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Emilia Pardo Bazan, "Cronicas en La Nacion de Buenos Aires"

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Book Review: Emilia Pardo Bazan, *Cronicas en La Nacion de Buenos Aires* (1909-1921). Edited by Cyrus DeCoster. Madrid: Pliegos, 1994. 285 pp.

Over the twelve-year period immediately preceding her death, Pardo Bazan regularly contributed articles to the prestigious Argentine periodical *La Nacion*. Surprisingly, these pieces have not been reproduced in previous collections of her works, and few references have ever been made to their existence. Cyrus DeCoster rectifies this omission by bringing together forty-six of what he considers to be the most interesting of the articles. The vast majority of those selected deal with literature and the other arts. Some are eulogies to eminent figures either recently deceased or being honored by centennial celebrations (e.g., Marcelino Menendez y Pelayo, Aureliano de Beruete, Teofilo Gautier, and Jose Zorrilla). Others are reviews of theatrical productions by such writers as Benavente, Echegaray, Galdos, and Oscar Wilde. Pardo Bazan also comments on the operas of Wagner and discusses the merits of El Greco, Velazquez, Murillo, Cervantes, and Shakespeare. A strong critique of Futurism is included among her observations concerning literary movements. Overall, Pardo Bazan's greatest praise is reserved for literary and artistic works that capture the realism of life in all its complexity. This preference even extends to erotic literature when it is well written and portrays human sexual desire realistically.

DeCoster includes at least one article from each of Pardo Bazan's twelve years with *La Nacion*, with a maximum of six from any given year. More importantly, however, DeCoster also lists the titles and dates of publication for all 236 of her articles, along with a brief description of their content. In addition, his introduction places many of these pieces within the context of Pardo Bazan's other writings. Although approximately half of her articles in *La Nacion* deal with

social or political issues, only a handful of those are included in this collection. Given the current interest in culture studies, it is unfortunate that more of her commentaries on contemporary life are not presented. Of particular note, however, are two essays treating similar situations: The French Academy's rejection of Madame Curie's candidacy in 1911 and Pardo Bazan's second attempt at admittance to the Spanish Academy in 1912. In both essays Pardo Bazan cites the injustices women endure due to prejudice, but regarding her own case, she also expresses great satisfaction that her supporters in the Academy cut across political, religious, and class lines. Her feminist views also are evident in an article in which she lauds France's decision to extend the vote to women and encourages Spain to follow suit. Sprinkled throughout these writings are comparisons of Spain with other countries, especially France. A variation on this theme occurs in one of the most delightful pieces in DeCoster's collection: a satiric cuadro de costumbres in which unwary Spanish women are likened to flies falling into the web of cloth wrapped around them by spiderlike French dressmakers. Readers of this book will find much to enjoy in the wide-ranging observations contained in Pardo Bazan's *La Nacion* articles.

-- Linda M. Willem,
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