

WILLIAM T. PILKINGTON, ED.
*Critical Essays on the Western
American Novel*
Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980. Pp. vii-
275. \$25.00.

This book is an important collection of essays for those students of American literature who have not yet considered, but who probably ought to consider, the book's basic thesis: in scope and in theme the literature of the American West is significantly different from traditional eastern or urban literature. That thesis has been a long time in the making and it is just possible that it is not yet fully developed. Seventeen years ago, John R. Milton and a few other American literature specialists formed The Western Literature Association and began publishing the *Western Literature Review*. That organization and that periodical have attained more than a semblance of acceptance, especially among the teachers and students of American literature whose colleges and universities are west of the Mississippi River. Yet a mark of how far the thesis has yet to go for complete acceptance is this book itself: five of the contributors are represented twice in a book that has only twenty-four selections.

Nevertheless, this book is very useful on at least two grounds. It contains John Milton's superb essay of 1964 in which he first made the claim that in general the eastern novel differs from the western novel in that the former is concerned with "relationship of characters in time" while the latter is concerned with "characters related in space," that is, the eastern novel is likely to be concerned with the psychological, social, or economic and the western novel with the physical and anthropological. The essay is a lengthy one and by way of developing its thesis examines closely several writers who are considered major by the western literature specialists.

The second way in which the book is useful is that, both in the general criticism section—which includes Milton's essay and those by Max Westbrook, Richard Etulain, and others—and in a section on individual authors, we are introduced to those writers essential to the book's argument. Walter Van Tilburg Clark was a powerful and persuasive writer who no doubt never achieved the recognition his work merited;

but this book requires us also to consider whether even lesser known writers may not have spent generally unrecognized careers because they wrote "westerns." Frederick Manfred, Vardis Fisher, and A. B. Guthrie are but three of the authors with whom I am familiar whose work suggests that the thesis of this collection of essays is a valid one.

Donald A. Short

STEPHEN GILMAN
*Galdós and the Art of the European
Novel: 1867-1887*
Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 1981. Pp. x & 413. \$30.00.

Professor Gilman's reputation as one of the world's leading Hispanists, established long ago by his seminal studies on Fernando de Rojas and *La Celestina*, will be further enhanced, even at this late stage in his career, by the publication of his first book on Spain's greatest novelist after Cervantes. This claim is made despite the recognition that the core of this handsome volume, printed in linotype Granjon, is composed of ten essays that Professor Gilman has already published over the last thirty years. One of them, the classical references in *Doña Perfecta*, is reproduced almost in its original form in an appendix. Drastic revision of the nine others, however, has enabled Dr. Gilman to clarify and deepen an argument that hitherto had been fragmented in time and space so that we can legitimately consider his book as a new study. Whilst it will surely stand as a lasting memorial to Dr. Gilman's distinguished work on Galdós, the book is full of praise and recognition of the work of other galdosistas closely connected with Gilman: his teachers, colleagues, and students.

Gilman's vast erudition is evident on every page in the learned references to the works of critics, philosophers, and novelists, though the note of pedantry is often avoided by the Ortega-like injection of personal anecdotes and references to contemporary social or cultural manifestations (the film *Love Story* is accorded some space).