Press jointly published the *Complete Works of Fabián Dobles* in five volumes, which include novels, short stories, plays, poetry, and a few essays and newspaper articles. The best known works are the novel *El sitio de las abras*, an agrarian saga written in a mythical style, which has now gone through ten editions, and *Historias de Tata Mundo*, which has also been published in English and Italian. Dobles's short stories have been widely published in anthologies outside Costa Rica – in English, French, German and Russian, for example – often appearing alongside stories by García Márquez, Borges, Faulkner, Quiroga and Asturias.

In his novels he often takes up the theme of tradition and change in the countryside and in society in general. He underlines the disappearance of traditional values and the transition to modern ways of thinking. In *Years Like Brief Days* he addresses the problem of change as seen in the relationship between the individual, the family and society – the individual gradually establishing his own identity and values. Dobles's treatment of time, in which past, present and future intermingle in the narrator's mind, and its consequent effect on the structure of the work, are regarded as innovatory in Costa Rican literature.

Fabián Dobles and his wife Cecilia Trejos had returned to live in the countryside, although he participated in academic and literary activities and was an active member of the Costa Rican Academy of Language and of the Directorate of the Colegio de Costa Rica. He had received many national and international awards, among them the Magón National Prize for Culture, although he has often stated that the prize he values most is the affection and respect of his Costa Rican readers, who have found in his work not only a national pride, but also a faithful record of their lifestyles, their language and their aspirations.

Dobles felt that the practice of writing is like running an enjoyable marathon towards a goal which is never attainable. In a place of honour

in his house he had a memento – a racing trophy – which a champion cyclist gave him as a present. The cyclist asked the writer to keep the trophy as a symbol of friendship, in exchange for autographing his most recent novel, *Los años, pequeños días*, the one about years which turned into years like brief days.

He died peacefully in 1997.





# PRAYER FOR THE DEAD

W e hadn't heard any reminiscences or stories yet. Tata Mundo was sitting on a bench, his legs wide apart, chewing tobacco and smoking cigars. The time had come for him to tell the tale of the Prayer for the Dead. Pitchblack night enveloped the road and the wind had died down. Heavy silence lay all around us. We were the ones Tata Mundo liked, and we wanted him to start talking. The old man began—

The night was just like this when the priest took me with him to the graveyard. Although I was rather tall for my age I was an altar-boy at that time, and that day Don Francisco seemed in a bad mood. He'd hardly eaten half a mouthful at breakfast and only swallowed a cup of soup at lunch-time. He was nervy and impatient when he said his rosary in the afternoon and let fly with a bad temper at both altar-boys and friends, which was quite unlike him.

"You've got a bee in your bonnet," the verger said as he helped him take off his surplice. "What's up, Don Francisco?"

"Nothing. Nothing," he replied; but then he gave me a sly wink—heaven knows why I was the altar-boy he was the most familiar with— and gave me to understand that I should wait for him to come out of the church.

Once there he asked me if I was prepared to help him with something he planned to finish off in the graveyard that night, and as I replied that of course I was, he told me again and again that I mustn't tell anybody.

I lived at home with some aunts who were heavy sleepers, so it wasn't difficult for me to sneak off without causing a stir. About eleven o'clock,

we went along the road which led to the nearby district of San Jerónimo, lighting our way through the darkness with the priest's old lantern. Everything was silent –the coffee trees, pastures, the cows which we guessed were lying at the edge of the road. Only a dog barked as it sensed us pass by and the guinea-pigs here and there broke the overall silence of the night. Like an animal I felt a shiver run down my spine with fear, but at that age you half fancy you're a man and I tried to feel indifferent so that my jaws wouldn't chatter too much. However, you can imagine that when we entered the graveyard my teeth sounded like rattles, no less. We walked on between white vaults and black and white threatening marguerites, and eventually stopped in front of a grave a bit bigger than the others where I undid the packet containing the paraphernalia for the ceremony.

"Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine", Father Francisco throatily recited.

"Et lux perpetua luceat ei", I replied in a very scared voice, and the Prayer for the Dead continued.

