

nevertheless, the most complete to date. It contains the most extensive bibliography that has yet appeared and a detailed chronology of the dramatist's life containing information never before available.

MARTHA T. HALSEY

*Pennsylvania State Univ.*

HALSEY, MARTHA T. *Antonio Buero Vallejo*. Twayne Publishers, 1973. 178 pp.

This book on Buero is remarkable indeed. Written in a clear, simple style, it serves as an effective introduction for readers who are unfamiliar with the plays of Buero Vallejo. At the same time, it is a scholarly work which encompasses the literary significance of Buero's theater.

Prof. Halsey has interpreted admirably the significances of Buero's tragedies. To the great benefit of neophytes and experts alike, we have here an original contribution to the understanding of Buero's plays in terms of themes and attitudes. Preceded by a modest preface which understates the mission of the book and a most useful chronology of Buero's life and works, the seven chapters which lead to the conclusion are entitled: "The Man and His Times," "Buero's Ideas on the Theater," "Man's Quest for the Impossible Dream," "The Search for Meaningful Human Relationships," "Man's Struggle for Self-Realization: Will versus Aboulia," "The Search for Truth: Idealism versus Realism," "Internal Victory versus External Defeat: The Tragic Sense of Life." Notes and references, selected bibliography and an index complete Prof. Halsey's study.

Halsey has blended very effectively, indeed, biography and literary criticism. She has relied prudently on Buero's own words as well as on the words of his critics. In so doing, she has given meaning to the theater in general as well as to Buero's theater in particular. Throughout her work she gives prominence to the role that is played by the audience itself. "The playwright leads the audience to identify with his protagonist not only through sharing his deafness and "hearing" his thoughts, but, furthermore, through seeing the world through his eyes." The audience is an active component of the theater. The play is not completed until the audience fulfills its role and reacts to it.

Halsey's analysis of Buero's plays gives us, first of all, an insight into their meaning as they relate to a particular audience. But, beyond the immediate propinquity explanation, we have also an insight into the meaning of Buero's plays in terms of universal qualities. Thus, we are provided with an historical perspective which transcends the plane of immediate experience.

Buero's theater is dedicated to a "Hope that is infinite." His hope is a quixotic quest of a beautiful dream. Prof. Halsey's hope, on the other hand, is realized with scholarly distinction. Her intent as stated in the preface becomes a fulfilled promise; hope here is converted into reality. "The author hopes that her work will serve to introduce one of Spain's most significant literary figures to new English-speaking readers and that it will also prove of some interest to American specialists in Spain's contemporary theater."

ROBERT KIRSNER

*Univ. of Miami*

DELIBES, MIGUEL. *El príncipe destronado*. Barcelona: Destino, 1973. 167 pp.

Within the radically changed canons of contemporary fiction (no longer demanding plot, protagonist or other traditional structural elements), Delibes' latest work can be classified a novel. It is a narrative, too long for the short story category, with several unifying factors. There is rigid unity of time—twelve hours—from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M., Tuesday, December 3, 1963. Narrative viewpoint is invariable: there is only one perspective, that of a little boy nearly four years old. Unity of place (the family apartment) is broken only twice: little Quico accompanies the maid to a neighborhood grocery, and in the evening is taken by his mother to a doctor's office.

There is no plot, no unified or completed action; it is simply one day in the life of the child, from the time he awakes in the morning until he falls asleep at night. Events are told as he might perceive them, with a certain bewilderment and imperfect apprehension. Delibes allows no detail to intrude which could not be absorbed by the four-year-old consciousness, and thus explanations are often lacking, story lines are truncated and episodes left incomplete as the infantile attention jumps from one person, room or scene to another.

Quico is the fifth of six children, "el príncipe destronado," who has lost out as family baby to a sister of perhaps one year. Major characters in his life are his brothers and sisters, his parents and two maids, Vito and Domi. The novel concentrates upon Quico, Juan (home from school with a slight illness), the young maid Vito, and the child's mother. His relationships with others are less significant, less developed; the elder siblings and father appear only at mealtime, and rather obvious family conflicts—including a bitter matrimonial feud—are merely glimpsed.

