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Maria Rosaria Alfani. *Il ritorno di Don Chisciotte: Clarín e il romanzo*.  
Rome: Donzelli, 2000. 121 pp. ISBN: 88-7989-525-7. €14.46.

This book represents a felicitous joining of two or more authors from disparate epochs and the work of Clarín. The authors are Clarín and Galdós, the central text is *Don Quijote*, and the material revolves around the origin and development of naturalism in the Spanish novel in the nineteenth century. The book becomes a veritable handbook of the history of the novel in Spain, with links with other literary traditions, e.g., France.

In the early part of the book, Alfani approaches the theme of the modernization of Spanish culture as a part of the period of Cánovas and the problems that emerge in this attempt at bringing Spain up to date with the rest of Europe. Philosophical traditions like Krausism and the figure of Giner as a purveyor of a new way of looking at the world by Spaniards are prominently discussed. The insertion of Krausist and Ginerist pedagogy, based upon a knowledge of literary, historical, and social developments of other European nations, could not have been without many conflicts, and these conflicts become the very warp and woof of the work of Galdós and Clarín. Such an interest and suggestion would in fact revolutionize Spanish society and drive a wedge into that society, creating for years to come the conflict between *europaización* and conservatism.

Authors like Galdós and Clarín examined the literary canons of other countries and came to the conclusion that Spain simply could not have compared with those traditions and that Spain was in fact mired in a situation strongly flavored by Romantic dreams and literary canons.

The key that generated much of the "revolutionary" ideas of Galdós, which later affected the ideas of Clarín, was Cervantes' *Don Quijote*. Characters of Galdós are often remakes of those of Cervantes; one of Galdós's characters, Anselmo, is even an imitation or remake of Cervantes' character in "El curioso impertinente," such is the presence of Cervantes in Galdós's works. The novel will be in the hands of Galdós a weapon to unmask the current vacuity of Spain, especially when compared with other European traditions. It is interesting to note, as Alfani shows, that lyric poetry and the theater, both much loved genres of the conservative community, held a special place in Spanish life during this period, but it was the novel that captured the imagination of the intellectuals as a manner of truly studying Spanish life.

Alfani makes sure that the reader understands that the basis of later *prises de conscience* of the time was Krausism, a powerful philosophy that took root in Spain in a way that perhaps it did not in other countries, but none-

theless fit the aspirations of the intellectual community, especially the educational circles of the university. The novel in these conditions and in these environments will attempt to deal with the link between the macrocosm and microcosm of Spanish society. As people like Galdós and Clarín studied the realistic and naturalistic traditions of France, for example, they later realized that their aspirations and ideas could not be assimilated into traditional Spanish society. Galdós's characters tend to be city people who go into the nucleus of Spanish country society, and with this they observe "lo specchio cervantino della follia chisciottesca" (21), and which *follia* Galdós uses in *La desheredada*, to mention only one novel. Oftentimes the basic dualism of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza cannot be reconciled in their aims. Alfani traces how *La desheredada*, *La regenta*, and *Fortunata y Jacinta* display the presence of Cervantine technique and ideology. Clarín saw his role as being a therapeutic one: the novelist as an instrument of social and political change through the vehicle of the novel. As Alfani says, "il romanziere realista è il terapeuta che ha come obiettivo la guarigione del chisciottismo come male nazionale. La struttura ironica del romanzo è strumento di diagnosi e di cura: come dire curiamo il chisciottismo con Cervantes" (27). According to Alfani, Galdós and Cervantes join together to answer Zola's claims of the use of the novel. Interestingly, Alfani believes, following the ideas of S. Gilman, that Galdós rediscovers Cervantes through the European novel. For Alfani there are many Quixotic characters running through the work of Galdós and even in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.

Clarín shares with Galdós the rejection of Canovist Spain and the culture that is associated with the epoch of Cánovas. Also working within the Europeanist vision, Clarín hoped to introduce to the Spanish public works and literary movements from outside Spain, and Clarín's *La regenta* is an attempt to create the modern novel that brings together all of Clarín's readings, often by using characters that symbolize political and social concepts. With *La regenta* Clarín hoped to open up those areas which no one had revealed before about Spanish society and to study deeply the soul of the characters therein. In the same way that Orbajosa symbolized for Galdós the reactionary Spain, *Vetusta* similarly becomes a symbol of Canovist Spain. *Vetusta* is, as Alfani says, a "personaggio collettivo, un insieme di personaggi determinati dall'ambiente che si costituiscono come l'antagonista naturalista di Ana" (65).

This is a very well-written work. The best part of it is the focus on the retrograde world that Cánovas del Castillo brought to the Spain of that time. Alfani does a thorough review of both history and literary history, elucidating the work of Galdós, Clarín, and Cervantes as well. There is much to be learned from this book. On the other hand, there are literary historians who

do not agree with some of the assertions regarding what Galdós took from Zola. They belong to that school that, following Pardo Bazán, believed that Galdós did not need Zola to teach him what literary naturalism was. Other than this caveat, I find the book a rewarding read and recommend it highly to others.

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