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0521371589 - The Novel of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1975)

Gareth Thomas

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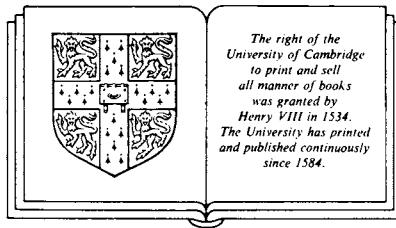
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PREFACE

In this study I analyse the ways in which Spanish novelists, writing in Spain or in exile during the Franco era (1936–1975), portrayed the Civil War in their works. Some eighty novels have been studied in detail in its preparation. With the exception of the final section, the study concentrates on the novels written in the three decades up to the middle of the 1960s, when the lines between Nationalist and Republican writers were still clearly drawn: no Republican novelist, for example, was allowed to publish in Spain until prior censorship was abolished in 1966. These works are related to earlier examples of universal war literature in order to establish not only similarities but major differences. The distortions occasioned by over-zealous commitment, propaganda or censorship are also examined. A section is devoted to the literary techniques employed by the ‘first-wave’ novelists of the Civil War, in order to explore the relationship between these works and the *novela popular* of earlier years. The central part of the study analyses the myths that wartime writers created on both sides to sustain themselves and their public during these traumatic days and, later, the gradual disintegration of these hopes and aspirations, whether in victory or defeat. A major aspect of the enquiry is a contrastive analysis of the literary production of Nationalist and Republican writers to discover in what ways their works are differently conditioned by ideology and socio-political phenomena. One Nationalist and one Republican author (J.M. Gironella and F. Ayala, respectively) are chosen for the light they throw on the problem of how to merge the two ‘horizons’ of the politico-historical novel (the real and the imaginary) – a problem to which critics like Ortega y Gasset saw no satisfactory solution. The final chapter deals with the novels written after the relaxation of censorship, in the final phase of the Franco régime, when the classification ‘Nationalist’ and ‘Republican’ begins to

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Preface

lose its meaning, and when some authors seek explanations to these violent events in psychoanalysis rather than in history. There follows a chart showing the number of novels produced in the years 1936 to 1975 and a glossary of terms (often colloquial) which were in common use during the Civil War.

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