When we got as far as the Lord's Prayer, the priest knelt down on the ground –that's not in the liturgy, and was very difficult for his corpulent person, who had the reputation of enjoying good meals served in the priest's house. Now he felt very devout and full of unction like some novice, so much so that in sprinkling the holy water he used it all up, even making sure he had completely dampened and sanctified the grave. And as if the Latin tags had known they were ancient, he still added in Spanish for greater assurance at the end of the Prayer for the Dead:

"In truth, may you rest in peace, Señor Evaristo", crossing himself again and again and looking to see whether any holy water was left. But as there wasn't any, he considered himself satisfied and began to remove his ceremonial vestments.

"Ah the burden, Mundo, ah the burden, my lad, which I've taken off my shoulders", he went on while I wrapped up the liturgical vestments.

We began to walk stealthily back to the centre of the district.

"What a burial this man had!" the priest commented, pleased and smiling once again. "Do you remember? The whole district turned out, but on that

occasion I couldn't truthfully or humbly recite a Requiescat. Lord! What a way to die! and how difficult it was for me to bury him at peace with myself and the deceased! While I was performing the rites, huge doubts teemed within me. Listen to this, my lad –the devil sometimes grabs hold of a man for his own purposes, however good a priest he may be.”

Well, well. Do you boys know why he talked of huge doubts? Because on the day of the funeral the priest had found it impossible to concentrate on the service, on account of an old squabble he'd had with Señor Evaristo during his life-time, and for sure amongst the crowd of hats and headscarves which surrounded the coffin he could hear whisperings and buzzings going on while he was conducting the ceremony. They must have seemed to him to be saying, “He was killed by fate. The dagger bounced back on the inflated ball and the blade split his forehead in two. What a shame! He was a good man. He did the district many favours.” “Goodness knows, the truth is, it would have been better if he'd not been so close-fisted and had given the land for the square and the church. In any case the boys got into the field, and although he didn't like it they played there and shook one of his coffee trees. Don't you remember when he suddenly arrived and shrieked and stamped like a madman when they struck him on the head with a ball which sent him tumbling to the ground?”

And while he was sprinkling the holy water again and again the priest thought of that other afternoon when he went to try to persuade Señor Evaristo: “But of course it's only a little matter, Señor. The field's worth more than an acre of coffee. In all, it's nothing for you who by the grace of God have so much. You're so well off and such a good Christian owning a few little clumps of coffee trees. Saint Jerónimo needs that land and the lads need somewhere to play.”

“No, no, Father –in any other place, yes, but not there. Look, you'd have to sacrifice your bit of the coffee plantation, and we can't have that. If you want the strip of the field alongside the road, all right, but not the coffee plantation.”

And he imagined, at that time, that it was the señor's corpse talking to him and he even heard it repeat: “No, Don Francisco. Let other people grub up their coffee plantation. I sow coffee and don't allow it to be wasted. As I say, you can have everything you want, but somewhere else.”

“But, my friend, the square and the church won’t fit into that strip of land. The square and the land for the church would need to come from some of the coffee plantation, it’s true, but very little, very little.”

But that was that. The priest had had to take his leave without being able to persuade the obstinate despot, muttering to himself that the man was dominated by greed. He was so resentful and offended that he even smiled at what the boys had done to Señor Evaristo’s wretched little coffee plantation, falling entirely into Satan’s hands by dint of swipes with a ball. Don’t worry, he thought, he’s tough and stubborn like my grandmother’s rheumatism. How can he expect us to build a church in another place if the one we want is to be in the centre of the district?

And the whispered graveyard conversations, things which nobody says aloud and things which everybody listens to standing around the weeping relatives, these continued to bewilder him to such an extent that he went on spluttering Latin praying for rest eternal for that greedy soul... “It happened because of the coffee plantation. Haven’t they told you yet? Yes, running as he always does like a madman. What? didn’t he realise he was carrying the dagger this time? It’s not known why. It happened that somebody hit the ball so hard that it fell near the old man. No, it wasn’t done on purpose. That lad hadn’t seen the gentleman. He got the ball handed to him on a plate. He bore down upon it snorting and claimed he would cut it in two with his dagger, but the wretched thing rebounded when he bent over the ball as he was about to strike it. That’s how he was killed ... Who did it, Señor Evaristo? What happened? He fell down, tripping over the ball. He struck his head on a sharp bit of stone ... I saw it. I was nearby. It happened as Doña Pura says. It happened with the dagger when he hit the ball ... Here, between you and me, don’t you think the same devil ... How do I know? Rare accidents do happen as though they’re caused by the hand of God. I think he’s the first Christian in the world to die in such a comic way. Just look how he fell down and messed his heart up with the dagger going like a thread through the eye of a needle ... But what are you talking about? It didn’t happen like that. Somebody threw the ball on to the dagger which he’d raised head high, threateningly, when...”

