

FICTIONAL MATTERS: DEATH, EMOTION AND REPRESENTATION IN NINETEENTH-  
CENTURY SPAIN

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the representation of death in works of Spanish fiction from 1850-1887. Looking beyond metaphorical representation, I examine the ways in which representations of death are influenced and enhanced by the representation of emotion. Death poses an interesting challenge to the mimesis that forms the aesthetic basis of Realism insofar as mimesis is concerned with the meticulous replication of everyday materiality. Critic Harriet Turner has noted that Spanish Realism places particular emphasis on the things of the world and our engagement with those things. While death is connected to the disintegration of materiality, it exists only as an unknowable and intangible idea. As such, death can only be expressed through metaphorical representation, as scholars such as Kenneth Burke, Elisabeth Bronfen and Garrett Stewart have noted. I argue that represented emotions enhance representations of death in that they “interpret” between material and ideal contexts in a way that, unlike metaphor, necessarily begins and ends with the body.

Drawing on theories of affect and on cognitive theories, I tease out the complex relationship between represented emotion and representations of death through an examination of selected works of Spanish authors who represent a broad diachronic spectrum of Spanish Realism. In the short fiction of Cecilia Böhl de Faber (penname “Fernán Caballero”), I demonstrate that Caballero conceives of the emotions as intimately ingrained with the materiality of the body, and as such she cautions her readers against compassion, an emotion that threatens the integrity of the body. By subverting the tenets of sentimental literature, Caballero presents scenes of suffering and death precisely to reveal her readers’ willingness to engage emotionally with a text. My examination of

Eduardo López Bago's novel *La prostituta* illuminates the pivotal role of the representation of disgust, an emotion that reflects both the ideal and material dimensions of death. As critics agree, disgust is a defensive operation in that it deflects attention away from the disturbing idea of death and onto a material event. Through an examination of the novel's interlaced discourses of contamination and prophylaxis, I demonstrate that represented disgust in *La prostituta* reflects a liminality that negotiates between the ideal context of death and the material circumstances that point to it. Finally, in my reading of the death scenes of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, I demonstrate that the climactic, yet unnarratable, moment of death is de-emphasized, while notions of anticipation and foreboding become the narrative vehicle by which death is expressed. I argue that the physically-rooted feelings of ascension, forward movement and rhythm which inform the depictions of anticipation are essential bearers of meaning. Furthermore, I argue that the emphasis on unresolved upward and forward movement speaks to the unnarratability of death as well as the equally irreconcilable notion of eternity.

Ultimately, my dissertation demonstrates that the liminal status of emotion, mediating between the body and the mind, makes it an appropriate vehicle for representing death, that liminal space between being alive and "being" dead, between the material and the ideal. As emotions inherently speak to the body, represented emotion facilitates a more comprehensive representation of the otherwise unknowable state of death.

*To my parents, Donna and Joseph,  
and  
my brothers, Michael and Brian*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

¡Maldito sea todo lo *negro*! La noche sin  
luna ni luceros... ¡maldita sea!  
La nada...  
El ateísmo...  
El odio...  
La primera hora de viudez...  
¡Malditos! ¡Malditas!  
Y la tinta de mi tintero... ¡Ah, no!  
¡Bendita sea la tinta *negra* de mi tintero!  
Alarcón, “Los seis velos,” 1855

The short story “Los seis velos” narrates a man’s longing for an ethereal woman, Matilde, who appears to him periodically throughout his life, each time behind a different colored veil. To characterize the declining stages of her life, Alarcón uses the progression of blue, to black, to yellow to capture her decline, the moment of death, and the remaining presence of the corpse, respectively. Blue is characterized as “the twilight of black”, a sickness that slips away into death: “Todo lo moribundo, todo lo que va a desaparecerse, es azul” (137). Alarcón associates black with both the grief of the survivor and with a nothingness from which creation springs: it is the ink with which the narrator produces fictional worlds. The final veil, “el velo de la muerte”, is the yellow shroud that covers the cadaver of the beloved. Yellow is the cadaver, the desiccated, that which appears to be alive but isn’t: “la muerte del ser, la muerte de lo que ha vivido, es *amarilla* como las mieses agostadas. El ocio, el tedio, el fastidio, todos los engendros de la hiel, son *amarillos*. Dijérase que en ellos la muerte está mezclada con la vida” (141-42).

In Alarcón’s short story, representations of disease and the corpse correspond to the bookends of the moment of death itself. If blue is dying and yellow the apparent life

of the cadaver, then Alarcón imagines black as the nothingness associated with the moment of death. As the epigraph indicates, death is both a void and a source of creation. As Michael Iarocci points out, it is the nothingness associated with death that makes it a “powerful progenitor” of the meaning-making associated with narrative (140). The urge to fill the void with meaning is precisely the keystone of representing death. In *Death Sentences*, Garrett Stewart examines the rhetorical responses to the inherently non-referential subject of death, and notes that “dying is by nature the one inevitably fictional matter in prose fiction” (4). The inevitable condition of representing death is, as Stewart suggests, “alternately void and fiction,” a state impenetrable to both the mind and senses that is thus necessarily conceived as fiction (5). The epitome of nonexistence, death “has no vocabulary to it, [and] would leave us mute before its impenetrable fact” (4). The crisis of referentiality associated with death motivates the creation of fiction, necessarily bound in symbolism or metaphor. Elisabeth Bronfen also notes that the nothingness of death ruptures our sign and image system. The principle consequence of this crisis of meaning is that “one can speak of death only by speaking other” (54). Kenneth Burke also suggests that death manifests in literature “cloaked” in the form of an Other, and in particular, an Other wrapped up in materiality: “The essential ideality of the term,” he remarks, “is disguised by the overwhelming material reality of the conditions in which it is involved” (369). Converting the nothingness into a knowable, material image is at the crux of the fictionalizing of death in representation. However, as Burke suggests, this materiality distracts from the fundamental ideality of death.

“Los seis velos” represents Alarcón’s retention of Romantic style in a body of work that is typically associated with Realism.<sup>1</sup> Alarcón himself reveals that “Los seis velos” is mostly a result of “química de mi imaginación” and is representative of a fleeting stage in the trajectory of his work in which he wrote extravagantly, almost ridiculously (“Historia” 10). However, he remarks that beneath its exaggeration, his work at this stage retained “un pensamiento sano y hasta muchas veces ascético” (8). Regardless of his intentions, what is remarkable about “Los seis velos” is its particular situation at the dawn of nineteenth-century Spanish Realism, a situation that raises the question: how is the ethereal represented in a period marked by the material? The melancholic story of the young, unsatisfied Rafael who along with his friend, the writer Pedro, are “más enamorados de la muerte que de la vida,” strikes a chord of late-Romanticism; consider the production of Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer or Rosalía de Castro (111).<sup>2</sup> In particular, one recognizes the similarities with Bécquer’s “El rayo de luna” (1862), a legend that tells the story of a young poet who chases what he believes to be the fleeting image of a woman through the woods, only to discover that he has been chasing an intangible moonbeam. Chasing an equally ungraspable woman, Rafael struggles to verbalize his melancholy and sense of defeat in his frustrated pursuit of Matilde. Rafael explains the insolubility of his narration:

Hazte cargo de que las emociones que intento traducirte con palabras son de aquellas que el juicio persigue inútilmente, o que no pueden ser aprisionadas en el

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<sup>1</sup> In “Historia de mis libros,” Alarcón reveals that his work was greatly influenced by the French Romantics – citing Walter Scott, Alexander Dumas and Victor Hugo (7).

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Alarcón himself states in the 1882 dedication of the *Narraciones inverosímiles* that many of the stories from the collection share the aesthetic of “una moda o gusto literario hoy abolido,” namely late Romanticism (11).

molde de un concepto. De las verdades que se sienten y no se explican, es una la historia que estoy contando. (118)

In this illuminating passage, Alarcón foregrounds his metaphorical venture into abstraction with a crucial quandary: there are certain things that we know and feel are true, but we cannot capture them in words.

The abundant enumeration of metaphor and contemplation of color that follows illustrates the underlying quandary of representing the abstract, the ethereal and the intangible, namely color, love, pain and death. Ultimately, Alarcón creates material imagery from the nothingness of abstraction and his ink produces tangible forms: both concrete objects — “[una rosa es] De color de billetes de quinientos reales” — and experiences — “Cuando invade las orejas de un hombre tímido” (125). However, in his contemplation of the abstract, Alarcón addresses the metaphorical nature of language itself when he characterizes the pink veil, and decides that “color de rosa” is an empty descriptor, as there exist roses of many colors.<sup>3</sup> The metaphorical and literal connotation of the word “rosa” calls attention to the problematic nature, if not the incommensurability, of representing the intangible.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate that metaphor is not just a poetic device, but is at the foundation of human understanding: “The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (5). By seeing the abstract as something concrete, Lakoff and Johnson propose that we are

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<sup>3</sup> He questions the word “rosa” with his interlocutor:

“¿De qué color es una *rosa*?”

AGUSTÍN BONNAT. -De *color de rosa*.

-¿Y una *rosa de color de rosa*?

AGUSTÍN BONNAT. -*Rosada*.

-Eso no puede ser. Déjame pensar un rato. Yo daré con ello. Fuma si quieres.

Una *rosa*..., una *rosa*..., es de color de... de...

De color de uñas [...]” (125).

able to deal rationally with our experiences. Metaphor provides cohesion to that which lacks structure: “We typically conceptualize the nonphysical *in terms of* the physical - that is, we conceptualize the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated” (59). In this way, we are able to refer to, identify elements of, describe and pretend to understand concepts such as inflation (26). This principle of human thought processes is exemplified in the metaphors of death that serve as accessible signifiers of an absent, unknown signified.

In *Over Her Dead Body*, Elisabeth Bronfen analyzes the ways in which the figure of a woman has become a conventional metaphor for death. She questions the delicate intersection between language, materiality and the cultural construction of the female body, and she conceives of the body as the fragile site at which language establishes a connection to materiality. As the perpetual “other,” the female body serves as an apt metaphor as not only the menacing threat of death, but the docile, aestheticized embodiment of death as a corpse. In the short fiction of Alarcón, the female is the embodiment of the devil in “La mujer alta” (1881), and she is the perpetrator of violence and murder in “El clavo” (1853). Ultimately, Alarcón uses the color yellow of Matilde’s shroud as an analogy for Spain: the yellow on its flag is “un amarillento erial cubierto de espinas, que le recuerdan otras tantas rosas llevadas por el viento. ¡Ay de la bandera española!” (142). This trope of the female corpse as a representation of the nation is also found in the closing lines of Emilia Pardo Bazán’s short story “La exangüe” (1899): an artist contemplates painting a portrait of a bloodless woman and depicting her with a crown of red and yellow carnations.

