

Part II is entitled "Le Programme de Sartre." After having briefly examined Sartre's theoretical statements about language in this part, Helbo goes on to study Sartre's characters in a number of linguistic situations. In one, of which *La Nausée* and "Erostrate" serve as examples, the accent is on the *locuteur* and his attitude towards language; in another, of which the other stories of *Le Mur* serve as examples, the accent is on the *locuteur's* power over the *allocutaire*; in still another, of which the three published novels of *Les Chemins de la liberté* serve as examples, the accent is on the conflicting attitudes towards language of diverse social groups. Throughout, Helbo argues convincingly, although somewhat repetitiously, that the meaning of Sartre's fiction can only be grasped through an understanding of the significance of language acts for Sartre's characters.

The first part of Part III, entitled "L'Enoncé," analyzes recurrent words and themes in Sartre's fiction. Citing Bachelard, and recalling Jean-Pierre Richard at every turn, Helbo studies such thematic topics as animal, vegetal, and mineral images, colors, light, and bodily sensations. This first chapter concludes with a summary of the pertinent semantic axes of Sartre's fiction. The second chapter, entitled "L'Énonciation," represents the most complex and original part of the book. In it Helbo studies manifestations of subjectivity in the fictional text. The first section of this chapter, called "La marque de l'énonciation," deals with formal indicators—for example, personal pronouns and proper nouns. In the second and third sections, Helbo extends his consideration of manifestations of subjectivity to the discursive situation as a whole. The second section, called "La référence," deals with spatial indicators or "toponymes" through which the *locuteur* imposes his subjectivity, thereby transforming the *allocutaire's* notion of the text's spatial reference. The third part, called "La pré-supposition," deals with indicators of attitude—for example, of the *locuteur's* accepting responsibility for the text or of the bases of the *allocutaire's* understanding it. In the fourth section, Helbo analyzes one particular rhetorical form—the portrait, or physical description of characters—as a paradigm of linguistic communication in fiction.

The book closes with a lengthy bibliography of works on Sartre's fiction and

on literary theory which is unfortunately flawed by numerous omissions, mistakes, and inconsistencies in bibliographical format.

Doris Y. Kadish

ARTURO USLAR-PIETRI

Oficio de Difuntos

Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1976.
Pp. 351.

The political novel in Latin-American literature is a significant tradition that has produced remarkable works from *Amalia* (1851-55) by the Argentine José Mármol to *El señor presidente* (1946) by the Guatemalan Nobel Prize winner, Miguel Ángel Asturias. During the last few years, the appearance of an important number of novels dealing with Latin-American dictators has demonstrated a renewed interest in the subject.

One such novel is *Oficio de Difuntos* (1976). Forty years after the death of Juan Vicente Gómez, the figure of this Venezuelan dictator comes to life in the pages of Arturo Uslar-Pietri's novel. The thin disguise of different names does not diminish the correspondence between Aparicio Peláez, one of the novel's two main characters, and Gómez himself. The parallel between Alberto Solana, the weak, lascivious and verbose priest of the novel and Father Carlos Borges, Gómez's military chaplain and "court jester" is also readily discerned.

The first pages of *Oficio de Difuntos* (Requiem Mass) show Father Solana reading the famous funeral orations of Bossuet, a classical model. Solana is preparing for the unwanted task of delivering the oration at the funeral services for General Peláez, "lleno de temores, con ganas de borrarse, de desaparecer, de caer en un inmenso pozo de olvido" (p. 8). As he pages through the high-sounding words of Bossuet, Solana begins to evoke Peláez's past, filling in all the necessary details with his own imagination. He demonstrates a determined effort to understand the elusive political figure, his rise to power, and his political survival through 27 years of autocratic rule: "Se iba del presente y

de la escritura hacia rotas imágenes del pasado Tiempos y lugares que él nunca conoció Con pedazos de recuerdos oídos, mezclados de imaginaciones, se acercaba a aquel hombre joven a quien por tanto tiempo le estuvo negado saber quién era y qué podía hacer" (pp. 347-48). But Father Solana does not progress much in writing his oration for he is frequently interrupted by shouts or gunfire in the streets and news of ransacked homes and threatening mobs. Nonetheless, his intense probing of the past provides an ample portrayal of Peláez's era. The conclusion of the novel represents an ironic twist of destiny. The military successor to Peláez, realizing the increasingly rebellious mood of the populace, opts for a discreet burial ceremony and cancels the funeral oration. Solana is thus relieved of the compromising burden, but shortly thereafter he is trampled by one of the mobs that roam the city.

Uslar-Pietri's novel is doubly interesting and valuable. On the one hand, the book has relevant literary qualities. Frequent alliterations give a captivating force to certain descriptions: "con los gruesos grillos grotescos" (p. 19); "Peláez regresaba con su pesado paso lento" (p. 56). Short, precise sentences abound. To the evoking strength of his images and metaphors, Uslar-Pietri adds the outstanding ability to represent with naturalness the language of dialogues and the flow of his characters' thoughts. On the other hand, the novel is primarily a serious attempt to comprehend a foregone but important era in history as well as the political career and personality of the last of the Venezuelan *caudillos*.

The good political novelist is able to "weave into his story the threads of history, recording not only the lives of his creations, but actual events in the lives of nations," recreating them "with a vividness found in few scholarly histories" (Joseph Lee Blotner, *The Political Novel*; Folcroft, Pa.: Folcroft Press, 1970; p. 9.) Uslar is a good political novelist as he vividly unfolds events and characters in half a century of his country's history: the military insurrection of 1892 which sent Peláez (Gómez) and his political and military boss, Carmelo Prato (Cipriano Castro) into exile in the neighboring Nuevo Reino (Colombia); the daring campaign of 1899, launched by Prato from across the border, in which he succeeds in capturing power by eluding and leaving behind powerful

enemy forces; the period of 1901-03 in which Peláez, with intuition and determination that compensate for his lack of military experience, defeats an array of prestigious *caudillos*; Peláez's difficult struggle to preserve Prato's trust and his accession to power in 1908 after the latter departed for Europe; and finally, Peláez's incredibly long stay in power during which time he ruthlessly gratifies his insatiable hunger for land by becoming the largest landowner in the country. The attachment to the land is an Andino (Western Andean) characteristic. Another Andino psychological trait, distrustfulness, is viewed in the novel as one of the important keys to Peláez's political survival: "El mando no se puede dejar ni un momento. Ni para dormir. Ni en manos de nadie" (p. 194).

Uslar-Pietri's literary skill allows the reader to relive the intimate atmosphere and everyday details of Gómez's tyranny. Gómez is a Venezuelan, as well as a Spanish-American political phenomenon that needs to be studied and understood. Most of the fascinating facets of the dictator's personality are brought forth by Uslar-Pietri with sure and effective objectivity. Uslar-Pietri's novel, together with its artistic merits, is indeed a revealing book about a long and painful era in Venezuelan history.

Jorge A. Marbán

MICHAEL HOLQUIST
Dostoevsky and the Novel
Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 1977. Pp. 202. \$12.50.

In view of the ever increasing flow of critical literature on Dostoevsky, it is difficult to imagine what new approaches might be taken in the study of his extraordinary and—as it would seem—perpetually fascinating literary output. Nearly every possibility has been probed: biography, formalism, comparativism, *critique du jour*, sociology, psychological, philosophical, and even theological criticism. Yet whenever it appears that there is little else