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translator believes, "the best that English has so far accommodated of the Ramonesque idiom" (35).

The problems posed by such an enterprise are insurmountable. Consequently, whether one reads the text in English first and then in Spanish, or vice versa, or else chooses to ignore the original and concentrate instead solely upon the translation, one finds oneself alternately satisfied or frustrated for a number of reasons, many of them directly attributable to Ramón, whose very fecundity and lack of editorial self-discipline often led to very uneven results, especially in the case of the various miscellaneous (i.e. non-thematic) collections of *greguerías* he published over his lifetime. And yet it is precisely from the author's *Total de greguerías* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1955) that González-Gerth makes his own selection of "aphorisms," which, he states, "have not been rearranged with regard to subject matter or their date of composition (which is unknown), or any other consideration" (35).

The resulting juxtaposition of humor and lyricism, poetic heights and occasional prosaic plunges, together with a potpourri of themes, is as disconcerting here as it is in the original. This is not a collection to be read from cover to cover; instead the book should be opened at random and savored bit by bit. The pleasure from reading Ramón comes from the very geniality of his unique vision of the world around him: he constantly surprises us into seeing things in a different way. And when he succeeds—which is certainly not always—he soars. That's a hard thing for any translator to capture, especially when there is humor involved. Sometimes González-Gerth is on target ("La lechuga es toda enaguas"/"Lettuce is all skirts" [72-73], or "Los recuerdos encogen como las camisetas"/"Memories shrink like undershirts" [130-31, for instance]; other times he seems unnecessarily wordy (i.e. "Todavía no ha inventado la naturaleza la fruta con cáscara de cierre relámpago"/"Nature has not yet come up with a fruit that has a zipper for easy peeling" [54-55], or "El sueño es el depósito de objetos extraviados"/"Sleep is a place where lost articles may be found" [62-63]); or even too concise ("La prisa es lo que nos lleva a la muerte"/"Haste kills" [54-55]). And then there are the inevitable—and hopelessly untranslatable—plays on words (such as "Bancarrotta es la caída del banquero del sillón roto"/"Bankruptcy is when a banker falls down from a broken chair" [64-65]).

Ramón Gómez de la Serna, the great, intuitive prose poet of the Spanish vanguard and standard-bearer of the Generation of 1927, defies all logic. Perhaps only another wizard of words would effectively recreate in English his brilliant and peculiar style. Miguel González-Gerth, for his part, is so innately logical that he even insists upon calling *greguerías* "aphorisms," a decision justified by him at great length in his introduction but with which this reviewer begs to differ, for, in the words of José Camón Aznar, "La greguería produce asombro. El aforismo, meditación" (*Ramón Gómez de la Serna en sus obras* [Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1972] 246).

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Gómez de la Serna, Ramón. *Aphorisms*. Translated and with an Introduction by Miguel González-Gerth. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1989. 214 pp.

This selection of some 500 *greguerías*, together with a useful list of other works by Gómez de la Serna in English translation, two brief bibliographies, a keyword index, and a critical introduction, is an admirable attempt at a thankless, and ultimately impossible, task. An inveterate advocate of this unique and prolific twentieth-century author, as evidenced by his enthusiastic introduction to the present volume as well as his recent monograph *A Labyrinth of Imagery: Ramón Gómez de la Serna's "Novelas de la nebulosa"* (London: Tamesis, 1986), Miguel González-Gerth has undertaken his mission with commendable honesty through the use of a "bilingual format," thus allowing his readers—at least those who have learned "sufficient Spanish to enjoy what Gómez de la Serna has to offer in the oceanic scope and variety of his production"—to judge for themselves as to whether or not his versions are, as the