As the analogy of “La exangüe” indicates, death and dying in the nineteenth-century Spanish narrative tends to appear *entre comillas*: quote, unquote “death” stands in for another issue. Metaphors of antiquity, disease or dying tend to signify national and/or social concerns, such as the tensions of modernity, middle class frustrations, or the twilight of the Spanish empire.<sup>4</sup> Romantic desires for transcendence persist in the Realist canon; there is an abundance of characters who contemplate death as a route to transcend specific social condition. Isidora’s “suicide” in *La desheredada* (1880) serves as a euphemism for her venture into prostitution. Consider the suicide of Ramón de Villaamil in Galdós’s *Miau* (1888) or Fortunata’s desire for transcendence through death in *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1887). Alarcón’s own novel *La Pródiga* (1881) ends with the suicide of Julia, who decides to alleviate the complicated life of her lover by eliminating herself from it. Dead or deformed children symbolize lack of progress, failure or a damned future, as in Galdós’s *Torquemada en la hoguera* (1889) or Clarín’s *Su único hijo* (1890). Conversely William Sherzer suggests that death may be a prerequisite to progress, as he notes in his analysis of *Miau* and *El amigo Manso* (34).

At the same time, death is represented through attention to the material, Kenneth Burke’s aforementioned “disguise” for the ideality of death. In his final thoughts, Ramón de Villaamil considers the commodification of his own corpse: “Ya la veo a usted arbitrando de dónde sacar el dinero para el luto [...] Sáquelo usted de donde quiera. Venda mi piel para un tambor o mis huesos para botones” (420-21). Death also becomes an opportunity to demonstrate wealth. As in *Torquemada y San Pedro* (1895), the funeral

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<sup>4</sup> The dying body as a metaphor of the dying Nation is undoubtedly prominent throughout Spanish literature, particularly in essays from the Enlightenment to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, in his *Cartas marruecas* (1789), José Cadalso refers to curing the nation, much like Ortega y Gasset who imagines Spain as a sick body in his *España invertebrada* (1920). Furthermore, in *En torno al casticismo* (1895), Miguel de Unamuno states that Spain lacks “gérmenes vivos y fecundos” (253).

is an opportunity to “see and be seen.” In the excessively elaborate cenotaph of *La de Bringas* (1884), one finds that the notions of death and memory are overshadowed and displaced by an alienating obsession. As Noël Valis points out, the exaggerated materiality of the cenotaph diverts attention from the thought of being dead: “it takes on an independence of existence that allows us not only to forget the origins of the object in real death and the bodies of dead children but in the living as well” (*Cursilería* 158).

Indeed material representations of death, particularly the idealized, composed and unmarred representations of dying or dead women, serve to distract the reading or viewing public from the truly harsh operations of death and putrefaction. The aghast, implied spectator of “¡Muerta!”, a painting from *La Ilustración Ibérica* (1886) analyzed by Lou Charnon Deutsch in *Fictions of the Feminine*, is shocked by the silent slippage from life into death. In this particular painting, a fully-dressed, reclining female, has very suddenly expired, as indicated by the journal that has barely left her hands as it slides to the floor. As indicated by the commentator’s judgment that this woman had clearly suffered a mortal blow to her soul, rather than a disease that would affect her body, Charnon Deutsch here finds further affirmation of the preference for an idealized, spiritual portrayal of the dead. Therefore, the exclamation “¡Muerta!” is compassionate, as the avoidance of “procedimientos naturalistas” noted by the commentator demonstrates the intention “to inspire piety instead of repulsion in his viewers” (228).<sup>5</sup>

The critical works of Stewart, Bronfen, Charnon-Deutsch and Valis have established and explored a number of assumptions about the representation of death.

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<sup>5</sup> In her examination of the anti-sentimental poetry of Emily Dickinson, María Magdalena Farland notes the ways in which sentimental fictions tend to use images of domesticity in scenes of the afterlife in order to provide soothing images associated with death. This created “a consolatory fiction whose purpose was to diminish the shock, grief, and bereavement that more menacing images of death might induce” (370-71).

They posit that representations of death are fundamentally rooted in the material and, as such, they are inherently metaphorical. Beyond that, and precisely due to this innately figurative nature, representations of death often serve as a metaphor for something else. And lastly, representations of death imply an engagement with the emotions of the reading public, be it to provoke or to calm. My examination of the representation of death stems from these postulations; however, my intention is to consider the ways in which represented emotion provides an intimacy with death that rhetorical metaphor alone cannot.

Garrett Stewart remarks that because death marks the close of life, it has a “brutal factuality” about it that nonetheless cannot be represented mimetically.<sup>6</sup> Emotions, as we experience them, are also brutally factual, and in order to describe them one resorts to metaphorical language; if we feel sad, we may “feel heavy,” as if our heart has been broken. Interestingly, in his efforts to describe death, he qualifies it in terms of emotion:

Treacherous, excessive, the occasion of terror without being a renderable object of it, the notion lurking invisible in the name of death, waiting untamed beyond any representation, remains, for all its attendant anxiety, unthinkable; for all its tenacity, in the root sense *untenable* – refusing containment either of content or by form becoming in itself just a form or figure of speech. (4)

Death may escape the reaches of our mind and sign system, but there is no uncertainty involved in how our bodies experience the emotions provoked by death. Likewise, in her attempt to describe the vocabulary-less state of death, Elisabeth Bronfen names it “a cut, a transition between the living body and the corpse, a before (the painful *fear*, the serene

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<sup>6</sup> In her discussion of advertisements for pain relievers, Elaine Scarry makes a similar claim about the representation of pain and wonders whether it is the “sheer factualness” of physical pain that precludes a fictional portrait of pain in advertising (*Resisting* 19).

joy of the dying person) and an after (the *mourning* of the survivor), an ungraspable point, lacking any empiric knowledge” (my emphasis, 54). To characterize the experiences that bookend the moment of death, Bronfen employs three ungraspable notions — fear, joy, and mourning — that, just like death, are nonetheless indisputably *real*. Although they do not pursue the notion, both Bronfen and Stewart distinguish emotion as the route by which one experiences and defines a narrative of death. Emotions such as anxiety or sadness are the knowable and referable experiences that demarcate the invisible perimeter that surrounds the void. Emotions are the undeniable traces of the reality of death that provide a vocabulary to the linguistically elusive, yet intensely real moment between being alive and “being” dead.

The unnarratable factuality of emotion is due partly to the fact that emotions seem to inhabit the same liminal realm that death shares. They are unquestionably linked to the material realm of experience, and yet, their ideality voids them of an adequate vocabulary, inevitably collapsing into the recourse of metaphor. The emotions are at once silent states of interiority and readable signs on the body. Mark Johnson remarks that emotions occupy both subjective and objective space: “emotions are both *in us* and *in the world* at the same time. They are, in fact, one of the most pervasive ways that we are continually in touch with our environment” (*Meaning of the Body* 67). In a similar way, emotions are *consequences* of experience and serve as a privileged point of access between the mind and the world. Representing emotion mimetically, then, is likewise a vexed process; to compensate for lack of access to the interior, an exaggerated depiction of an emotion’s exterior spawns melodramatic rhetoric. Peter Brooks points out that in

melodramatic rhetoric, characters speak the unspeakable, the interior is exterior and, in this way, “nothing is understood, all is overstated” (*Melodramatic* 41).<sup>7</sup>

And yet, the liminality of emotion between interior and exterior realms suggests that represented emotion serves a more subtle role as medium between contexts. Emotions subsume an implicit gathering of information and interpretation of experience. Emotion functions as a silent interpreter of experience, and in this way, the implicit connections it forges between meaning and consequence simulate the operations of metaphor. In this dissertation, I examine the ways in which represented emotion functions as a meaning-making operation in a text and contributes to the “fictionalizing” of death. In order to pursue this route, I draw on the orienting principles of affect theory to the extent that this theoretical approach refers to an expanded category of experience. Callard and Papoulias state that the “affective turn” is concerned precisely with the non-representational and extra-linguistic aspects of subjective experience (247). Similarly, Blackman and Venn define the salient characteristic of affect theory as “the heightened interest in the non-verbal, non-conscious dimensions of experience” (8). Affect theory is fundamentally based on the work of psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1911-1991) who viewed affect as a mechanism that magnifies awareness and the intensity of biological operations. As affect contributes urgency, it creates “a distinctive qualitative experience that causes the organism to care about what is happening” (Demos 19). Many theorists agree that in contrast to affect, emotion involves a cognitive reflection that structures the bodily experience into recognizable states. Although many scholars use the words *affect*

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<sup>7</sup> This excess of emotion and representation in the face of the emptiness of death constitutes the demarcation between *lo cursi* and an authentic portrayal of grief, for example.

and *emotion* interchangeably, I recognize that emotion and affect are distinguishable by their relationship to cognition:

Affect refers to an amorphous, diffuse, and bodily ‘experience’ of stimulation impinging upon and altering the body’s physiology, whereas emotions are the various structured, qualified, and recognizable experiential states of anger, joy, sadness, and so on, into which such amorphous experience is translated. (Callard and Papoulias 247)

In this way, affect *precedes* awareness and cognition, whereas emotion *depends on* a thought process that structures the experience of affect into identifiable states. The cognitive aspect of emotion is crucial to my examination of represented emotion as a fictional operation that facilitates a representation of death. In my examination of the particular emotions of compassion and disgust, these emotions serve to uphold boundaries of the self, to deflect disturbing thoughts and to stabilize the disordering effects of death. Ultimately, it is my argument that emotion provides an intimacy with death that rhetoric alone cannot.

Various scholars have used affect theory as a platform for studying the extent to which emotion affects politics, culture and media.<sup>8</sup> Affect theory provides new insight into studies of the body, refocusing work on the body’s capacity to affect and be affected. This interest in the experience of the body has brought to light the question of embodied knowledge – the pre-conceptual meaning that is rooted in the reactions and alterations in the body. In this way, affect theory shares a basis with cognitive theory, in that

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<sup>8</sup> See Neuman’s *The Affect Effect*, a collection of articles regarding the effects of emotion on politics that focus on campaign strategies. Helena Wulff’s collection *The Emotions: A Cultural Reader* includes numerous intriguing essays that consider the ramifications of emotions on a number of subjects in various cultures including dance, homosexuality, academia and adoption.

consciousness is considered a biological operation. The work of Lakoff and Johnson attempts to recuperate and examine the physical origins of meaning. In Johnson's later work, he continues to pursue this question, denying that meaning is disembodied and formal, and proposes that meaning stems from an embodied experience of the world ("Embodied" 157). Johnson proposes that there is inherent, corporeal meaning at the foundation of how we understand the world: "Beneath and within what is *said* is the vast richness of what is *meant*, and this meaning pulsates with corporeal significance" (*Meaning* 219). Johnson draws on the work of Eugene Gendlin, who proposes that experience is largely implicit and has an underlying dimension of "felt meaning". He suggests that part of felt meaning can be explicated with verbal symbols, but in cases where verbal symbols are absent – such as in a work of art – the felt meanings are more noticeable to us (*Experiencing* 70).

