

The meanderings of Prince Arnulfo

by Dominique Kligine

Arnulfo, o los infortunios de un principe, by Daniel Guebel, Ediciones de la Flor.

ONE never knows just exactly what makes some people want to write novels. But a still more baffling thing is to understand why some of them are ever published. It may

sound harsh, but when so many boring things are seen hovering at book stores waiting for the gullible purchaser, one tends to ask oneself: Is all this stuff any good? The sincere antiblabber will obviously prefer more trees and less "literature". But the point is: Which are the adopted criteria which determine whether a book should be published or not?

Ediciones de la Flor, for example, has been doing an all out effort to present to the common reader the latest literary works produced by very young Argentine writers. The idea is excellent and quite a trial considering current publishing conditions. The collection is called "Los Nuevos" (The New Ones) and it is a fact that it has included some very interesting things. But not *all* of them are masterpiece-buds. Some of the novels have good points. Others are lousy and they simply pounce upon the reader like a teen-ager ready to blow your patience up.

Daniel Guebel's novel has been published: *Arnulfo o Los infortunios de un principe* (*Arnulfo or A Prince's Mishaps*), now belongs to "The New Ones" collection. The novel is supposedly meant to be parodic, with a little bit of wit and rather a spoonfull of stylization. The patient reader, moreover, may find (and, perchance, enjoy) quite a few winks of the eye given to Lacan and his henchmen.

But that is about it. One may want to follow the overtly ridiculous story of this poor chap (Prince Arnulfo) who has to bear the weight of incest, violations and machiavelic manoeuvres until he can finally find his mummy and very Freudianly make love to her. Sheer rubbish? It all depends on how keen the reader is on fixed psychological conducts. But the sexual history of the kings and queens of an unknown kingdom suddenly runs short: Too much teen-age imagination and would-be sarcasm, but there is practically no insight or depth of feeling. Epidemic sexual peripecies depicted in a parodic prose. Now, the "once upon a time" tale could have been a good excuse for parody and hyperbolic style, but it is misused: The writer sells his product (and, hence, himself) to the best reader: His urge to prove he has got his lot of wit and humour is obvious and the text becomes pedantic and clumsy.

We must nevertheless bear in mind that this is Guebel's first novel: We can always believe that something really good is coming next. For the time being, there is too much "literature" and little first rate creative ability to ever become a masterpiece-bud. So much so for our poor Prince.

