

FERNANDO DURÁN LÓPEZ, *José María Blanco White, o la conciencia errante*. Sevilla: Fundación José Manuel Lara. 2005. 646 pp.

Between 1971 and 1972 three seminal publications began the reinvention in Spain of Blanco White: two anthologies of his work in Spanish and English, the one edited by Vicente Llorens and the other by Juan Goytisolo, and the first Spanish translation, by Antonio Garnica, of *Letters from Spain* (originally published in London in 1822). Although there has been a plethora of books and articles since then, Goytisolo's continued representation of Blanco as the marginalized victim of a conspiracy of silence is no longer sustainable. Fernando Durán is right to declare that 'quejarse hoy de que se posterga a Blanco White sería repetir un tópico por pura pereza mental [ . . . ] Desechemos, pues, las jeremiadas' (10).

There are many Blanco Whites. For Goytisolo, his was the suppressed voice of an 'other' Spain: non-conformist, heterodox and liberal. The defect of his thesis, for all its passionate brilliance, was that it ignored the many episodes of Blanco's life and work which were at variance with it. Durán sees the man whole, warts and all, and combines sympathy with objectivity. He also asserts Blanco's right to be considered as one who is not to be defined exclusively in relation to Spain or to the Catholic Church. 'Veamos lo que Blanco puede decirle a un español como español, pero también como ser humano, como hombre moderno atezado por angustias y miedos universales. Él no quiso ser sólo un disidente del catolicismo: fue un hombre angustiado por la trascendencia, cuya obsesión final fue la fe, no España, ni siquiera la crítica a la Iglesia católica' (17).

The resurrected Blanco White of the seventies and eighties was primarily the political journalist, literary critic and autobiographer. Neither Goytisolo nor Llorens had much interest in Blanco as a religious thinker, or in the later years of his life in Liverpool (1835–1841) when his obsessive lifelong struggle to reconcile faith and reason finally came to fruition in his *Observations on Heresy and Orthodoxy* (1835)—the work which he himself regarded as his most important legacy to posterity. Durán is the first critic to give it the close attention and respect it deserves. He goes so far as to maintain that 'el Blanco White que más me interesa y me admira es el de los últimos quince años' (235): 'Creo que Liverpool—ciudad que apenas significó para él lo que el suelo bajo sus pies—define mejor a Blanco que Sevilla, porque en el estuario del Mersey [ . . . ] alcanzó al cabo la entera soberanía de su conciencia—su verdadera patria' (27).

Durán himself is a literary historian, not a theologian, and he is a perceptive critic: 'Ver en las *Letters from Spain* una recreación de una España pasada, con corrido y trajes de época, es una lectura inocente [ . . . ] que castra su auténtico sentido crítico [ . . . ] No es costumbrismo lo que se propone, ni le seduce el localismo, sino que persigue una imagen de la sociedad que explique y dé coherencia a los sucesos políticos. Es intrahistoria' (335–36). Yet it was its scene-painting, not its didactic message, which made the book a best-seller, both in England and Spain.

To make his work more accessible Durán has dispensed with footnotes. This certainly makes for a fluent and discursive exposition, attractively written in a style which carries the reader through some difficult territory. He describes it as a biographical essay, rather than a biography, his aim being 'que la interpretación prevalezca sobre la narración, y le dé sentido' (11). While looking for meaning and coherence in his subject's life the biographer interrogates himself, with refreshing honesty. His exceptionally thorough researches are used to maximum effect. Even when he is elucidating the complexities of Tractarianism and Unitarianism, he does not put a foot wrong.

Durán does not disguise Blanco's flaws, notably his *automitificación*, and his compulsive need to present himself as hero and martyr in the service of a cause, yet he tells a story which ends well, not sadly. It was in Liverpool, he maintains, that Blanco finally discarded the English pragmatism which he had earlier forced himself to admire, and discovered a natural affinity with the German idealists who shared his vision of a *teología antiteológica*. This view

is eloquently argued, but one of Blanco's last poems, 'Una tormenta nocturna en alta mar', which is not mentioned here, shows that this victory of Reason came at a high emotional price. Blanco's private verse is generally a better guide to his heart than the public prose.

This admirably researched and fair-minded work breaks new ground. It deserves to be widely read.

MARTIN MURPHY

Oxford.

TERESA FUENTES PERIS, *Galdós's 'Torquemada' Novels: Waste and Profit in Late Nineteenth-Century Spain*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press. 2007 xiii + 159 pp.

This monograph traces the themes of profit, efficiency and utility, degeneration and philanthropy in the *Torquemada* trilogy, and places these themes within the context of the theoretical discourse on those topics during the second half of the nineteenth century. In so doing, the author gives Galdós' readers today the opportunity to 'hear' him as his (educated and cultured) contemporaries might have. As the author states in her preface, she proposes to 'show the ways in which the novels of the *Torquemada* series—firmly anchored in the social, cultural and intellectual contexts of the late nineteenth century—reproduce contemporary debates on "waste versus profit" and "identify Galdós's stance and assess his personal contribution to these debates" (xii).

The introductory chapter, 'No Room for Waste: The *Torquemada* Novels in the Context of their Age', adduces the work of Jeremy Bentham and Samuel Smiles (specifically his book *Self-Help* [1859]) as important influences on Spanish theoretical discourse in the nineteenth century, as well as advancing the author's view that Galdós' *Torquemada* novels can profit from readings other than the prevalent 'spiritual' readings (3). Importantly, the author anticipates her understanding of the dynamic between 'Galdós' (posited as an ideological subject) and these theories as satirical: 'In the *Torquemada* series, Galdós extends his satire on the utilitarian spirit of the period, with which various characters engage, to a more general ethical attack on selfish, ruthless and unscrupulous attitudes and actions of some characters, notably Cruz and Gamorena' (11). Further, she posits a balanced reaction on the part of 'Galdós': 'As a modern man, Galdós endorsed scientific and technological advance as a counter to backward ideas, still prevalent in Spain, which associated materialism with immorality and a lack of spirituality. Galdós did not conceptualize the spiritual as the antithesis of the material. Rather, he was sympathetic to an ethical materialism which he saw as more "human" than the "raw", mechanistic materialism of the utilitarian mentality' (11–12).

Chapter 1, 'Gain and Loss: *Torquemada* and the Utilitarian Ethos' examines theories of 'utility and profit', a concept arising from the new ideology of economic liberalism that challenged the "waste" and "inefficiency" that was perceived to be associated with the pre-modern economy' (17), and refers to works by Samuel Smiles, John Stuart Mill, Rafael María de Labra and Valentín Morán. The author then proceeds to point out this discourse in the *Torquemada* novels (especially *Torquemada's* speech in *Torquemada en la cruz*), and sums up her purpose: 'My contention is that Galdós did not reject the kind of progress that led to improvements in social and economic conditions. What he condemned was excessive rationalism and pragmatism and hedonistic materialism, propounding a balance between the spiritual and the material' (29).

Chapter 2, 'Disease, Degeneration and Death: The Squandering of National Resources', studies principally the role of the nature and death of *Torquemada's* two sons, both named Valentín, as exemplars of the monstrosity of either genius or degeneration, signalled in contemporary medical and health literature (Bénédict Morel, Valentin Magnan, Paul Maurice Legrain, Rafael Cervera y Barat, Cesare Lombroso, Phillippe Hauser). The author concludes that 'although the *Torquemada* series echoes some commonly held views on the issue of