

*Special Service* (1973) is also his most popular among readers of Spanish, probably because of its rollicking humor. Pantoja is a diligent young army officer who, because of his exceptionally fine record as an administrator, is sent to Peru's northeastern tropical region on a secret mission, the purpose of which is to organize a squadron of prostitutes referred to as "Special Service." It seems that a series of rapes has been committed by lonely soldiers stationed in this remote zone, and high-ranking officers in Lima reason that the prostitutes would satisfy sexual appetites and thus reduce tensions between civilians and military personnel. Although less than enthusiastic about his new post, Pantoja flies to the tropical city of Iquitos where, despite many obstacles, he makes his unit the most efficient in the Peruvian army. Meanwhile, a spellbinding prophet called Brother Francisco has mesmerized a growing sect of religious fanatics, whose rituals include the crucifixion of animals and human beings. The novel is brought to a climax by the death of Pantoja's beautiful mistress, one of the prostitutes, and his dramatic funeral oration revealing the army's role in prostitution. By way of punishment, he is transferred to the remote highlands of Peru where, it is suggested, he continues to represent the epitome of military efficiency.

*Captain Pantoja* . . . might be described as an absurd novel enriched by strong doses of irony and the grotesque, its protagonist typifying the absurd hero who never gives up in the face of adversity. A victim of irony throughout the novel, Pantoja elicits the reader's guffaws because of his puritanical nature and his serious, analytical approach to his scabrous assignment, but ultimately he merits sympathy and respect. The frequent juxtaposition of his ludicrous antics and Brother Francisco's barbarous crucifixions, moreover, create clashing emotional tensions similar to those produced by grotesque art.

Because of his emphasis on avant-garde structural techniques, Vargas Llosa has been regarded as the technologist of the Latin American novel. *Captain Pantoja* . . . not only utilizes a montage of military reports, dream sequences, letters and radio broadcasts, but also fuses narrative prose with two or more interwoven dialogues dramatizing the different plot threads. The result is an impression of

dynamic movement that serves to accelerate the flow of events and heighten ironic contrasts.

In his dissection of Peruvian society, Vargas Llosa satirizes the military organization as well as the corruption, hypocrisy, and cliché-ridden language of his fellow countrymen. A difficult book to translate, *Captain Pantoja* . . . loses some of its impact in the English version. Still, it should be greatly enjoyed by American readers with a taste for absurd humor and innovative narrative devices.

George R. McMurray

### HILDEGARD EMMEL

*Der Weg in die Gegenwart: Geschichte des deutschen Romans*. Vol. III. Berne: Francke (Sammlung Dalp 106), 1978. Pp. 214.

The third and final volume of Professor Emmel's history of the German novel covers the years from the end of World War I to about 1970. The book has three parts; the first is devoted to the time of the Weimar Republic, mainly to novels by the following authors: Erich Maria Remarque, Arnold Zweig, Lion Feuchtwanger, Alfred Neumann, Alfred Döblin, Jakob Wassermann, Franz Werfel, Joseph Roth, Anna Seghers, Hans Fallada. The second part is entitled "Romankonvention und totalitärer Staat"; under this heading the author analyzes novels written in Germany during the Nazi period, novels written in exile, and the modern novels written in the German Democratic Republic by authors like Anna Seghers, Johannes Bobrowsky, Christa Wolf, and Hermann Kant. Western novelists treated in this chapter are: Elias Canetti, Bert Brecht (*Dreigroschenroman*, *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar*, *Tui-Roman*), Ernst Jünger, and Thomas Mann. The third chapter is the most convincing one: Ms. Emmel analyzes the most important novels written since 1950—works by Heinrich Böll, Hans Erich Nossack, Wolfgang Koeppen, Max Frisch, Günter Grass, Martin Walser, Uwe Johnson, Ingeborg Bachmann, and Arno Schmidt.

Professor Emmel had no intention to include everybody and everything. In fact, she mentions a few dozen novels altogether—no more. Anything which she considers not quite first class is either left out or just mentioned in passing. Peter Handke and Thomas Bernhard are left out because, as pointed out in the introduction, they are authors, "die vom heutigen Standpunkt noch nicht mit Sicherheit einzuordnen sind."

Although Professor Emmel is herself a refugee from the GDR, her treatment of East-German authors is fair—at least with regard to the space allotted to them. Clearly, she has a better understanding of Brecht than of Christa Wolf or Hermann Kant. Erwin Strittmatter, Ehm Welk, Hans Marchwitza, Willi Bredel, and Stefan Heym are mentioned *en passant* only, but so are many known West-German authors.

Professor Emmel is a careful reader—and an honest one. She writes only about what she has read herself, and her analyses express her own considered opinion. One might argue that she overestimates certain authors; one, for instance, is Feuchtwanger. While about 20 (of 240) pages are allotted to him, Heimito von Doderer and Hanns Henny Jahn have less than 20 lines each, and Peter Bichsel or Adolf Muschg are not mentioned at all. As in her previous volumes, popular literature is ignored: there is no mention of the best sellers by Simmel, Habe, de Wohl, or those modern authors who hide their talents and their keen social criticism in crime novels of literary value—a unique phenomenon in recent German literature. But books in the series "Sammlung Dalp" are limited in length, and a choice had to be made. Also, the author had to keep in mind her public, mainly students of German literature, i.e. she had to adhere, more or less, to the generally accepted canon of the German novel. For all who want an introduction to the field, Professor Emmel's "History of the German Novel" is a reliable, well-written, if somewhat conservative guide.

Ingrid Schuster

DEAN McWILLIAMS  
*The Narratives of Michel Butor:  
The Writer as Janus.*  
Athens, Ohio: Ohio University  
Press, 1978. Pp. 150.

Professor McWilliams's premise that all of Butor's work presents one unique theme, inherent from the earliest to the most recent, becomes plausible as we read his study of the total opus of the French writer. Suddenly works which may have appeared unconnected and crisscrossed by multiple hermetic trends become one cohesive whole dominated by one omnipresent theme: the search of modern Western man for his historical roots.

The study begins with an introduction intended to give the reader insight into Butor's life and an understanding of the mythic structures inherent in his works. Some of these are: rites of passage, the quest of the hero, meandering through labyrinthine tasks, aborted Epiphanies, and ultimate sacrifice. The entire oeuvre is seen as a journey which often ends in frustration although the hope for personal and collective regeneration lies at the core of the ritual patterns.

There are ten individual chapters arranged in clear chronological order from *Passage de Milan* to the recent *Intervalle*. The earliest novel published in 1954 places the search theme in a vague Egyptian cultural background which colors the meanderings of the protagonists in their shallow Parisian lives. The next chapter deals with *L'Emploi du Temps* wherein Butor is seen as expanding his historical schema by unearthing an entire series of earlier civilizations buried in present day Manchester. The hero struggles toward a higher level of consciousness while we, the readers, join him in his archeological and psychological wanderings. In the chapter devoted to *La Modification* Butor is seen as denouncing an attempt at self-deception by a hero or anti-hero who would suppress part of his Roman heritage from his conscience. He is torn between his pagan aspirations and his bourgeois Catholic milieu. Janus, the god who oscillates between the forces of the past and the reevaluation of the future is introduced as he haunts Delmont's nightmares and points the way toward a yet unforeseen course of action.