

especialmente los ejemplos de Felipe Trigo (1864–1916) y Almudena Grandes (nacida en 1960). Mientras que por una parte ve la obra de Trigo y sus contemporáneos como limitada por un modelo de la sexualidad femenina decimonónica y masculina, *Las edades de Lulú* (1989) y otros textos eróticos escritos por mujeres socavan, al parecer de Ríos-Font, las oposiciones binarias y las categorías jerarquizantes, dando mayor campo y libertad al deseo. Me parece que al relegar a una nota las visiones diametralmente opuestas a la suya, es decir una menos celebratoria y más crítica, que presentan Lou Charnon-Deutsch y James Mandrell, se deja pasar la oportunidad de explorar más ampliamente la diversidad de reacciones ante este tipo de literatura.

El último capítulo está dedicado a la obra de Vázquez Montalbán, escritor que por ser popular y escribir algunas novelas detectivescas ha sido a veces marginado a la región de lo trivial. Ríos-Font presenta excelentes argumentos para demostrar el valor de su literatura. Sus consideraciones sobre cómo un autor se transforma en una marca de valor comercial (aunque no siempre de prestigio académico) son muy atinadas, al igual que su defensa de la novela detectivesca como crítica de la sociedad. Escritores como Chandler o Simenon, por ejemplo, confirmarían sus observaciones.

El libro se abre y cierra con bien pensadas discusiones sobre el canon y el archivo, completando así un texto admirable que merece y retribuye una atenta lectura.

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LEOPOLDO ALAS "CLARÍN". *Doña Berta*. Ed. David R. George, Jr. Newark, Delaware: Cervantes & Co.: European Masterpieces, 2007. 89 pp.

**Jennifer Smith**

*Doña Berta* tells the story of Berta Rondaliego, one of the last members of a dying aristocratic line. During the first Carlist war, she and her four brothers took in, and cared for, a wounded liberal captain, even though they themselves supported the Carlists. Doña Berta, a young woman at the time, falls for the injured officer and becomes pregnant with his child. The captain returns to battle promising to keep out of danger so that he can come back and marry Berta. While on the battlefield, however, a courageous (foolhardy?) impulse leads him into the line of fire, where he dies defending the liberal cause. Berta is never informed of the captain's death and does not know why he does not return to marry her. Fearing for the family's good name and honor, Berta's brothers sequester Berta during her pregnancy and send the child away once he is born, telling Berta that the child has died.

As the years pass, her brothers die without Berta ever discovering what really happened to her son. Berta, now an elderly woman, lives isolated on the Rondaliego estate completely removed from the changes that have taken place in the modern, industrialized urban centers. One day a painter comes to the house and tells the story behind his portrait

of a captain who had promised to stay out of the line of fire in order to pay off his debt to a man who essentially saved his life. The officer, however, is driven by a desire for glory to risk his life and consequently dies in battle; it was precisely at this moment that the painter captured him on canvas. Upon hearing this story, Berta immediately assumes, correctly, that the same thing happened to her former lover.

Shortly after he has departed, the painter sends Doña Berta a revision of one of her youthful portraits as well as a copy of the head of his famous portrait of the captain in battle. Berta is immediately struck by the resemblance of the captain to her former lover and to herself, and concludes that the man in the painting must be their son. This discovery gives Berta a new purpose in life and she decides to sell everything she owns, including the entire Rondaliego estate, and travel to Madrid in order to purchase the original portrait of the man she believes to be her son, and to pay off his debts in order to save his honor. Once in Madrid, however, Doña Berta is confronted by a dirty, hectic, and isolating urban reality completely unknown to her until this point. Robbed of her class distinction by the anonymity of city life, Doña Berta is perceived as a crazy old lady. In Madrid, she is also thwarted in her objectives to obtain the painting and plagued by doubts about whether the man in the portrait is truly her son. The denouement of Berta's story is both sad and tragic.