The truth is, my lads, that nobody knew for sure how Señor Evaristo had managed to peg out. It had been a very strange accident. And it’s certain that Don Francisco for his part told himself that it was Divine Providence,

Divine Providence. However mixed up his conscience became, when all was said and done, it had to be a grave sin to condemn a dead person, especially if one is a priest and is praying for the peace of his soul. However, the mischievous thought returned to torment him again –the lofty inscrutable designs of the Almighty. He refused to donate anything for a playground or a church for divine worship, and here he is right here, right here, stiff and laid out.

Then, what happened? No, that day the priest did not say the Prayer for the Dead devoutly. The poor soul of Señor Evaristo with such a bad advocate must have had to go at top speed to Saint Peter and his awesome keys.

The little priest must have felt very ill-fated because he was almost confessing to me, an ignorant lad half bewildered by all that story, since a lot of what I'm telling you was being told to me as we walked along. I finally understood the rest of it when I was growing up and increasing in understanding. And it's a fact that, as you'll see, black became white and what was dim became clear by means of a simple though very fortunate event.

At this point Tata Mundo's voice sounded hollow and malicious–

About one o'clock we were approaching the priest's house. "Come in and read what Vargas the lawyer has written to me," the village priest exclaimed at the door, brushing off the dust from his round-toed shoes. "Blessed be the Lord! In his will the old man is leaving the village of San Jerónimo everything necessary for the square and the church where I wanted them, where he delivered his blessed soul to God, and what's more, a large amount of money. Now it's obvious. He'd told me that time, 'I don't cut down even one grove of coffee. Let other people elsewhere do that.' Frankly, I don't fully understand the incident of Señor Evaristo ... At any rate, good heavens!" and the priest rubbed his hands together exuberantly and with a cherubic smile added, "What a stunning sermon, Mundo, what a sermon there'll be tomorrow, Sunday! The square, the church and fifty thousand pesos to begin work! That man was a saint. And now he's another angel in heaven."

And immediately threatening me with his consecrating finger and almost speaking into my ear, he said:



“Now you know, my lad, not a word about all that. God will say whether I sinned that day, but I don’t want any malicious parishioner to go and imagine that you and I went to do anything wicked in the graveyard.”



# THE DETAIL<sup>1</sup>

One night we were going along the top of the hill called Monte del Aguacate with old Tata Mundo riding on his red trotter and us, two by two, astride Lucero and Lunanca, when the old man took it into his head to stop at the house of a few acquaintances, to say hello to them, he said. I think it was more likely to have a rest and warm up, because we were all frozen on account of the altitude, especially the old man who wasn't one to spend all day on a long journey. It was already nearly four o'clock and we were dead beat and as hungry as hunters.

No sooner had we dismounted than the master of the house appeared, came to meet us and introduced us to his family. We very soon rumbled Tata Mundo's secret, for it was here you could get the good mountain home-made liquor which you could seldom enjoy elsewhere. What did Tata Mundo not know? That's why he'd stopped. Of course it was. The old man was fond of what he liked. We stayed there to have a nap. We were intending to go in the direction of San Mateo, but he liked this place and we spent the night under the family's roof, with a little sleep, a little tippling, but with many of his stories and tales. As I was a bit older than the others he let me take shelter in the garret and even allowed me to wet my innocent gullet with two gulps of contraband, which felt like hot coals and very quickly made me nearly hit the roof.

