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Miguel Delibes. *La mortaja*. Madrid. Alianza. 1970. 197 pages.

Delibes, already a star in the rather dim sky of the post-Civil War novel, confirms two new directions of his recent writings: interest in the short story, and deft probing toward some reconciliation with the great issues of life, death and suffering, which he previously regarded hopelessly and bitterly. Perhaps this recent orientation also reflects the waning of *tremendismo* on the Spanish literary scene in favor of a compromise by authors to search, to question, to agonize but not to surrender so completely.

The nine short stories in this latest collection deal primarily with the problem of death as a mystery of the human plight—the surprise of the event, the innate tragedy for the condemned victim, and most strikingly, the effect upon the living loved one of the end of it all. Delibes poignantly describes these effects as they affect children who emerge thereby from the time of innocence to the age of adulthood. Nothing, Delibes seems to say, brings a child or a youth to the realization of the meanings and implications of the human condition so much as the terrible confrontation with the unseen visitor in the form of the disappearance of another living being.



L. H. Klibbe



Indeed, many of the stories do read as though they had been written in English—Tom Sawyer English. And anyone who has talked with or read of Borges knows that Mark Twain, and nineteenth century writers in general are his favorites. Here he echoes their