In a representation of death, authentic verbal symbols that would accurately depict the experience of death are inevitably absent. In their absence, as Garrett Stewart and Elisabeth Bronfen have brilliantly examined, we employ *other* verbal symbols that in some way speak to the experience of death, but are ultimately inadequate. I propose that by examining the meaning inherent in represented emotion, a representation of death can speak to us in new ways. Garrett Stewart claims that representations of death are inevitably fictional; style and form stand in for an absence of meaning one might attribute to the moment of death. Stewart sees the formal recourse of narrative as the inevitable key to representing death – style provides meaning where meaning is truly absent. However, if we follow Johnson's claims, we must not confuse *form* with that which it *informs*: "we fool ourselves into thinking that it is the forms alone that make something

what it is – that make it real and knowable” (“Embodied” 150). I propose that meaning is expressed in a representation of death not through form alone, but through underlying, nonformal meaning.

In her discussion of the “affective turn” in Spanish literary studies, Jo Labanyi considers the possibility of re-examining the ways in which Realist novels affect us beyond the realm of cognition and obliges us to consider instead the dynamics of intensity present in a text. She cautions that this does *not* mean one should “abandon thinking about the meaning of texts”, but to attend to “what texts do” (230). If we read Labanyi’s suggestion with Johnson and Gendlin’s interpretations of experience, there is meaning inherent in what texts “do” and the experiences they portray. If death lies outside the realm of concrete experience, we must examine the silent fictionalizing operations of emotion that structure and affect its representation. By drawing on the claims of Mark Johnson’s cognitive theories, I propose that the emotional dimension of represented experience provides an additional layer of meaning to representations of death that speak to both mind and body. In this way, we can explore how the operations of emotion in a text facilitate a representation of death.

Drawing on these theories and the way that they conceive of meaning, I approach the text thinking not about how the text makes us feel, or depicts its characters’ feelings, but thinking about what emotion *does* in the text. How do emotions, and their translation between the world and the self, influence the unique challenge of representing death? How do the dynamic contours of the text communicate meaning about death that speaks to the mind and the body? I have chosen to analyze texts of three disparate authors that are associated with a broad spectrum of Spanish Realism. These texts present emotion as

intricately related to the ways in which death is represented within the texts. In chapters one and two, I examine the representations of specific emotions, namely compassion and disgust, and their relation to the overarching narrative discourse on death. In both cases, I demonstrate the ways in which emotion is enmeshed with reason, and how this privileged position provides an effective medium to speak about the liminal state of death. In the third chapter, I examine the ways in which the material/ideal nature of death is expressed through the felt meaning of anticipation and foreboding. The texts that I have chosen serve as case studies and my analyses unfold the ways in which death is treated through the representation of emotion; the results are not identical, but each text engages with death on the same theoretical and representational plane.

The work of Fernán Caballero is essential to my project for various reasons. Chronologically speaking, Caballero is considered to be the “father” of nineteenth-century Spanish Realism, and her novel *La gaviota* (1849) is widely considered its foundational text. Beyond the historical importance of Caballero, her work is key to an inquiry into death, representation, and emotion in that it is consistently oriented towards the evocation of emotion; after all, the type of conservative *costumbrismo* with which Caballero’s work is imbued connotes an emotion-based rejection of modernity and nostalgia for the past. Caballero’s work is often characterized, and criticized, not only for this emotional orientation, but also for the intrusion of the author into the narration for the purposes of directing the readers’ emotional engagement with the text. I examine two examples of her short fiction that present narratives of suffering and that are dotted with overt appeals to the readers’ emotions. I am not claiming that these two short texts constitute a sufficient representation of Caballero’s entire work. However, these

particular stories are illustrative of the role of emotion in Caballero's work because in them she demonstrates that the emotion of compassion possesses a dangerous relationship with the integrity of the body. In fact, I demonstrate that, in contrast with the standard reading of sentimentality as flawed emotional manipulation in Caballero's work, in "Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte" (1850) and "La flor de las ruinas" (1857), Caballero depicts death and suffering precisely to caution her reader *against* emotional engagement with her text.

At the other end of the broad spectrum of Spanish Realism is the work of Eduardo López Bago. His works of Radical Naturalism take the mimesis of Realism to its ultimate consequences: following the scientific method of Claude Bernard, López Bago promotes the meticulous representation of materiality to demonstrate its primacy in determining the fate of his characters. Thus, his *novelas médico-sociales* provide a depiction of reality that emphasizes the sensorial and the material conditions of existence. However, at the same time, the realization of the scientific method in a novel results in a highly metaphorical depiction of society; the clinical case of the prostitute, for example, serves as a metaphor for the "corrupt" and "diseased" aspects of society. The interdependence of metaphor and the materiality of the body provides an intriguing opportunity to examine the ideal and material dimensions of death. I examine the incendiary novels *La prostituta* and *La Pálida* (1884) in particular because these novels feature the metaphorical character "La Pálida" as their protagonist; she is a prostitute and symbol of death. It is important to note that these novels are the first and second novels of the tetraology, *La prostituta*, which is also comprised of *La buscona* and *La querida*, both published in 1885. I focus on the first two novels because they depict the life and death of "la Pálida,"

who is an important metaphor for contagion, and because of the integral role that disgust plays within their respective narratives.

A work of Benito Pérez Galdós is unquestionably necessary to any discussion of the representational challenges of literary Realism in Spain. As the epitome of Spanish Realist authors, Galdós serves as the fulcrum that balances between the other two authors who represent polar ends of the spectrum of mimesis: the conservative *costumbrismo* of Fernán Caballero, on one end; and López Bago's Radical Naturalism, on the other. Galdós's *oeuvre* is committed to replicating the social realities of Spain, and this translates to attentive representations of the material conditions of reality. I have chosen to examine *Fortunata y Jacinta* because in it Galdós weaves a spiritual contemplation of experience with a marked preoccupation for the physical presence and significance of the body. As such, embedded in its detailed death scenes, a noteworthy presence of feeling accompanies an otherwise abundant narrative attention to the material.

## **Chapter Descriptions**

My first chapter, "The Throes of Compassion: the Danger of Emotion in Fernán Caballero's *Relaciones*," addresses a fundamental issue regarding the ways in which death challenges reason, and I begin with the foundation of nineteenth-century Spanish Realism. I examine the ways in which the representation of death, and the related issues of suffering and compassion, serves as a vehicle for observing represented tensions between reason and faith. I take as my case studies two short stories by Cecilia Böhl de Faber, penname Fernán Caballero: "Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte" (1850) and "La flor de las ruinas" (1857), two *relaciones* whose plots revolve around women who are

complicit in violence and murder. While each *relación* takes a different position on whether knowledge generates suffering, Caballero's underlying message is to avoid compassion. In order to impress this message upon her readers, Caballero formulates two plots in which three approaches of confronting the existence of violent death – through reason, sentiment and faith – are presented and challenged. I demonstrate that Caballero subverts the discursive domain of Positivism and the epistemological worldviews it represents, while nonetheless borrowing elements of this very worldview to dismantle the dangers of sentimentalism. Through a complex construction of discourse, Caballero subverts the hallmark emotional response of sentimental literature, compassion, in order to reveal the dangerous aspects of this emotion.

The works of Fernán Caballero are typically criticized for the extent to which emotion encroaches upon the formal properties of narrative, and this is a contributing factor to the dismissal of much of her literary work. The nomination of Fernán Caballero as the “father” of Spanish Realism in the nineteenth century<sup>9</sup> hinges greatly upon her “curiosidad fotográfica” meshed with the formal tenets of *costumbrismo* (Herrero 292). Nonetheless, this lauded characteristic is leavened with critiques: “En esa labor de fijación en que consiste realmente toda creación artística, Cecilia hace un consciente esfuerzo por ser todo lo fiel posible al modelo real que trata de reproducir; por eliminar, hasta donde sea posible, la imaginación” (290). According to critics, this “carencia de facultades creadoras, su incapacidad de inventiva” is exacerbated by heavy-handed moralizing and obstinate critique of modernity (Montesinos 71). Noël Valis echoes a similar critique in *Sacred Realism* which revisits the role of religion in modern Spanish literature. As she carefully dissects the strands of faith that run throughout “secular”

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<sup>9</sup> *La gaviota* [1849] is typically considered the first Spanish Realist novel of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

texts, Valis briefly addresses the Catholic contemporaries of traditionally secular authors like Galdós and Clarín:

Literary critics of modern Spanish literature, for example, have tended to view Spanish Catholicism and Catholic writers as a monolithic block of political conservatism and immobility, with the implicit understanding that religious thought and feeling in general reduce the possibilities of imaginative literature. (9)

Although Valis highlights the subtle, faith-bearing signs of “sacred realism” in the works of the great Realists, she too dismisses these “Catholic texts” as perhaps undeserving of critical attention due to the implicit lack of creativity imposed by the religious weight of their narratives. Citing Coloma, Caballero and Pereda: “Their writings, while still of much interest, have overall not withstood the passage of time, though one suspects any deficiencies lie less in the political and more in the aesthetic realm” (*Sacred* 9). While Valis successfully re-inserts religion and faith into the way in which modern Spanish fiction may be understood, perhaps it would be generous to assert that she rectifies the reductive bifurcation between Catholic and secular texts. Religious allusions in surprising places are redemptive and intriguing; overt references to faith and dogma are simply overlooked.<sup>10</sup> As I demonstrate in this chapter, the religious themes touched upon in Caballero’s prose fiction reveal a surprising treatment of the questions of faith and reason, the representation of compassion constituting the curious interface between cognition and emotion.

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<sup>10</sup> Valis indeed commits no oversight as the objective of her book is to examine the ways in which religious faith informs the creative imagination in the fiction of Spain’s modern period, focusing primarily on the cornerstone novels of Spanish Realism. As such, direct references to religion and faith do not factor in to the discussion as Valis observes little “fiction” in their portrayal. However, her dismissal of “religious” writers such as Caballero and Coloma supports the trend to exclude their works from a canon due precisely to the overwhelming religious themes perceived by critics.

In order to fully address the intriguing intersection between faith, reason and emotion in these *relaciones*, I draw upon the work of Martha Nussbaum and the relationship that she establishes between cognition and emotion, namely her suggestion in *Upheavals of Thought* that compassion is dependent on a number of conscious appraisals. Nussbaum argues that, rather than an irrational and unpredictable reaction, emotions derive from judgments that measure value and importance. Furthermore, I draw on Michael Bell's and Jane Thraillkill's respective works on sentimental literature to facilitate an analysis of the dynamic between compassion and suffering in the *relaciones*, as well as the tension between authenticity and represented emotion.