You know, –the old man said to the Aguacate distiller,– your liquor isn't bad. It got a good reputation, and I can't help recalling what my godfather Encarnación did when he was young. I've tasted few liquors like the one

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1 This story –El Detalle– was filmed as a short film by the Costa Rican Center of Cinema Productions and directed by Juan Bautista Castro. Fabián Dobles played the role of Tata Mundo.

my godfather used to drink over there to the north of Alajuela. You should see what a wily chap Encarnación was. There were many occasions when the excise men dropped in over there looking for home distillers, who were legion, but without making any detailed investigations. In that village every other family lived off the trade since the hill was a walking distance away, sugar cane was tasty and there was traditional distilling all over the place. Whoever didn't illegally distil, sold illegal liquor or drank illegal liquor. The ingredients grew on irrigated land stretching as far as Heredia and Alajuela. It was good stuff to drink and good for rubbing on the neck or back. You can imagine the headache the Government got because of that illegal traffic, and the one they'd got their eye on most was, of course, my godfather Encarnación, because of his famous liquor. But there was nothing they could catch him for. When they dropped in on him they found not a single trace of the crime. As if my godfather would be such a fool! The people had their own telegraph system. Hardly did the first eyes spot the two old horses with the excise men appearing on the bridge down below than the first pair of legs rushed up the hill path and there gave the first loud whistle. Keen ears heard the warning and the second pair of legs rushed up the path. At the second whistle, there were other ears on the alert, another rush between enclosures and more people given the warning. It went across the fields, from house to house, from danger to danger. And hide! Bury! Clear off to the mountain! The poor excise men couldn't do a thing. It was like pouring water on clean hands or stopping the wind with your fingers. Well, even so, they caught my godfather completely redhanded. When a name is written down on a list, not even the liveliest fellow can set himself free. So it was with Encarnación. They seized his bottle more or less filled with the purest clear contraband liquor. But how did that happen? Simple. Nobody warned him. The wife of the man down below was giving birth to a baby and had sent the little ones of the family to stay with relatives, and the big ones, with him at the head, helped the delivery. The only one to realise the danger was the dog which certainly barked like the devil and even went outside with his tail held high to bark the warning. But the dog couldn't whistle, so nobody took any notice of him. My godfather was caught, as it were, with his trousers down and all exposed. 'You're coming with us to the capital.' They'd have seen the man shaking his head vigorously, at his wits' end trying to find a loophole to slip through. But where was rescue to

come from? But just see how crafty, glib and slippery Encarnación could be. The only thing he could think of was to come out with:

“Sergeant, old man, you’ve made a mistake. This isn’t illegal liquor. It’s simply spirits from the National Distillery.”

“I know you, mate,” was the reply.

And there goes Encarnación again with his nonsense:

“No, on the level, sergeant. Have a sniff.”

“Look at it!” said the sergeant, making a rude sign.

The private who was with him, like somebody who doesn’t want to, uncorked the bottle and took a good sniff.

“What do you say?” my crafty godfather asked.

“Illegal liquor, and of the strongest.”

But my godfather didn’t have anybody to go along with him, so he craftily kept on and on with his nonsense:

“That, liquor? and Encarnación Badilla’s? Never. I’ve not been making it for years, but when I had some it wasn’t just any old stuff. My liquor was enough to make you see angels and archangels. Not that stuff. I tell you, it’s spirits from the National. Have a sniff, sergeant.”

And the sergeant eventually put his big nose to the bottle. It was at this juncture, dear friends, that the godfather I’m talking about noticed a detail... His brain whizzed, his soul became mischievous, and his fingertips began to fidget. He didn’t know how, but he was beginning to spy a little door in the distance he could slip through.

The sergeant, more convinced than ever, ordered:

“Hurry up and get out!”

His wife handed him his jacket, wrapped up a few tortillas with some meat and put them in his saddle-bag for him and the others, and soon the three of them were riding clown on horseback through the middle of the shacks. And Encarnación remembered the detail, recalling

the sergeant licking his lower lip when he sniffed the neck of the bottle. There's no doubt he likes it.' And again, he didn't know how, although he wanted to, he felt some sort of wall would have to collapse so that he could get out of the fix he was in. How could he trap him? How could he lead him into temptation? What a devil my godfather was! One way and another he tried to return to the same point with the man, to stimulate his thirst, but he seemed to be a real fat slob. The more Badilla wanted to involve the sergeant definitely concerning the delicious quality of his tippie –many years ago he used to distil according to a special recipe– the more the other's apparent indifference affected him, so the distiller either remained silent or went on chatting about something else, but all the time studying the sergeant's expression on the sly. And so they arrived at the local police station.