*Doña Berta* is an excellent choice for the Cervantes & Co. series: it exemplifies the styles and themes treated by Leopoldo Alas "Clarín" and by Spanish Realism and Naturalism in general. In terms of style, the text makes use of a seemingly objective, omniscient narrator who occasionally employs free indirect discourse to reveal the inner thoughts of the main character. Moreover, the novel is a character study that, according to Alas's own definition of Naturalism, appropriately studies a character within a larger social framework. This allows for both the exploration of the protagonist and the larger socio-political realities that characterized Spanish society of the time, such as the ideological struggles and contrasts between liberalism and the *ancien régime*, modernity and tradition, and urban life and rural life. Doña Berta's story illuminates all these aspects of nineteenth-century society. As the last representative of the aristocratic Rondaliego family, her strong sense of class identity is completely annihilated, first, through her seduction and abandonment by a liberal captain and, ultimately, through her journey to modern, industrialized Madrid. In typical realist fashion, *Doña Berta* parodies Romanticism by showing how the poor decisions the protagonist makes in her life (i.e., allowing herself to be seduced, selling off her entire estate in order to obtain a painting that she *assumes* to be a portrait of her long-lost son) are the result of a naïve, romantic worldview that was largely formed by reading French *feuilletons* at a young, impressionable age.

David R. George, Jr.'s edition of *Doña Berta* starts off with a six-page introduction in English in which students are given a brief biography of the author, an historical overview of Restoration Spain, a discussion of Realism and the genre of the novella, and a brief analysis of the text itself. Well written and concise, the introduction will provide students with a useful outline of the literary movement of Realism and of the socio-historical context of the novel. Nevertheless, it might have been more helpful to student readers if this

information were tied more closely, specifically the history and the characteristics of Realism, with the analysis of the text, either by making such connections more explicit in the introduction or by using footnotes to guide the reader in recognizing these elements and their importance.

The novella is accompanied by glosses and footnotes that provide English translations of Spanish vocabulary as well explanations, in English, of specific references. At the end of the book there is a 13-page Spanish-English glossary. The glosses, footnotes and glossary are excellent and will definitely be useful to students. Overall, David R. George Jr.'s edition of *Doña Berta* should prove to be an invaluable asset in undergraduate Spanish literature courses. The novella, short and accessible, is also an engaging text that is representative of late nineteenth-century prose and therefore serves as an excellent introduction to Spanish Realism as well as to the works of Leopoldo Alas "Clarín."

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"The "Cook Ting" of Translators: Robert Russell's *Misericordia* (1897) by Benito Pérez Galdós. Translated from the original Spanish, edited, and with an introduction presented in a bilingual format. Published as an issue of *Isidora. Revista de Estudios Galdosianos*. No. 3 (Febrero 2007).

**Harriet S. Turner**

This review contemplates a magisterial translation of *Misericordia*, (1897). Robert Russell, translator and a remarkably fine scholar, has produced a bilingual edition of this great novel. His translation faces the page of the original text in Spanish. He has also divided the book further by including an "Introduction," also in English and in Spanish, and in turn, this "Introduction" divides again into sections about the text and the art of translation, the genesis of *Misericordia*, the literary career of Galdós, a list of first editions of his novels, and, finally, the very world of *Misericordia*—Madrid in the 1890s. These divisions "dismantle," as it were, the complexities of Galdós's life and work as exemplified in *Misericordia*.

The insights offered by this new translation of *Misericordia*, the third to be published in the English language, suggest a range of metaphors. Principal among them is "illumination" —of a process and of innovative ideas: "If the principal aim of literary translation is the illumination of the original text—as it surely must be," Russell writes, "then this is a kind of translation that may properly be considered to be a form of literary criticism" (6). His translation of the famous opening lines of the novel offers a compelling example of illumination and insight. Through a comparison of this part of the text, in English and Spanish, we see how Russell achieves perceptions of light and lightness, highs and