

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).

But then, nothing less is to be expected from a study with such a wide scope as indicated by the title. Nonetheless, Gilman's intention is not so much to situate Galdós within the great Realist tradition of the nineteenth-century novel as to show how the Spanish novelist was inspired by his perceptive readings of Dickens, Balzac, and Zola in the development of his fiction. This kind of creative communion or symbiosis, or as Dr. Gilman prefers, double dialogue, characterizes the Galdós novel from its inception in 1867 to its apotheosis in 1887. Moreover, this double dialogue is also conducted by Galdós with his earlier creations. It is an interminable organic process.

Gilman's study is divided into three parts. The first, "The Historical Novelist," demonstrates Galdós's original achievement in arousing the historical consciousness of the Spanish reading public in *La Fontana de Oro* (1867-70). However, the caricature-like portrayal of people (Paulita Porreño being the one exception) did not convey the temporal mutability of the historical experience, how the past lived on into the present. In order to comprehend this phenomenon, Galdós turned to the contemporary thesis novels such as *Doña Perfecta* (1876) whilst continuing the historical novel in the first two series of *Episodios Nacionales* (1873-79). These two strands were then combined in the cardinally important novel, *La desheredada* (1881), the first of Galdós's justly famous "serie contemporánea." The march of history and above all its meaning for contemporary society, are now presented simultaneously, with, thanks to the example of Zola's *L'Assomoir*, an appropriately Naturalistic language. Society could now be presented historically and history, socially.

Part II, "*Fortunata y Jacinta* in Prospect," charts the subsequent attempts by Galdós to break the fetters of Zolaesque Naturalism by introducing free will into his novels. This dialectic with *La desheredada* finally resolves itself in the 1887 creation of Fortunata, after Galdós's cataclysmic reading of the masterpiece by his friend Leopoldo Alas, *La Regenta* (1885). Its Cervantine and Flaubertian echoes triggered off in Galdós's mind (a very retentive mind, Gilman insists) memories of other novelistic voices: *La Conquête de Plassans*, *Pot-Bouille*, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, *Le Ventre de Paris*, *Thérèse Raquin*, all by Zola, Balzac's *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, and Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*.

Part III is devoted entirely to an examination of Fortunata's unique status in Galdós's fiction in this period: her sublime sacrifice at the end offers the Spanish reader an escape from his century's oppressive historicism, so minutely recorded in the first part of the novel. Fortunata's incitation (a term Américo Castro used in 1947 to describe the conscious incorporation of excitement or the inner rebirth of spiritual consciousness) commences when Fortunata becomes aware of the incarceration of her spirit within the gradually taller walls of Las Micaelas, the Madrid convent to which her would-be reformer and soon-to-be husband, Maxi, has agreed to send her for the proper religious education a married woman should receive.

Gilman's thesis is dauntingly impressive, but basically flawed, for two interconnected reasons. First, he celebrates Galdós's masterpiece as the apex to and from which all the other novels inevitably flow. Despite the chronological limits of the title, Gilman does allow himself a few forward glances to the later novels, regarding some protagonists (not all; interestingly he does not mention *Angel Guerra*) as linear descendants of Fortunata. Secondly, this view of the masterpiece is predicated on the belief that Fortunata does succeed in breaking the bonds of contemporary historical determinism. I cannot share this view as I believe that Galdós inserts within the fictional frame sufficient indicators (self-absorption, dramatic gestures) for us to place some reservations on her self-proclaimed status as an angel, which Dr. Gilman, with lyrical outbursts (p. 136) seems to accept without hesitation. It would seem more accurate to regard Fortunata as another imperfect attempt, along with Camila in *Lo prohibido* (1885) and Nela in *Marianela* (1878) (another novel which Gilman does not mention), to overcome the weight of historicism, an achievement that is only finally realized in the figure of Benina in *Misericordia* (1897). *Fortunata y Jacinta* thus becomes just another, albeit important step in Galdós's protracted and painful search for a totally autonomous spiritual realist character. Nor can one say that Galdós held fast to this novelistic creation, for the following year in the Third Series of *Episodios Nacionales* he once more returns to the victims of historicism. In short, in Gilman's seductive book we have only a partial scheme of Galdós's work which from a more complete perspective takes on a different complexion altogether.

Dr. Gilman's thesis is further weakened by what I consider a number of misinterpretations of specific details. For example: is Doña Perfecta really a human archetype and not a caricature (pp. 72-73)? Surely Galdós suggests the important political representativeness of Isidora in *La desheredada* well before the key penultimate chapter of Part I (p. 101)? Gilman seems to overlook the redeeming features of Rosalía in *La de Bringas* (p. 140) and underplay the relevance of José María's protestations of instructional purpose in *Lo prohibido*. Moreover, is Fortunata always so clear-sighted about Juanito (p. 339)? The high claims made for Galdós's use of language in *Fortunata y Jacinta* (p. 254) are unsupported by studies of the same topic in the other novels. Furthermore, is Gilman's explanation of the process of "double-dialogue" anything more than a snobbish reluctance to descend to the more prosaic level of source-hunting? To his credit, Dr. Gilman does acknowledge from time to time that he is treading on dangerously thin ice with these speculations and hypotheses (p. 214).

In such an attractively produced volume it is sad to have to record a large number of typographical errors (accents proved to be a particularly thorny problem for the typesetters). A bibliography and list of periodical abbreviations would have been valuable additions. The chapter subdivision headings do not appear to be very helpful, and the varied approach to the problem of translating large quotations is extremely perplexing: some are placed below the original, others are omitted or replace the original, without there being any obvious reason for this varied treatment. Occasional compression of footnotes and rambling sentences would have been welcome along with less paternalistic references to students' end-of-term essays or soon-to-be-published books. Some mention should have been made of the studies by Varey and Cardwell on *Doña Perfecta* and Ribbans and Lassaleta on *Fortunata y Jacinta*.

Despite these reservations and criticisms, Professor Gilman's study will remain a major reference book for galdosistas in the years ahead. Admitting to have read *Fortunata y Jacinta* over two dozen times, Professor Gilman clearly demonstrates that he, like Galdós, is an avid and perceptive reader as well as a brilliant writer. In encouraging lesser mortals to follow his example, his achievement will be all the more lasting and significant.

P. A. Bly

GRACE RADIN

Virginia Woolf's The Years: The Evolution of a Novel

Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981. Pp. 188. \$14.50.

The development of few novels is as well documented as the progress of Virginia Woolf's *The Years*. We know the exact moment of initial inspiration: In her diary entry of January 20, 1931, Woolf wrote, "I have this moment, while having my bath, conceived an entire new book—a sequel to *A Room of One's Own*—about the sexual life of women: to be called *Professions for Women* perhaps—Lord how exciting! This sprang out of my paper to be read on Wednesday to Pippa's society."

The difficulties of *The Years*, thus, seem to have arisen in the moment of its first inspiration. Virginia Woolf had prepared a speech to be given before the London/National Society for Women's Service (a shortened version of this speech is found in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*; a transcription of the first typescript of the speech is found in Michael Leaska's *Virginia Woolf: The Pargiters*). Whether a feminist speech was a fruitful inspiration for a novel by Woolf I suppose we cannot ultimately decide. That Woolf had great difficulties in finding the proper form and style for *The Years* is well documented. Between that moment of inspiration in the bathtub and the publication of the novel in 1937, the work underwent many changes, and Woolf was dissatisfied with the result. Leonard Woolf, when he finally read the work in galleys, was relieved to find it less bad than he had feared; he was able to express encouragement honestly if not wholeheartedly, an encouragement he felt essential to his wife's health at the time.

To document the development of the novel we have seven and a third bound notebooks in Woolf's handwriting, what is apparently the first draft of the novel. There are eight sheets of undated typescript (Radin guesses they date from 1934). A nearly complete set of galley proofs from March 1936 survive. (There were, apparently, two sets of page proofs.) In addition, of course, we have periodic and important reports on the progress of the work in the diaries.