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## Torrente Ballester, Gonzalo (1910-1999)

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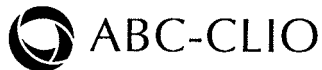
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# World Literature in Spanish

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA

Volume 3: R–Z

Maureen Ihrle and Salvador A. Oropesa, Editors



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### **Torrente Ballester, Gonzalo (1910–1999)**

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A literary critic, columnist, and professor, this most relevant novelist of 20th-century Spain belonged to the Generation of 1936. Despite his cooperation with right-wing Falange intellectuals, during the Francoist dictatorship some of his novels suffered censorship and he was fired from one job for having supported strikers in Asturias.

Although Torrente Ballester wrote six plays, he is most known for his more than 20 novels. The first, *Javier Mariño* (1943), is a politically ambiguous story of the male protagonist's conversion to the Falange Party. His trilogy *Los gozos y las sombras* (Joys and Shadows)—consisting of *El señor llega* (1957; *The Master Arrives*), *Donde da la vuelta el aire* (1960; *Where the Air Takes a Turn*), and *La Pascua triste* (1962; *The Sad Easter*)—presents the fight for power and love waged by two male Galician villagers before the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). The successful Spanish television series based on this trilogy gave Torrente Ballester public recognition.

*Don Juan* (1963) demythifies the archetypal womanizer and mixes fantasy and reality, setting the story in 1960s France. The first novel of a “fantastic trilogy” and his most acclaimed work, *La saga/fuga de J. B.* (1972; *The Saga/Escape of J. B.*) relates the millennial story of a village from the points of view of three narrators and in such diverse intercalated texts as poems and graphics. *Crónica del rey pasmado* (1989; *The King Amaz’d: A Chronicle*, 1996) satirizes the 17th-century Spanish monarch, King Philip IV.

Hallmarks of Torrente Ballester’s prose include acute psychological character studies; a mixing of fantasy, myth, and reality; a masterful command of the language; and inventive narrative techniques.

*Iker González-Allende*

See also *Censorship and Literature in Spain*; *Don Juan Archetype in the Hispanic World*.

#### Work By:

*The King Amaz’d: A Chronicle*. Trans. Colin Smith. London: Everyman, 1996.

#### Work About:

Miller, Stephen. “Structuring Probability, Possibility, and Ultimate Questions: Theory and Practice of Fantastic Fiction in Torrente Ballester.” *Critical Studies: the Fantastic Other, an Interface of Perspectives*. Ed. Brett Cooke, George E. Slusser, and Jaume Martí-Olivella. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998, 87–100.

Pérez, Janet, and Stephen Miller, eds. *Critical Studies on Gonzalo Torrente Ballester*. Boulder: Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 1989.