

ENRIQUE OJEDA, A LIFE CONSECRATED TO ECUADORIAN LITERATURE

FILE/EL COMERCIO

Enrique Ojeda, one of Ecuador's greatest literary critics, passed away last week. He specialized in the narrative work of Jorge Icaza and the great poet, Jorge Carrera Andrade.

Enrique Ojeda, one of the most important scholars, researchers, and promoters of 20th century Ecuadorian literature, is "now free of a sly death" to use a line from Jorge Carrera Andrade. On the morning of March 9, in a message dedicated to family and friends, Jo Ellen Haynes Lincoln, his wife, shared that, in his final moments, Enrique's soul and mind remained intact.

"He had just finished the prologue of his 15th book, a manuscript that he had written in 1967 for Columbia University and that could not be published due to student protests," said the message.

At nearly 95 years old, Enrique continued to reflect and write about Ecuadorian literature with fervor, affection, and absolute dedication. Words fall short when saying farewell to a friend of Enrique's stature. To say that he was a very valuable and serious intellectual, generous, and honorable, would leave out hundreds of effusive adjectives.

If one thing defined Enrique's work in Ecuadorian literature, it was the passion and affection with which he studied and promoted it throughout his entire life, extinguished only by his death.

I had the fortune and privilege to meet Enrique in 2004 through the poet and critic, Iván Carvajal. Enrique welcomed me with open arms, like an old friend who one hasn't seen in years and who wants to know what was new in his life.

Enrique immediately and unquestionably became that for me; a mentor and model to follow both personally and professionally. I could not describe here everything he shared so generously with me, but it was a lot; an abundance, filling my hands with new friends and books, joyful conversations about Ecuadorian, Latin American, and Spanish writers and literary critics, and his many experiences of his close friendship with Jorge Icaza or Jorge Carrera Andrade, among others. His good humor and endearing friendliness are unforgettable.

In a photo that Jorge Icaza dedicated to him in his own handwriting and that appears in the book, "In Pursuit of the Miner of the Night" (Paradiso Editores, 2010), the famous novelist wrote, "To Mr. Prof. Enrique Ojeda, with my old friend, Quito, 1966." The great poet, Jorge Carrera Andrade, also affectionately dedicated one of his poems to him: "To my great friend, Enrique Ojeda, passionate defender of poetry. September, 1969. 'Poems of the Book of Exile'."

In the United States, Stephen Ford Brown, English translator of "Century of the Death of the Rose: Selected Poems of Jorge Carrera Andrade 1926-1927," affirmed, "Dr. Ojeda is also Jorge Carrera Andrade's hero because he is the one who has dedicated 30 years of his life to this one poet."

For Enrique, literary criticism was an elevated form of friendship. There is no separation between literature, poetry, and life, because verses and narrations are also slices of life interwoven with words.

The distinguished Ecuadorian was born in Quito in 1928. He received a doctorate in Romance Languages and Literatures from Harvard University.

He was a professor emeritus of Ecuadorian and Latin American literature at Boston College, a member of the Ecuadorian Academy of Language, and his work as a critic, editor, translator, and cultural promoter of

Ecuadorian literature received international recognition. It is with Carrera Andrade's poem dedicated to the fertile old age of the fig tree that accompanies this article, and as a meeting of friends, that I wish to celebrate the life of Enrique Ojeda and his many contributions to the Arts of Ecuador. Go with God, Enrique.

Juan Carlos Grijalva
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FIG TREE

Fertile old age
more than any lush youthfulness.
You teach me to treasure sweetness year after year
to offer secret honey
succulent concentration of twilights
ripening beneath the protection of the leaves
distinguished for their baffling quantity
abundance of green rising to the heights
attached by mysterious designs.
World, I once again find
your swift birds
from the blue tomb of my window.
By chance I was dead and have now come back to life
to observe the natural mysteries.
Time escapes on the wings and in the leaves.
Everything happens around and within me.
The cloud alone tries to convince me
that nothing has changed.
But the world grows older.

ENRIQUE OJEDA received a doctorate in Romance Languages and Literatures from Harvard University. He worked as a professor emeritus at Boston College. He published 14 books about Ecuadorian authors. Enrique Ojeda, one of the greatest Ecuadorian literary critics, passed away last week. His specialty was the narrative work of Jorge Icaza and that of the great poet, Jorge Carrera Andrade.

In 2017, EL COMERCIO interviewed Enrique Ojeda. On the right, with two great poets: Jorge Carrera Andrade (left) and Nicanor Parra (middle)