The unwitting object of an ideological battle between his parents, who direct at him the barbs intended for the mate, Quico is more concerned with his successes and failures in toilet training and his terror of the devil. Sin is loosely defined, but frequently mentioned, and he is threatened



with hell for his occasional outbursts, his incontinence, and simply for Juan's sadistic amusement. But Quico is by no means passive; he is curious, mischievous, lively and impudent. Among his escapades for the day, he hooks the vacuum cleaner hose to the bathtub faucet to "gas up" his tricycle, paints his baby sister and gives her a sedative suppository, blows the fuses by sticking scissors in an electrical socket, and convinces his mother that he has swallowed a needle.

Latent social and moral criticism is undeveloped, adhering to the logic of the infantile narrative viewpoint adopted. Style and syntax are kept simple and often simplified, suggesting a giant step backward in relation to Delibes' two previous novels. In many respects, *El príncipe destronado* belongs to an earlier period (and in fact, Delibes mentioned to this reviewer his plans for the present work in 1965). Intellectually and aesthetically less ambitious than *Parábola del naufrago* or *Cinco horas con Mario*, it has a clear thematic connection to the latter as a study of the formation of the bourgeois mentality and an exposé of its intimate contradictions. Narrative interest is low, because of the author's strict, self-imposed limitations: parental conflict, probably adultery and other more dramatic themes are merely suggested and then abandoned to concentrate upon those things of greatest immediacy to the child. While it is unlikely to emerge as one of Delibes' major works, it is nonetheless an artistic tour de force in the unflinching adherence to childlike perspective and recreation of the four-year-old's world.

JANET W. DÍAZ

Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

ROBERTS, GEMMA. *Temas existenciales en la novela española de postguerra*. Madrid: Gredos, 1973. Paper. 285 pp.

Coverage is less sweeping than the title suggests: this is not a general study of the post-war Spanish novel but of five specific works. Among many possible themes, four basic topics or novelistic axes, none necessarily or exclusively "existential" have been chosen: alienation, decision, failure and death (the last examined in two novels, the others in one each). This is then essentially a collection of essays, each interpreting a selected novel from a thematic focus, often used as a point of departure rather than of concentration. An introductory chapter examines the concept of existentialism as applied in literature, its relationship to the phenomenon of war, and the peculiar adaptations of existentialism in Spain. Emphasis is given the "precursor" roles of Unamuno, Machado and others of the Generation of 98, then to Marías and Ortega. The author notes the national "affinity" for existential attitudes, if not for organized

philosophical treatises thereon. Perhaps this theoretically justifies the lack of any rigid ideological criterion in the choice of novels studies.

The selection of the period, as of the specific titles (perhaps never exempt from arbitrariness) is not elucidated. Publication dates span fourteen years, 1948-62, and while the latter year is of significance for the development of the novel, the former is not. "Tremendista" works are excluded, as Roberts considers the movement only marginally existential, and superficially so, in its brutal portrayal of life. This reasoning is sound enough, and could justify not beginning her study in 1942, but the temporal point of departure (Delibes' *La sombra del ciprés es alargada*) lacks conviction. Delibes' first novel is considered exemplary of the existential preoccupation with death. Its inclusion and treatment seem the weakest part of the study. Death is not an existential monopoly, nor is Delibes' protagonist concerned with death as nothingness, being-toward-death, death as ultimate absurdity, or any of the recognizably existential views of death. He merely reacts with pain to the death of a loved one, withdrawing from life and further suffering. His ultimate and tardy confrontation with the terms of his existence is poorly motivated, vaguely religious and almost certainly not conceived by Delibes in existential terms.

To a lesser degree, the existential intent of other novelists studied is subject to challenge. Three (Núñez Alonso, *La gota de mercurio*; Aldecoa, *Con el viento solano*; Castillo Puche, *Con la muerte al hombro*) have philosophical or ideological bases which are diffuse or insufficient; only Martín Santos (*Tiempo de silencio*) is clearly aware of the literary and philosophical ramifications of the movement. Existential themes, which happen also to be universals, are clearly present in these novels—and many others—but their presence is not an unequivocal indicator of contact with the movement.

Gemma Roberts' work is basically five independent essays, with the common denominator of existential thematics, although other considerations are not excluded (stylistic, intellectual, psychological, etc.). The longest study is that of *Tiempo de silencio*, occupying half the book. There is little cross-over from one essay to another (e.g., alienation is analyzed in one novel, failure in another, decision in another), and the work lacks the sufficiently profound or synthesizing conclusion which might have given unity. The five individual studies are nonetheless useful and occasionally valuable contributions to the body of interpretative criticism on the post-war novel.

JANET W. DÍAZ

Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill