

sex urge to be stronger than the will to live. This then evolves as the book's central theme.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the novel, apart from its unique narrative perspective, is the characterization of Inspector Guedes of the Rio de Janeiro Police Department. Guedes is depicted as a loner living in a roach-infested flat, dressed always in the same sweat-stained jacket. In Brazil, after the "ditadura," or military dictatorship, Fonseca has created a character—an authority figure—who is scrupulously honest, intelligent, streetwise, and appealing. Guedes symbolizes the man of virtue whose life is lived out amid the corruption of contemporary society. His personal life in shambles, it is Inspector Guedes who is intent on righting the amorality that he confronts daily. However, at times, Guedes's sense of personal morality goes well beyond the limits and rigidity of the law.

While Fonseca's crime fiction has a *film noir* quality about it, it is approached from a Brazilian perspective. Like American author Andrew L. Bergman's Jack LaVine series ("The Big Kiss-off of 1944"), Fonseca seems to stop just short of parodying the genre.

Bufo & Spallanzani is an interplay of exotic atmospheres and compelling mystery. Fonseca, in the guise of a hack writer, is able to comment freely upon Brazilian society and politics. The book is footnoted in scholarly fashion, while its love story is the equal of any TV soap opera. This entertaining and darkly comic novel is arguably Fonseca's best to date. The novel converges upon contemporary literary theory, science, and the conventions of pulp fiction to create an ingenious amalgam of all three.

Adolfo Bioy Casares

THE DIARY OF THE WAR OF THE PIG

Translated from the Spanish by Donald & Gregory Woodruff

New York: E.P. Dutton, 1988. Pp. 192. \$7.95

Reviewed by Evelio Echevarría

The war of the young against the old in its most violent form is the topic of this novel by the Argentinian Bioy Casares. The story is told in the form of a diary, as well as through dialogues sustained among groups of public servants who are about to retire from their jobs. One of them is Isidoro Vidal, almost sixty years old and in love with a much younger woman. The action takes place in the Argentinian capital or any big, modern city and, presumably, in what could be the present or the very near future. Fired up by a fanatic, youths get out of control harassing, robbing, and killing senior citizens, or "pigs." The war is carried out without any dogma or doctrine, but not without a number of reasons which the author expresses repeatedly: the young kill the old out of hatred the old they themselves will become; by sheer numbers, old men are now masters, occupying posts and jobs that the young also need; the dictatorship of the proletariat has now ceded its place to the dictatorship of the elderly; the old

man represents ever-advancing age, and has no way out but death. The "war of the pig" runs its course and comes to an end, but not without leaving a foretaste of things to come.

There is a parallel between Bioy Casares's *Diary* and Albert Camus's *The Plague* (1947). In the conflicts of his plague-afflicted city of Oran, Camus discovered the absurdity of existence as well as the bravery of the human being in facing the ordeals of living. Through Vidal, his protagonist, Bioy Casares arrives at a similar discovery: the human being is "repulsively weak" but, paradoxically, strong and brave in meeting the challenges of life and death.

This novel was first published in Buenos Aires in 1969. It is not a typical work of Bioy Casares, whose great specialities were the fantastic and intellectual fiction, but the massacre of one part of human society by another is an allegory that lends to many interpretations. After turning the last page of this *Diary*, readers are left with the notion of some temporary truce and of an uncertain future.

Malise Ruthven

A SATANIC AFFAIR: SALMAN RUSHDIE AND THE RAGE OF ISLAM

London: Chatto & Windus, 1990. Pp. 176. \$14.95

Reviewed by Axel Knoenagel

The controversy concerning Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* was the literary event of 1989. For most Westerners interested in literature, the vehemence of the Muslim reaction over a work of fiction came as an almost incomprehensible surprise. Ruthven's book is intended to shed some light on the background of this reaction. The book is therefore "not about an author, but about a book and some of its readers" (10). In six chapters Ruthven discusses "Satanic Fictions," "Honour and Shame," "Islam in Britain," "Conspiracy," "Ayatollahs of the North," and "The Word and the Text." Ruthven's study focuses primarily on the reception of *The Satanic Verses* in Bradford, where copies of the novel were burned as early as November 1988. The Muslim community of Bradford, like that of most other British cities, consists largely of immigrants from India and Pakistan. Ruthven's attempt to analyze this particular case of reader-response develops primarily into a study of these readers' sociopsychological constitution.

Unfortunately, Ruthven, who declares himself "an admirer of Rushdie's writing, and a student of Islam" (10), introduces into the text a note highly critical of Islamic dogma and practice. In the book's first paragraph, the protesters are, by implication, disqualified as intellectually and culturally incompetent to deal with the intricacies of the kind of literature Rushdie offers: "After decades of living in Britain, they still seemed utterly *foreign*: even in Hyde Park . . . they were aliens. They were not sophisticated . . . they seemed like men from the sticks, irredeemably provincial" (1; Ruthven's emphasis). Similarly negative is the portrait of Islam in the prologue: "The scenes of this demonstration . . . con-