At this point Tata Mundo laughed and said that chatting about these things made him thirsty, and wiping his silvery moustache emptied in one draught a good proportion of the bottle in front of us as we were listening to him. Putting his hand on my shoulder he gave me a second drop to taste and said sententiously: "Of course, you ought to know that liquor can and must be drunk whenever a man can keep on top of it, because if spirits get the better of a man, that's no good!"

This is what Encarnación had thoroughly sniffed out about the sergeant: that he was the sort of man who is brought down by drink, although at the moment he was like a thief with keys. I've already told you that my godfather kept his eyes open to watch and his nose to sniff out good opportunities, and the longer he remained unsure of how he could get the better of him, the more hopeful he grew of being able to get free. When he saw that they would not get through the district that day because it was already dark, he told himself he'd have to activate his grey matter until he got sparks of inspiration. He used his best blarney with the police chief, and they didn't shut him up in the prison but allowed him to stay and snore with the two excise men in the station office. By then the excise men were on his side to some extent because he had won them over with his chat and witty remarks on the road, so they willingly agreed to keep

him with them. You couldn't say that godfather Encarnación had spun his spider's web already, but it seems to me that he had half done so.

"You see, of course," he was saying when the policeman Pánfilo Artavia from the same village as himself came along out of curiosity, "the liquor I used to make was strong. It made the good man better and the bad less bad. When you drank it angels and archangels used to say, 'Holy, Holy, Holy'. That," pointing to the bottle, "that's no good at all. Mine used to do good little by little, like flowers for the back of your neck, mother's milk for your chest, arms and shanks; and a beautiful vision of heaven used to take shape in your eyes; and the top of your head went up and up. Some people even used to come from the capital to buy it. It's medicinal, they said, good for friction. The girls from Heredia used to rub it on their skin, they said. Isn't that so, Pánfilo?"

"Encarnación, man, don't put me in an awkward spot."

"No, you know I gave that up a long time ago. They'll see how they're wasting their time. They'll let me go as soon as we get to San José and they examine that rubbish. What a pity they're wasting this day away!"

Then, turning to the sergeant, he added:

"Or is it that you don't know much about liquors? Mind you don't confuse the good and the bad. Just imagine, Pánfilo, I gave it to him to sniff and he's off his rocker to think it's home-made liquor. You know, so put your nose to it to prove it's pure Distillery," and he gave a wink.

The policeman smelt it. He became doubtful. He shook his head like an idiot. He did more than that. He uncorked the bottle, drank a draught and blurted out the words:

"Well, I'd say it doesn't seem to be home-made."

"You see, sergeant?"

The sergeant was by now screwing up his courage. He brazenly licked his lips and moustache.

"Shall I try it, sergeant?" the private timidly asked, reassuring himself.



“Well, try it if you want to. Hm,” he growled smugly, “who says I don’t understand?”

And so the underling fell, grabbed the bottle to pour out a good measure in one go. There was enough for tasting, since the bottle was of the pot-bellied sort. In the meantime godfather Encarnación pretended to look elsewhere, with an air of pure indifference. Like somebody who doesn’t ask anyone in particular, he said:

“What do they say? National Distillery, isn’t it?”

Silence. I think conflicting thoughts were brewing in the sergeant’s mind. If he said ‘no’, the chance of a second draught would be lost. If he said ‘yes’, what would be the point of prison, the Chief of Police and everybody? He remained silent, and quietly, now that he was overcome by temptation, considered the possibilities of a second draught.

“Pour some out to see”, he said at last. “I’m not sure yet.”

And glug-glug, the second sip of spirit went down his gullet and, together with the first one, permeated his body and soul. The policeman too allowed himself to test it, and the private found himself in seventh heaven when he least expected to. My godfather, urging them on, said:

“What a pity! Supposing it had been the stuff I used to make! My friends would be singing praises in the company of angels, archangels and all the company of heaven. I remember there were musicians from Heredia who drank it to compose their best works, and poets from Alajuela who didn’t write good verse unless inspired by Encarnación Badilla’s rum ... May I, sergeant? Just a drop for me too. Like that, carefully, it doesn’t do me any harm, even though it’s rotten stuff.”