The significant intersection between metaphor and death is examined in my second chapter, "Sensing Death in Eduardo López Bago's *La prostituta*," which treats the representation of disgust in *La prostituta* (1884) by Radical Naturalist Eduardo López Bago. The tetraology follows the inauguration of two young women into the life of prostitution and, consequently, a life in constant dialogue with disease. This *novela médico-social* was condemned for the immoral and indecent representation of human sexuality – lust, orgasm, prostitution, lesbian romance and decadent orgy. Due to looming censorship, López Bago attributes both his direct language and his sensible discretion to the scientific nature of his art. In the scene of a virtual autopsy – the detailed prediction of the ways in which a syphilitic man will eventually die – he warns: "no podré disfrazar ninguna palabra. Es la ciencia la que se expresa por mi boca, y el lenguaje científico siempre es puro, como es puro el alabastro, aunque represente desnuda la estatua" (*La prostituta* 186). López Bago intervenes to tell his readers that he struggles to relate the disgusting details: "Lo que sucedió entonces tres veces y en tres formas distintas, he

procurado describirlo al llegar a este punto de la novela, y las tres [veces] he roto las cuartillas escritas” (32). He claims that as a surgeon-novelist, he must remove corrosive materials from the body, or omit excessive details, for the good of the reader.

Nonetheless, disgust and metaphor serve as the primary fictionalizing processes in the text. The pervasiveness of metaphor in *La prostituta* is rooted in its marriage of science and literature, however the depth of metaphor in the novel goes beyond the explicit. The cultural association of the female and death in late nineteenth-century literature is many ways dependent on scientific discourse.<sup>11</sup> The cultural representation of the prostitute in art and literature is Medusa-like: at once intoxicating and repulsive, the metaphorically dangerous *femme fatale* and a potentially fatal source of infection. Indeed, the figure of the prostitute in *La prostituta* comes to be associated with death and malicious disease-spreading.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the protagonist herself is nicknamed “La Pálida” and the third and fourth books of the tetraology – *La buscona* (1885) and *La querida* (1885) – also lend themselves to the double-entendre that fuses the notions of the desire and danger in relation to the female body. Nonetheless, the fountainhead of infection in *La prostituta* is a male: the Marqués de Villaperdida, owner of forty brothels who spreads his disease both through heredity and promiscuous sex and rape. The battle

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<sup>11</sup> The identification of the woman as dangerous at the *fin de siglo* is also dependent on scientific notions developed in Naturalist literature. Turn-of-the-century fears of civilizational decadence were often expressed through representations of antiquity, most notably through art and literature by a depiction of dark forces resurgent in the form of the atavistic, semi-divine female seeking to seduce and destroy man by draining his energy through sexual activity. Bram Dijkstra calls attention to the ways in which Decadent aesthetics were influenced by evolutionary science, such as Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* [1871], which determined that the woman was unable to evolve at the same speed or in the same fashion as the man. Dijkstra imagines the European middle-class man and the pseudoscientific conclusions he could draw: “Even with his surreptitious reading of the sensationally informative writings of the new breed of naturalists and bio-sexists, he would, more often than not, enter adulthood full of strange scientific knowledge about the perversions to which woman’s nature was prone” (236).

<sup>12</sup> At the conclusion of *La prostituta*, an infected and embittered Estrella sets out to spread her disease throughout Madrid.

with disease is not only portrayed in the depictions of treatments, hospitals and surgeries, but in the overarching sentiment of disgust that pervades the novel.

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which the ideal/material nature of death is reflected in the emotion of disgust, which translates between ideal and material contexts. To frame my analysis, I draw on the work of Susan B. Miller and William Miller, who treat disgust and how it functions to combat the fragility of life by strengthening the border between the self and the Other. Furthermore, in order to fully examine the physical ramifications of disgust, I consider the studies of Charles Darwin, Paul Rozin et al, and Wulf Schiefenhuvel, who examine the relationship between disgust and distaste. Ultimately, this chapter analyzes the crucial intersections between the obligatory metaphorical imagery in representing death, and the exchange of ideal and material contexts inherent in disgust.

In the third and final chapter, “Escalating E/motion: Approximating Death in *Fortunata y Jacinta*,” I take up what is perhaps the most representative Spanish Realist novel, Galdós’s *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1887). As a number of critics have recognized, death plays an integral role in the plotting of the novel, despite the fact that relatively few characters die. The resolution of the plot depends on the fact that Jacinta adopts Juan Evaristo from Fortunata, who facilitates the adoption right before her own death. This “transaction” accomplishes numerous feats that have been left unanswered throughout the lengthy novel: there is a secure heir to the Santa Cruz family, Jacinta has the child she has longed for, and Fortunata achieves self-redemption as she dies naming herself a virtuous “angel,” the social category that she has long-believed escaped her. Each one of these resolutions hinges upon the fact that Fortunata dies.

Like the death of Fortunata, the narrated deaths of the relatively few characters that die<sup>13</sup> in *Fortunata y Jacinta* bear resemblance to the “styles of dying” that Garrett Stewart outlines in Victorian literature. The continuation of the Santa Cruz lineage and the achievement of Jacinta’s motherhood demonstrate the ways in which Stewart claims that death scenes provide a sense of survival or rebirth for other characters (69). The “deathbed” scenes of Mauricia la Dura and Fortunata serve as moral and religious sounding boards; they are places where social structures are reestablished. Aside from the death of these primary characters, a number of secondary characters meet their fate within the pages of *Fortunata y Jacinta*. In some cases, the death is barely recognized at all. The death of Arnaiz el Gordo, father of Barbarita and grandfather of Jacinta who never appears directly in the novel, and that of Don Evaristo Feijoo are never noted directly, but barely reach the surface of narration as their funeral processions wind passively through the background. This follows Stewart’s observation that in many cases the “transition” from life to death is often replaced and reconceived in the image of the funeral cortege (59). Curiously, the most detailed description of death in the novel is dedicated to the section that focuses on Manuel Moreno-Isla, the anglophile nephew of Guillermina who spends most of his appearance in the novel complaining about Spain and aching to return to London.

The polarity of the death scenes in *Fortunata y Jacinta* is remarkable: either death is portrayed with tremendous anticipation (Mauricia, Moreno-Isla, Fortunata), or, it is noticeably lacking in any anticipation whatsoever (Arnaiz el Gordo, Feijoo). The question of anticipation is crucial in the representation of death. As a representation of

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<sup>13</sup> Aside from Fortunata, the deaths of Manuel Moreno-Isla and Mauricia la Dura are narrated in close detail. Furthermore, the funeral processions of Arnaiz el Gordo and Feijoo are present in the narration.

death defies mimesis, Stewart suggests that dying is “all presentiment and never direct presentation” (55). The experience of death is composed of anticipation and, for the survivors, the abrupt occurrence of absence that it leaves behind. The climax of death is inaccessible through representation.

Taking into account the inherent rise and fall associated with representing death, this chapter examines the dynamics of foreboding that sculpt the narration of *Fortunata y Jacinta*. In it, I demonstrate the ways in which the event of death – symbolic or narrated – serves as a narrative climax that is never achieved. In particular, I examine dynamic foreboding in the death scenes of Mauricia la Dura and Manuel Moreno-Isla, and I demonstrate the ways in which the notion of ascension facilitates the expression of anticipation. In order to fully consider the ways in which the physically-rooted feeling of ascension, rhythm and climax contribute to these scenes, I draw on the theory of “felt meaning” outlined by Eugene Gendlin. Gendlin’s theory is based on the notion that experience is largely implicit, and that much of meaning is experienced. Where linguistic signs are inadequate, one is acutely aware of felt meaning: he gives the example of religious services, strong emotions, our acquaintance with persons (*Meaning* 70-71). Because death lies outside the realm of relatable experience, I use Gendlin’s theory to examine the ways in which implicit meaning provides a sense of experiencing death. Mark Johnson elaborates on Gendlin’s suggestion that the body implies and carries our situations forward, and posits that implicit meaning is rooted in the corporeal. For Johnson, meaning “arises from our feeling of qualities, sensory patterns, movement, changes, and emotional contours” (*Meaning* 70). Both Gendlin and Johnson posit that meaning derives from the experience of a situation, and although death itself is not a

relatable experience, the anticipation of death is represented in *Fortunata y Jacinta* with the physically-rooted experience of ascension. Where words are inadequate, the felt meaning of death comes to the forefront of narration.

### **Scholarship on the representation of death in Spanish Realism**

Representing death in the nineteenth-century is caught up with the increasing preoccupation with the materiality of human existence. This anxiety partly explains why the dominant aesthetic movements of this time period are informed by mimesis, the meticulous replication of everyday materiality, a practice exemplified in Spanish Realist literature. Inaugurated with the publication of Fernán Caballero's *La gaviota* (1849), Spanish Realism features "the primary engagement with the things of this world" (Turner 81) and a preoccupation with externalizing the interior. For example, in his examination of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Geoffrey Ribbans calls attention to the ways in which the wind-wheel outside Las Micaelas corresponds to Maxi's feelings: while it functioned, it provided him encouragement, but broken it represents his despair (54). However, if death is the precise limitation and disintegration of materiality, how does the Realist writer represent it? If the moment of death cannot be presented directly, how is death nonetheless present in Spanish Realist fiction? Is the moment necessarily elided, as Stewart suggests regarding Victorian literature, and its absence filled with sleights of rhetoric that simulate the gap? These are the challenging questions that inform my analysis of the representation of death in a broad spectrum of Spanish Realism.

Scholarship that addresses the representation of death in the texts I have chosen to examine has been largely lacking, specifically in the case of the short fiction of Fernán

Caballero. The little work that has been dedicated to her short fiction tends to focus on two aspects: its features of *costumbrismo* and the moralizing artifice that some critics believe characterize her narratives. The work of Monserrat Amores García, Javier Herrero and José Montesinos examines the *costumbrista* roots of the body of Caballero's work. An article by María Teresa Palet Plaja specifically addresses the use of "andalucismos" in the *relaciones*. Germán Gullón and Montesinos criticize the moralizing interventions of Caballero and its effect on the narration, and their critiques are integral to my examination of the manipulation of emotion in the *relaciones*. Marieta Cantos Casenave has provided focused scholarship on Caballero's short fiction. In "Los cuentos de Fernán Caballero: Una vision poetica de la realidad," Cantos Casenave addresses Caballero's disdain for the exaltation of the passions associated with Romanticism, however she does not examine with any profundity either of the *relaciones* that I examine in this dissertation. Her article "Los relatos de Fernan Caballero entre costumbrismo y realismo" continues the critical tradition of examining the *costumbrista* roots and influences of Caballero's work; however, she also addresses the question of honor and the woman in a selected number of Caballero's early *relaciones*. Again, Cantos Casenave remarks that Caballero sought to "correct" the vice of Romanticism in women, in such a way that "el sentimiento fuese dominado por el ejercicio de la virtud" (199). However, Cantos Casenave suggests that Caballero accomplishes this by presenting relatable, idealized protagonists. As work on collections of short fiction, rather than individual texts, is more common, I have found that no in-depth, critical work has been dedicated to either "Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte" or "La flor de las ruinas."