“No, man. What are you thinking about? You’re under arrest”, and he looked at the bottle again, thinking there were still three quarters left and there’d be enough for another sip.

Tata Mundo then went on— Just as we are rather high up here, so those three people in authority began to rise up in influence, to feel important. Each one praised himself to the skies and they all forced down another couple of mouthfuls, related some colourful tale, uttered now and again a guffaw, gave now and again an embrace, drank now but not again another

draught, always of course the last, because the sergeant, more under the influence of the liquor each time, couldn't stop looking at the bottle, thinking about the proof. You'll be sure like me there wasn't a moment when the man doubted that that was illegal liquor. But what illegal liquor! Although entirely sober, godfather Encarnación was very well aware that he was also heaping coals of fire on his own head with those embraces, and patiently biding his time in the hope of a way of escape. Ah! that was very hard. It just didn't appear at all. He had it in for the bottle, but the sergeant had nicked it and so he was parted from it. 'This business is taking a long time,' my godfather said to himself when he saw the sergeant scrutinising the contents from time to time. And the contents, my friends, meant more than a year in prison for my godfather. There was no way the bottle could be considered empty, the level was still a little below the half-way mark.

The hands of the church clock must have been climbing towards ten o'clock when the Chief of Police was walking home, half asleep. A sound of voices coming from the station reached his ears and he went to see what the racket was. What he saw didn't please him at all. His policeman, the arrested man and the sergeant were sitting on the ground throwing dice, gambling for the tortillas which Encarnación had carried in his saddle-bag, while the private holding the bottle aloft and with his thick lips at the ready, sucked at the neck while the sergeant hoarsely shouted at him amid guffaws:

"You blockhead, leave that. We'll find ourselves without the criminal."

After that there was a period of duty with big drums, a Holy Week sermon and procession with the Cross held high. The Chief of Police pronounced the sermon, and the sergeant carried the Cross high, gripping the pole and threatening everybody, while shouting that nobody but his superior in San José was going to order him about, and he wasn't going to be ill-treated by any old chief of police. The private was on an equal footing when Pánfilo toadyingly ran up to assist his boss. There would have been blood flowing in the river if it hadn't been for my godfather's bright idea, because you'll see how it occurred to him... It was that, not knowing exactly how it

would all end, he had been working out a plan ever since he spotted the detail of the sergeant's greed. And it happened in less time than it takes for the devil to appear. He started up and with a mighty kick finished off the bottle, spilling the remaining liquor all over the police station. Sure enough, there was blood, but not much, only what spurted out from his fat toe when he cut it on the broken glass. After that the lawsuit didn't amount to anything much. My godfather was fined for lack of respect towards authority, and the next day, a little footsore but free, he went back to the hills. Pánfilo went with him, sitting behind on the horse. They'd crossed him off their list.

And my godfather went and told him when he left him at the lowland by the bridge:

"Well, Pánfilo. It really was liquor from the Distillery. What would have happened if it had been mine?"

They laughed, and Encarnación gave a wink.

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It is perhaps in *The Stories of Tata Mundo* –a true classical work of Costa Rican literature– where the legacy of Fabián Dobles is clearly outlined: a foundational identity of Costa Ricans without caricatures, without ogres, without mockery, without remoteness; but indeed, with the ironies and paradoxes of life, both signs of the best universal literature.

Dobles work is characterized by realism tinged with hope, by a poetics of landscape, focusing on the bravery and solidarity of his characters, exhibiting original grace in the language, and even humor in the depiction of some characters and issues.

In spite of the harshness of some episodes, there is no violence in the words, but rather a delicate portrayal of what; no pessimism in the issues, but rather respect, admiration and faith for the people and the vicissitudes they face.

Fabián Dobles dignifies his characters and shows us the intrinsic kindness of a Costa Rican identity rooted in solidarity with others and with nature, through a playful and masterful command of language.