Although significantly more scholarship has been published on the *La prostituta* tetraology, the criticism tends to follow the trend of Caballero in that the influence of ideology on aesthetics is the target, and almost exclusive focus, of the scholarship. Pura Fernández has published an essential study of López Bago that has served to bring *naturalismo radical* into the critical debates regarding the Naturalist movement in Spain. In *Eduardo López Bago y el Naturalismo Radical: la novela y el mercado literario en el siglo XIX*, Fernández provides crucial biographical information about López Bago and his body of work, outlines the theoretical foundations of the *novela médico-social*, and discusses the question of regulated prostitution as a point of departure for the social critique that the *naturalistas radicales* realized in their works. Fernández's excellent edition of *La prostituta: novela médico-social* provides necessary background information regarding the social and cultural milieu from which this novel was produced.

In terms of critical work about *La prostituta* and *La Pálida*, a scant assortment of published articles address various aspects of the novels, however the majority serve to criticize its aesthetic orientation. Many scholars have directly questioned López Bago's capacity as a writer. Miguel Ángel Lozano Marco remarks that the first two books of *La prostituta* are heavy, pessimistic and sordid portrayals of sex. Yvan Lissorgues criticizes the exaggerated, emphatically grotesque features of López Bago's work, and Oscar Barrero Pérez goes as far as to insinuate that López Bago avails himself to Zola's technique precisely because he just wasn't a good writer. Of those critics who have chosen to analyze the novels, disease and the body are the salient themes that have been examined. Alrick Clauson Knight Jr analyzes the ways in which odor serves as the organizing principle of the novel, and Denise DuPont has examined the influences of

decadentism on *naturalismo radical*. Erika Sutherland examines the treatment of syphilis in the novel, including its function as metaphor, and questions the historical authenticity of its portrayal. Therefore, as I demonstrate in Chapter 2, while many indignant critics condemn the depiction of the disgusting in López Bago's work, none have analyzed the details of his representation of the disgusting, nor examined its relationship to death in the novel.

Much of the scarce criticism on Fernán Caballero and Eduardo López Bago has not ventured beyond an attack on the “manipulative” nature of their respective narrative styles. In both cases, there is little to no criticism that develops arguments or detailed analyses about the works themselves, a feat that I see accomplished in my dissertation. In the case of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, there is a tremendous amount of criticism on the novel, however very little attends specifically to the representation of death. Camille Cruz Martes has published an article about the presence of death in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, however she examines the ways in which death is a function of life in the novel. In *Vida y Obra de Galdós*, Joaquín Casaldueiro argues that death plays a nominal role in the novel and goes largely undetected. Very few critics have examined the role of Manuel Moreno-Isla, a character whose death figures prominently in my chapter. Gonzalo Sobejano has written an excellent piece on the narration of his death that examines the ways in which waning hope for the love of Jacinta ultimately determines Moreno-Isla's death. Geoffrey Ribbans also comments that Moreno-Isla's fatal heart condition is conditioned by his hopeless love for Jacinta. Linda Willem's intriguing article on an eliminated scene that precedes Moreno-Isla's death was integral to my reading, and only strengthens my conviction about the narrative import of Moreno-Isla's character. Both Vernon

Chamberlain and Hazel Gold have addressed the question of closure in the novel, and while neither article directly addresses the relationship of closure and the representation of death, both articles influence my reading of the dynamics of felt meaning in the novel.

These scattered works demonstrate that the representation of death in nineteenth-century Spanish literature merits a more detailed and focused examination.

In an article that treats the representation of life and death in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction, John Dowling uses Galdós's *Marianela* (1878) as the singular text representing Spanish Realism. Even so, his interpretation of Marianela's death is still steeped in another aesthetic movement. He comments: "Galdós portrays a Romantic death scene with the clinical eye of a realist" (130). As Dowling's article suggests, death is pervasive in Spanish literature and it deserves critical attention. However, a comprehensive examination of the representation of death in Spanish literature, or any particular century or movement is a daunting and likely unproductive task. Due to their metaphorical nature, one might conclude that representations of death are omnipresent in any given literary period. The three authors whose works I examine in this dissertation represent the full spectrum of Realist literature, spanning its inception at mid-century and extending to its bifurcation into Naturalism. As such, these authors range from the conservative to the incendiary to Realist *par excellence*. My goal is not to prove that these authors necessarily treat death in the same fashion; rather, I demonstrate that representing death in a Realist text is problematic, and that the representation of death extends beyond a singular deathbed scene that might tie up the loose ends of a complicated plot. The liminality of death between the ideal and the material resides in the implicit operations of a text, its negotiation between the abstract and the tangible.

Thus, as Dowling's article illustrates, there is a need for a new way of looking at death in Spanish literature. The representation of death does not solely serve purposes of plot; it is not just a death scene, a narrated Romantic suicide, or a *fin de siglo* metaphor. To represent death is an attempt to capture the unknown, an attempt to answer the impossible questions related to the experience of expiration and the possibility of an experience beyond death. A representation of death raises philosophical questions regarding the existence of violence and suffering. Death is ultimately a fictional matter – a question of fiction, and a fiction rooted in materiality. We must look beyond the material representation and examine the fictionalizing processes nascent in represented emotion that facilitate the signification of death. By examining the ways in which death is approached, expressed and felt in the exemplar texts of Fernán Caballero, Eduardo López Bago and Benito Pérez Galdós, I illustrate that emotion as an operation of fiction that shapes and provides meaning to a representation of death.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE THROES OF COMPASSION: THE DANGER OF EMOTION IN FERNÁN CABALLERO'S *RELACIONES*

Outside the rational knowledge, which had to me appeared as the only one, I was inevitably led to recognize that all living humanity had a certain other irrational knowledge, faith, which made it possible to live.

Tolstoy, *My Confession*, 1884

Thoughts are some of the most disturbing things there are.

Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, 2001

Death is the ultimate unknown reality. In addition to the lack of details of the experience of death, death as a tragic phenomenon is an unanswerable question. Indeed, undue pain and suffering breed an intolerable mental suffering that is often relieved by faith in a higher power. The human inability to access divine knowledge in the face of suffering demarcates the opposing realms of reason and faith: “[La fe] supone una confianza en Dios y la esperanza firme de que todo tendrá una solución, aunque nosotros no podamos comprenderlo” (García González 15). To experience suffering and never fully understand its divine motivation, or the mere existence of such a motivation, constitutes a secondary representational level of pain. Voltaire’s *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* (1756) provides an exemplary testament to the pain associated with the collapse of faith in the face of a devastating natural disaster, a pain that revisits the Epicurean paradox: God is either unable or unwilling to prevent evil, and therefore He is either not

Almighty or not Good.<sup>14</sup> For Theodore E. D. Braun, the perceptible emotional distress of Voltaire's poem is perhaps its most striking element: "the poem develops [his indignation] in such a way as to make us share the author's deep anxiety over [...] the problem of physical and moral evil in the world" (146). The representation of suffering indeed explores the emotional dimension of the epistemic conflict associated with faith and reason, in the sense that the pain is both perceived and *shared* by the reader, as Braun suggests.

As Voltaire's poem demonstrates, the awareness of the inadequacy of reason produces a painful doubt that plays an important role in the generation of emotional responses, such as anxiety or fear. In his essay "The Vanity and Suffering of Life," one of the supplemental essays to *The World as Will and Representation* (1814, 1844), Arthur Schopenhauer asserts that the fact that life inevitably ends in death is proof of its meaninglessness. Although he suggests that the driving force behind all human motivation is the fear of death, Schopenhauer observes that in spite of all efforts to avoid death, "at every step he comes near to the greatest, the total, the inevitable and irremediable shipwreck, indeed even steers right onto it, namely death" (103). In his analysis, Schopenhauer observes that man's ultimate objective—to avoid suffering—is in fact not unlike that of the beast, the primary difference being the connection between man's knowledge of death and the ensuing emotional response:

It is indeed remarkable how, through the mere addition of thought, which the

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<sup>14</sup> "But how we conceive a God supremely good,/ Who heaps his favours on the sons he loves,/ Yet scatters evil with as large a hand?/ What eye can pierce the depth of his designs?/ From that all-perfect Being came not ill:/ And came it from no other, for he's lord:/ Yet it exists. O stern and numbing truth!" (Trans. Joseph MacCabe 259).

animal lacks, there should have been erected on the same narrow basis of pain and pleasure that the animal possesses so vast and lofty a structure of human happiness and misery, and man should be subjected to such vehement emotions, passions and convulsions that their impress can be read in enduring lines on his face; while all the time and in reality he is concerned only with the very same things which the animal too attains, and attains with an incomparably smaller expenditure of emotion. Through all this, however, the measure of suffering increases in man far more than the enjoyment, and it is very greatly enhanced specifically by the fact that he actually *knows* of death while the animal only instinctively flees it without actually knowing of it and therefore without ever really having it in view, which man does all the time. (100-1)

Although he does not seek to explain the connection, Schopenhauer envisions a crucial association between emotion and the capacity to reason. It is precisely the knowledge that death awaits man and that there exists no possibility of escape that heightens his misery. The liminal character of suffering makes it ripe for representation: it is the crossroads between the cognitive, the emotional and the material. Suffering characterized as *overwhelming* doubt as in the case of Voltaire, and as the *burden* of knowledge in the case of Schopenhauer, inherently suggests the inevitable physical connotation of pain.

In *Upheavals of Thought*, Martha C. Nussbaum conceives of emotion as a purely cognitive process that makes judgments of value. She proposes that emotions evaluate and deduce what is important and will ultimately promote the flourishing of the individual. In her discussion of compassion and its relation to reason, Nussbaum draws on the definition of compassion outlined by Aristotle, which she defines as a “painful

emotion occasioned by the awareness of another person's undeserved misfortune" (301). Compassion as a type of pain is differentiated from others, such as fear or grief, based entirely on the variety of cognitive appraisals involved. Nussbaum posits that one will consider whether the perceived suffering is serious or trivial, whether the suffering was produced by one's own actions, and whether or not this suffering could befall oneself (306).<sup>15</sup> The knowledge associated with compassion – the awareness of another's pain – provides its own dimension of pain to the compassionate. Nussbaum questions whether the imagined pain of the victim is a necessary motivational role for compassion and debates the character of that pain. It seems implausible that "a knot in the stomach or a lump in the throat" be requisites of compassion, she notes (326). Ultimately, Nussbaum suggests that in compassion there is a mental pain indivisible from cognition itself, and names it the "affective character of the thoughts" (326). The interplay between the interpretation of experience, imagination and materiality that is an inherent operation of compassion renders it a fascinating prism by which to analyze the liminal position of suffering in relation to death and violence.

In the realm of literature, Nussbaum notes that the brevity with which a reader experiences the suffering of a character is insufficient to provoke true compassion. For example, she remarks that the melodrama of daytime television is "too much prompted by curiosity and sensationalism to engender real concern for the person involved" (330). Until recently, the representation of emotion has been an area of study largely ignored in literary studies, a phenomenon one might attribute to the perhaps automatic association between emotion and sentimental literature. In her book *Affective Fictions*, Jane Thrailkill

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<sup>15</sup> Nussbaum notes that one may feel compassion for an animal, for example, because the state of vulnerability in which an animal may suffer is a point of association for humans.

attempts to debunk the notion that attention to the reader's affective response to a text means descending a slippery slope of relativism, essentially disrupting the level field of interpretation, an exclusively cognitive field, upon which literary criticism is conducted. Thrailkill advocates the notion that emotion constitutes an integral part of interpretation, rather than a force that destabilizes or negates meaning in a text. Contending with long-standing argument that affective responses have no place in the interpretative world in that they "threatened coherent principles of order and epistemological stability" (2), Thrailkill demonstrates that feeling indeed contributes to the operations of consciousness, and applies this notion to unite dichotomies of mind and body, subject and object, and reason and emotion as they are constructed within realist texts of the nineteenth-century United States.

Emotion is inherently embedded in the works of Cecilia Böhl de Faber (1796-1877) who under the penname "Fernán Caballero" wrote the works of *costumbrismo* that many critics claim ushered in the Realist movement to Spain in the nineteenth century. José Montesinos remarks at that Caballero is motivated to "archivar el recuerdo de lo que va a morir" in her nostalgic, highly conservative works of prose fiction (34). Emotion is the inspiration for her literary project, and Caballero's style has been criticized for coaxing her readers with direct appeals to their emotions. If we take as an example the preamble to her *cuadro de costumbre* entitled "El dolor es una agonía sin muerte" (1865), one identifies the various ways in which emotion encroaches upon discourse. The story depicts a mother's grief over the death of her son in battle. The tale begins with the portrayal of the snowy fields of Utrera that are dotted with the carcasses of cattle that

have been greedily driven to market by the ranchers despite the harsh conditions. The narrator comments:

¿Es posible que tan sibaritas nos vayamos haciendo, en cuanto pertenece a los sentidos y al exterior, y tan grosero indiferentismo tengamos en una cosa que directamente toca a los sentimientos, a la delicadeza y a la cultura interna? Pero, nos hemos alejado de nuestro asunto: volvamos a él. Sabemos que hemos prometido un cuadro de costumbres, y no un alegato a favor de los martirizados animales. (1997, 167-68)

In this brief passage, the reader notices that the narrator intervenes on the narrative to speak against modernity. Man has become insensitive to the omnipresence of suffering, and Caballero situates the modern priority of wealth in opposition to emotional integrity. Beyond the connection that Caballero draws between modernity and lacking compassion, the way in which the narrator distinguishes this particular discourse on animal suffering from the aesthetic integrity of the *cuadro de costumbre* is particularly disruptive for the reader.

Critics such as Gullón, Herrero and Montesinos maintain that it is precisely through these obstinate interventions on behalf of the narrator that Caballero force-feeds inflexible conservative dogma to the reader. Susan Kirkpatrick echoes similar criticism when she calls attention to manipulation of narrative in *Elia, o La Espana treinta años ha* (1852). She has noticed that Caballero employs subversive techniques in order to produce a conclusion that, in the case of *Elia*, lends itself to the *ángel del hogar*. In fact, Caballero seems to offer up “the narrative paradigm of the Cinderella story only to make her readers aware that she rejects it” (259). Following these interpretations of Caballero’s

manipulation of narrative, I examine examples of her short fiction that show how the author subverts the very narrative structure that she constructs throughout the text precisely to caution the reader against emotional engagement with victimized characters. Marieta Cantos Casenave has recognized Böhl de Faber's deep disdain for the French sentimental novel, in particular the "la exaltación pasional de la novela romántica" which she sought to contest in her literary project ("Cuentos" 112-13). Brian Dendle remarks that Caballero's underlying belief, evidenced in *Elia*, is that "the heart can see more clearly than the intellect" (104). I propose a more critical reading of what the "heart" is, and contend that Caballero cautions against compassionate engagement with the suffering. In "Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte" (1850), Caballero presents a woman who suffers with the knowledge that her husband has killed her own mother for money. In "La flor de las ruinas" (1857), a victimized woman becomes complicit in murder. I argue that in both cases her representation of suffering brings into question the ideological systems of empiricism and faith, and disdains the compassionate engagement with characters who suffer in the face of death.

This rhetorical maneuver is certainly not an anomalous attribute of Caballero's writing style, especially with regard to the topic of negative repercussions of modernity. In "Callar en vida, y perdonar en muerte" (1850), Caballero breaks with the illusion of fiction to address the reader directly, in order to assert that the negative manner in which she has illustrated the influences of modernity is only one of many rhetorical possibilities:

No es nuestro ánimo personificar la época en el señor D. Andrés, sino sus influencias, y es seguro que en un orden de cosas opuesto habría sido el centinela

avanzado de la intolerancia, la sede de la rutina, el cancerbero de los aranceles y el carabinero de útiles y necesarias innovaciones. Esto lo decimos en honor de la verdad, y en favor de la exactitud del tipo que pintamos, y de ninguna manera por lavarle su feísima cara a la época. (38)

In this passage, Caballero has illuminated her readers with regard to the motivations of her rhetorical design; the *truth* of this portrayal lies in Caballero's admission to having chosen a particularly negative light in which to represent Don Andrés. In an effort to remain true to her project of faithful depiction of reality, Caballero in fact reveals the artifice of her work, her choices and perhaps her prejudices.<sup>16</sup>

What is more intriguing about Caballero's somewhat jarring intervention about animal suffering is that the story it precedes does not actually focus on an analogy between soldier and sacrificial animal, as one notes, for example, in Clarín's "¡Adiós, Cordera!" (1893).<sup>17</sup> Instead, the story focuses upon the soldier's mother who, wrongly assuming he has died in battle, experiences intense, uncontrollable grief which culminates in instantaneous death when, to her shock, the son returns alive and well to Utrera. Based on the manner in which Caballero has framed her story, one notices the effort to demonstrate that emotions such as grief or compassion produce potentially dangerous, or even fatal, consequences for those who experience them. When the narrator mentions the sight of the animal carcasses, he notes that describing the myriad of instances of animal suffering has only a detrimental effect on the spirit:

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<sup>16</sup> Caballero's denunciation of the modernity associated with the nineteenth century was certainly no secret; in a letter written to editor and mentor Manuel Cañete in 1857, Caballero openly admits: "Soy por las cosas antiguas y contra las modernas y abomino . . . al siglo diez y nueve" (92).

<sup>17</sup> In Clarín's short story, drafted men leaving for the Carlist War on a train are likened to the cattle that were sent to market, on the same train, to be butchered.

Todo el mundo se lamenta de estas y otras atrocidades, de que son víctimas los animales. Nos hemos propuesto no hablar de [los animales] entre gentes, porque si lo hacemos, cada persona de las presentes se apresura a referirnos hechos de que ha sido testigo, a cual más conmovedores e irritantes, hasta acongojar amargamente nuestra alma. (1997, 167)

The disturbing consequence of compassion that Caballero suggests in this anecdote is crucial to understanding why compassion is depicted as a dangerous emotion. The 1843 edition of the *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana por La Academia Española* defines the verb *conmover* as “Perturbar, inquietar, alterar, mover” (186), and defines the verb *irritar* as “Excitar vivamente la ira,” or “Conmover y agitar con violencia” (416). One notices the physical connotations of these words; if a story is moving, it creates a negative disturbance in those who hear it. As Nussbaum points out, the Stoic reading of compassion holds that a sense of compassion can inspire other strong emotions: “the soft soul of the compassionate can be invaded by the serpents of resentment and hatred” (362). The permeability of the compassionate is also due in part to elements of empathy that pertain to compassion. Nussbaum notes that empathy involves “a participatory enactment of the situation of the sufferer” that requires an awareness that the plight of the sufferer is not one’s own (327). Nussbaum likens this awareness to the notion of “twofold attention” of Richard Wollheim (1980) who suggests that the spectator of a work of art is aware of an object as well as the state of representation. It is precisely this aspect of compassion, the division between the compassionate and the sufferer, that Caballero does not depict in her portrayals of strong emotion. For Caballero, to be compassionate is to fully open oneself, to take on the pain that the sufferer is experiencing, and the

relinquishing of self-protection can ultimately lead to the destruction of the self. In this way, Caballero's appeal to avoid compassion is a call to prevent harm done unto the self that is portrayed in her narrative as physical and uncontrollable.

### **Subverting Sentimentalism through Intervention**

Fernán Caballero's body of work is notably charged with profound emotion that is linked directly to its formal properties. Montesinos notices "Un desconsuelo romántico en que se confunden la nostalgia del pasado y una medrosa congoja frente al inevitable, próximo porvenir, le inspira el deseo de recoger piadosamente trasuntos fieles de lo que pronto ya no será" (37). Here, Montesinos of course refers to Caballero's *costumbrismo*, the detailed literary depiction of traditional life in Andalucía which Caballero employs in order to preserve traditional religious practices and the value of faith. Caballero indeed envisioned references to faith as a necessary component of the Andalusian life she attempted to capture. In a letter to Cañete in 1855, Caballero defends the religious content she weaves into her works, claiming it serves to "hacer conocer el numen poético y religioso de nuestro pueblo" (*Epistolario* 33). The form and content of Caballero's stylistic calling card also served the moralizing dimension of her literary project, particularly against the French *nouvelle* in vogue at the time; a "religiosa" who "como un pobre y humilde contraveneno esparce, cual ellos su ponzoña, entretegidas [sic] (por tal que se lean) en novelas" (92). The literary motivations of Caballero are therefore regulated by the dynamics of emotion, from the fervent conception of her literary project – attributable both to personal faith and defense of tradition – to its anti-sentimental purpose: to diffuse melodrama with piety.

The literary production of Fernán Caballero can be widely classified as *costumbrista*; her texts depict Spain's traditional life, almost exclusively portrayed in Andalucía. Aside from her novels, Caballero's short prose is divided into *cuadro de costumbre* and *relación*; the author explains the distinction in a brief prologue to the 1857 collection of *Relaciones*:

Las composiciones que los franceses y alemanes llaman *Nouvelles*, y que nosotros, por falta de otra voz más adecuada, llamamos Relaciones, difieren de las novelas de costumbres (*romans de mœurs* que son esencialmente análisis del corazón y estudios psicológicos) en que se componen de hechos rápidamente ensartados en el hilo de una narración, en que son *aguadas* en lugar de miniaturas como las antedichas. (1)

Favoring narration over "pintura" (Montesinos 81), Caballero engages with a genre aimed at a reading public that consumed the *folletín* and sentimental literature. "Se echa a caza de *efectos*," writes Eduardo Pedroso in the prologue of the 1880 edition of her *Relaciones*, but he warns: "desengañense aquellos a quienes pudiera ser grato ver enriquecido con un nombre más el catálogo de los maestros zurcidores de emociones fuertes, espeluznadas, rufianescas, o sentimentales" (vii). Considering the foreign origin of the genre and its contribution to commercial culture, it is unsurprising that Caballero's literary project rested on combating the passions represented in and excited by the sentimental novel. Here arises the conflict of form and content with which Caballero must contend: to undermine sentimentalism while identifying with its vehicle, the *nouvelle*.

As Robyn R. Warhol observes, Realist fiction constituted the only “public place” in which women writers of the Victorian Age could speak authoritatively about civic or moral issues. Trading the pulpit for the pen, women writers employed a gendered discursive technique, what Warhol refers to as “earnest direct address,” in order to engage publicly with such issues; male writers, on the other hand, employed “a more conventionally literary structure of ironic, self-reflexive fictionality” (170). As such, Warhol identifies as masculine those distancing narrative strategies that call attention to the fictional nature of a text, or that maintain the divide of intra- and extra-diegetic planes. On the other hand, the objective of the engaging narrator is to seek identification with the reader, in order to ultimately evoke compassion from him. The rhetorical moves that will engage the reader and facilitate identification with an unfortunate protagonist are subtle and, for instance, might suggest a comparison between the intra- and extra-diegetic planes of sympathy. According to Warhol, this rhetorical gesture to unite the fictional world and the reader’s reality depends on an earnest appeal from the writer that will stimulate and harness the reader’s willingness to align her feelings with a character, or share the observational critiques of a narrator. Though this appeal may lack in irony, or meta-fiction, it is not altogether artless; in other words, this discursive technique does not undermine the text’s realism. As Warhol suggests, this empathetic identification between reader and text would ideally effect social repercussions for the female author detached from the public sphere.

The case of Fernán Caballero is particular in that she seeks not to evoke compassion from the reader, but to discourage it; she replaces a discursive call for social

justice with deference to the divine.<sup>18</sup> These features undoubtedly inspire much of the criticism surrounding her fiction. Although Caballero is criticized for her resistance to modernity and, not unrelatedly, a stanch adherence to Catholicism, these specific criticisms are frequently coupled with attacks of rhetorical deficiency rooted in the transparency of the author's voice. As Montesinos observes, "Fernán Caballero sale a cada paso de detrás de su retablo, a increpar directamente personajes y público" (89). Caballero's destruction of the novel's illusion, effected through her self-reference that we have mentioned both in the case of "El dolor es una agonía sin muerte" and "Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte," was criticized for bastardizing her talents for *costumbrismo* with these jarring elements of style and content. Juan Valera notes that Caballero's moralizing digressions "fatigan al lector," and that the transparency of those digressions detracts from their intention: "sus novelas ganarían infinito, y hasta moralizarían y santificarían más a los lectores, si en ellas no se notase tanto el afán de moralizar y de catequizar" (qtd. in Montesinos 125). These narrative digressions do not follow the expectations of the reader, and therefore for Germán Gullón create "[una] barrera infranqueable para la comprensión y disfrute estético" (29). Like Gullón, Montesinos finds her *cuadros de costumbres* to be plagued with moralizing plot deviations, which, in his opinion all but ruin *La familia de Alvarada*: "Una vez más en España la moral ha hecho abortar una novela. La moral y un cristianismo tan gritador y alharaquiento<sup>19</sup> como insincero" (104). Here, Montesinos implies that the narration comes to a sudden halt, or

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<sup>18</sup> The question of gender here is certainly problematic. One might suggest that Caballero's disdain of compassion is related to and enhanced by the identification of the author as male. Warhol's examination of gendered interventions and the masculine penname of Cecilia Böhl de Faber raises very interesting questions regarding the place of compassion in the work of Fernán Caballero.

<sup>19</sup> Highly emotional.

deviates in such a way as to “abort” the tale; in essence, Caballero turns the narration on its head, revealing the artifice, and insincerity, of her rhetorical design.

Preachy in form, preachy in content, this antagonistic aesthetic provides a hotbed for emotional reaction from the reader. Resistance to the formal qualities of the text is rooted both in the disconnection between the discursive expectations of the reader and in its moralizing content of the digressions. As Caballero takes up the *relación*, a genre characterized by narration and representation based on verisimilitude, her characteristic *costumbrismo* and “moralizing” must be watered down, in the words of the author herself. She thus converts into the “atropellada narradora *de sucesos*” (Pedroso vi). This transition from the description-heavy *cuadro de costumbres* to the *relación* is not without its consequences. It is in this transition that one can observe the validity of Montesinos’s claim that Caballero’s rhetorical shortcomings, namely her digressions, are signs of insincerity. I believe that the “insincere” undertones of Caballero’s work are rooted in an incongruent shift of narrative and discourse; the reader has been led down one path and is abruptly defrauded. For Montesinos, this characteristic is as counterproductive to the text’s objective as it is jarring to the reader: “Era, pues, como una enemiga de sí misma, siempre dispuesta a destejer la trama recién urdida” (95). In order to examine this question more closely, we will consider the *relación*, a genre whose objectives differ greatly from Caballero’s typical concentration in *costumbrismo*.

While the influences of empiricism are often disparaged in her texts, the style with which Caballero constructs her *relaciones* is indeed aligned with observation and documentation, avoiding overt reference to questions of the heart and mind explored in her *cuadros de costumbres*. In his prologue to the 1856 edition of Caballero’s *Obras*

*Completas*, Fermín de la Fuente y Apezechea specifies the brand of literature that Caballero has produced, marked for its quotidian authenticity and purity of expression:

[N]o es una historia, no es un cuento, ni una novela; no es un asunto buscado ni inventado de propósito, combinado a placer, desenvuelto con arte; no es un drama tampoco. Es lo que su autor ha dicho, tan natural como profundamente, la Relación de uno de tantos sucesos que todos hemos visto, con que hemos tropezado, unos en el teatro del mundo, otros en el estudio del hombre, y muy particularmente los médicos, los abogados y los confesores, que por deber están llamados a sondar los secretos de las pasiones y de los intereses humanos. (viii)

Caballero's method of portraying a detailed reality in the *relaciones* is curiously likened to that of society's truth seekers, doctors, lawyers and confessors – in a style that de la Fuente distinguishes as “natural.” This term may be interpreted as unaffected and objective, as the professions to which de la Fuente refers are concerned with the pursuit of details and determine, in their respective realm, the observable border between “right” and “wrong.” The naturalness to which de la Fuente refers will above all serve to contest the style characteristic of provocative melodramatic fiction.

Despite the conservative nature of her texts, I contend that in her *relaciones*, Caballero draws on modern literary conventions, specifically in the form of empirical narrative qualities, in order to dismantle and/or criticize the emotions characteristic of sentimental literature. On one level, these emotions operate within the text itself, represented in suffering protagonists, as well as secondary characters whose narrative function is to observe and react to that suffering. On another level, Caballero strategically deploys textual sentiment within the *relación* in order to engage with the emotional

responses of the readers. In order to accomplish this, Caballero constructs a story with “logical” discursive components and acknowledges a potential resolution to her *relación* that is based on empirical evidence, although her purposeful dismissal of such a conclusion ultimately defrauds the reader. The reader’s ensuing response of incongruity, the sense that the plot crisis has not been appropriately solved, is the precise vehicle by which the implied religious conclusion, that faith invalidates the pursuit of rational knowledge, is to be achieved. The underlying religious discourse at once quiets the disordering emotional responses within the text and subverts the authority of observable knowledge upheld by Positivism.<sup>20</sup>

However, although Positivism may be mistrusted within the *relación*, it is not entirely discounted. In *Sentimentalism, Ethics and the Culture of Feeling*, Michael Bell calls attention to the “empirical continuity” between sentiment and reason, two notions that are traditionally conceived of in opposition: although there is no “direct access to ‘truth’ in matters of feeling,” sentiment itself provides an analytic means to a comprehensive understanding of reality (206). Drawing on Bell’s disassembly of the divide between reason and sentiment, in this chapter I will examine two of Fernán Caballero’s stories, “Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte” (1850) and “La flor de las ruinas” (1857), both of which feature an anguished female protagonist whose suffering is curiously associated with her complicity in a crime. Caballero subverts the discursive domains of Positivism and the epistemological worldviews it represents, while nonetheless borrowing elements of this very worldview to dismantle the dangers of

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<sup>20</sup> Caballero interchangeably refers to “positivismo” and “siglo de luces” in her texts. Historically, these terms refer to different, though clearly not unrelated, epistemological systems. It is my assumption that with them Caballero simply refers to Rationalism, especially considering that her use of the terms depends greatly on their distinction from reliance on faith.

sentimentalism. Through a complex construction of discourse, Caballero subverts the hallmark emotional response of sentimental literature, compassion, in order to reveal the dangerous aspects of this emotion by establishing a hierarchy of sentiment within the text. Therefore, the relationship between the discursive and thematic qualities that typically contribute to what for many critics constitutes the relative aesthetic failure in Caballero's writing in actuality demonstrate the complexity with which her short prose is constructed.

### **Knowledge and suffering: ¡Cuánto sabe la mujer que sabe ser cristiana!**

On May, 23 1850, the forthcoming publication of a new *folletín* was announced to the readers of *La España*. “Una preciosa novelita original de costumbres contemporáneas” was to follow the current *folletín* concluding that day, “cuyo manuscrito tenemos completo en nuestro poder, firmado con el nombre hoy desconocido en la república literaria de León de Lara. Su título es ‘Callar en Vida y Perdonar en Muerte’” (1). The two installments were to be the only works published by Lara, as the rest of his works were published under the more widely recognized pseudonym, Fernán Caballero. Unable to find either copy of *La España* or her original manuscript in its entirety, Böhl de Faber had to reconstruct the story from notes of the original manuscript when the text was published as “her” work six years later with *La familia de Alvareda* (Montesinos 159). The motivation for her second pseudonym, never to be revived, remains a mystery, but one imagines it is likely connected to Böhl de Faber's own evaluation of the quality of the text.<sup>21</sup> In a letter written to Hartzenbusch in 1849, Cecilia mentions her

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<sup>21</sup> This lesser-known pseudonym is recognized *The Feminist Encyclopedia of Spanish Literature* [2002]. In the entry about nineteenth-century short fiction by women, Ana Rueda mentions the name León de Lara in

disappointment upon hearing that he had sent the manuscript of a short novel, *Magdalena*, to publishers and had attributed authorship to her well-known pseudonym. Rather than choose another pseudonym, Böhl de Faber suggests he send a better, specifically a more realistic or didactic, piece instead:

Le dije a V. mi querido amigo que no deseaba se desluciese desde luego *Fernán Caballero*, saliendo a la palestra con una novelilla vulgar sin novedad, y que no vale un bledo [...] Substitúyala Vd. con cualesquiera de las otros [sic]. “Los dos amigos,” y “La hija del sol,” tienen interés de ser verdaderas – “Sola,” es dramática y de alta enseñanza y gráficamente descriptiva. (Heinermann 82)

It is likely, then, that Böhl de Faber believed her first edition of “Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte” to be unworthy of her pseudonym due to the fact that it was not a true story or that it lacked aesthetic or didactic appeal. When it finally appeared in 1856 as a work of Fernán Caballero, the story had been transformed from a vulgar “novelilla” to a *relación*, although the story’s events and style of narration remained largely unaltered. In the prologue to the 1856 edition, the text is newly categorized as a work of non-fiction by de la Fuente<sup>22</sup>: “Hay, en efecto, verdad histórica en el fondo del suceso, ya que no en todos sus pormenores. La que a éstos les falta, no se pide a la fantasía; se encuentra en el corazón, en la lógica de los hechos, en la experiencia de la vida” (viii). Although the *relación* may not be an exact reconstruction of a true event, it is indeed based on a true story, and those details of the author’s creation are derived from the sincere sentiment of the heart, not the false passions of fantasy.

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exclusive reference to “Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte” (561). Carmen Ramirez Gómez mentions the pseudonym in *Mujeres escritoras en la prensa andaluza del siglo XX (1900-1950)*, but does not mention which works were published under this name (74).

<sup>22</sup> This prologue also appears in the 1880 edition of *Relaciones*.

The emotional dimension of Caballero's *relación* is indeed a defensible pillar of its realism, rather than its weak link; as Thrailkill proposes "Works of literary realism, despite the documentary promise of the term, are not photographic representations of a real world elsewhere; they are condensations and expansions of human thought, sentience, and experience" (26). Although the sentiment with which Caballero infuses her *relación* is attributable to a comprehensive depiction of reality, if we examine compassion in relation to the discursive elements of the text, Caballero presents a hierarchy of emotion that is directly linked to the theme of truth and illusion throughout the text. As Michael Bell points out, true feeling and negative sentimentalism share a dialectical relationship: "In the realm of feeling, the true and the false define each other in a process of constant discrimination" (118). Attesting the true complexity of Caballero's work, this rhetorical antagonism resurfaces throughout the text as the vacillating juxtaposition and conflation of faith and reason. By drawing on the rhetorical conventions of the *nouvelle*, namely narrative intrigue and sentimentalism, Caballero questions the intersection of these epistemological systems while at once undermining the very discursive modes that generate her ultimate conclusion: that faith reigns triumphant.

Despite this inclination, the question of revealing the truth constitutes the central theme of Caballero's *relación*, which in certain respects contains the semblance of a mystery plot. "Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte" tells the story of Rosalía, the pious young wife of a captain in the military, Don Andrés. Accompanied by her mother Mariana, Rosalía and her family live in a fragile peace, as Don Andrés frequently berates both women. The story revolves around the murder of Mariana, who is robbed and brutally stabbed after having received a sum of money delivered by a page. The *relación*

is divided into eight short chapters, the first three of which are dedicated to the relation of the events, and therefore is dominated by the interaction between two characters through whose dialogue the events surrounding the murder are exposed. Although these chapters are by and large lacking a narrative voice that could influence the reader, the dialogue exposes the ways in which the fundamentally incompatible tenets of Positivism and Christianity suppress and discredit the false feeling associated with sentimentalism. Representative of these two worldviews are a foreigner, who inquires about renting the home where the murder had occurred, and a neighbor who narrates the events of the terrifying murder that has emptied the home of renters for six years. The foreigner asks if perhaps the house was in poor condition, or if someone had died of tuberculosis inside, as the death of an inhabitant would only frighten away a potential renter if contagions were to remain in the home. Although this statement should be read as a representative of a Positivist inquiry, the neighbor interprets it as a sign of excessive apprehension:

[E]se miedo exagerado, *que es ciertamente una preocupación*, se va desvaneciendo. Blanqueando las paredes, pintando las maderas, como se hace después de cualquiera enfermedad, todas las casas se habitan hoy día luego que deja de existir en ellas la víctima de ese terrible padecimiento, que sólo curan los viajes de mar con privilegio exclusivo. (emphasis added, 5)

In this passage, Caballero calls attention to the perils of exaggerated fear, both in the sense that it is illogical, considering therapies and prevention exist, and also in the sense that it is exaggerated. The unreliable quality of emotion is exposed by the neighbor's reference to sanitary precautions, however, when she reveals that the home is a source of terror, "tiene asombros," the foreigner discredits this unreasonable emotion in a similar

fashion: “¿Eso me decís en el siglo XIX, en medio del esplendor de las luces, en las barbas de la reinante despreocupación?” For the foreigner, “el timón de los hechos” that marks the age of Positivism would discredit any out-dated superstition (6). However, the terror associated with the home is based on the fact that the murderer has remained undiscovered, and that the mystery will never be solved: “ese asombro aún no han llegado a disiparlo ni las luces, ni la despreocupacion” (6). For the neighbor, God is the only force that will reveal the truth, and for this reason “el misterio [...] cubrirá siempre al autor del crimen” (6).

This interchange between representative voices of Positivism and Christianity is essential to the epistemological climate of the story, and indeed reveals the discursive complexities with which Caballero has constructed the story. The lack of closure surrounding the murder elicits terror from the town that the foreigner deems “cosa de agüero y sobremanera anómala en esta época” (6). The neighbor’s response that the crime will forever remain unsolved is however not meant to alarm the reader, but to bring peace. In this way, faith serves as a way to overcome emotional crisis, in that it serves to quell those emotionally provocative “imponderables of life”, an interpretation of religion that Martin Riesebrodt attributes to David Hume (58). In this *relación*, Caballero confirms that Positivist ideology fails to provide comprehensive knowledge of the world, and instructs the reader that a corresponding emotional crisis is excessive and needless.

The dynamic of knowledge and ignorance is prevalent throughout the *relación*, and the question of the attainability and worth of knowledge operates within various interdependent realms: the empirical, the social, and the spiritual. In order to illuminate the ways in which Caballero unites these three realms, we may consider Don Andrés’s

repeated response to his wife's various perceived deficiencies: <<Tú no sabes nada>>. Throughout the narration, this commentary is contextualized with regard to the social duties of the woman. As the public works projects of Don Andrés flourish and the family receives a greater income, Rosalía fails to adapt to middle-class lifestyle: “[N]ada sabía de los primores y etiquetas de una ciudad populosa; ni vestirse con elegancia, ni estar tres o seis horas en su tocador; ni cantaba, ni bailaba, ni tocaba el piano” (32). This particular lack of knowledge is directly associated with class and gender expectations, and Rosalía recognizes that her husband's worldliness justifies his claim. She reflects: “Natural es que eso piense y eso diga mi marido, que tanto sabe, cuando yo nada sé, sino coser y rezar” (39). Rosalía's dexterity in prayer, however, is an indication of the spiritual variety of knowledge that is exalted in the final scenes of the *relación*. As she lies on her deathbed, Don Andrés exclaims that she doesn't even know how to explain her ailment to the doctors, or to call for medical attention, however it is Rosalía's knowledge of the afterlife, “la certeza de que era mortal,” that proves superior (43). Despite the fact that faith is defined by the *lack* of undeniable truth, Caballero indeed portrays faith in God as a type of knowledge that overcomes all others. The ironic turn of the story, of course, is that Rosalía *does know* the identity of the murderer, as she has seen empirical evidence that implicates her husband. In the final moments of her life, Rosalía reveals the two things that she has known: “CALLAR EN VIDA, porque era madre, Y PERDONAR EN MUERTE, porque soy cristiana” (44).

Although Caballero considers reason to be an insufficient vehicle to achieve all knowledge, and distinguishes faith as a type of superior knowledge that does not in fact connote *knowing* associated with reason, the temperance that an empirical worldview

promotes is indeed favorable and necessary in the *relación*. Empiricism depends on the senses, but it also mistrusts them: “the senses that are the gateway to all knowledge must be disciplined and checked in order to provide that knowledge; and all knowledge is comprised within the realm of the natural” (Levine 2). In this way, the tenets of empiricism correspond with the Christian value of temperance. As such, Caballero provides a structured, unaffected depiction of the crime scene that juxtaposes revealing, objective details and the disordering, affective responses that the murder elicits amongst the characters, creating an antagonistic relationship between excessive emotion and the solemnity of fact.

Although suffering and tragedy fill the pages of this *relación*, Caballero demonstrates that compassion is indeed a dangerous response. The neighbor explains that she had always felt drawn to the family for the goodness and peace that their home embodied. The language with which Caballero describes her strong attraction to the home is significant as it originates in empathy, which seems to overpower her:

[U]na simpatía grata me *inclinaba* hacia aquel hombre tan digno y tan estricto en el cumplimiento de sus deberes, me *impelía* hacia aquella suave mujer que gozaba en sus virtudes como otras en sus placeres, y me *arrastraba* hacia aquella anciana sencilla y amante, que no hacía más en la vida que sonreír y rezar. (emphasis added, 10)

Here, Caballero depicts compassion as a force of the heart, a process of recognition which undergoes no rational process. As the details of the crime are revealed to both character and reader, the figurative embrace that compassion connotes is revealed as its dangerous quality. The police decide that the crime was committed from someone within

the home, and two of the servants are arrested, though later freed. However, the shock of the situation had a lasting effect on one of them: “Notad hasta qué punto fue aterrador y horripilante el atentado, cuando sólo la idea de que se le sospechara de haber tenido parte en él, hirió de tal suerte la imaginación del asistente [...] que perdió la razón, y de la cárcel fue llevado a la casa de los locos” (13). The neighbor explains that to be sensitive at heart is a double-edged sword: it is the source of temperance, but it can dominate the faculties of reason, which can produce disastrous consequences: “[L]as españolas, francas y ardientes de corazón, no reflexionan cuando [el corazón] las arrebató; y si por esta razón aparecen siempre tiernas, valientes y generosas, a veces son irreflexivas” (14). Here, Caballero establishes a hierarchy of emotion by which the reader should evaluate the varying degrees of emotion displayed within the narrative. In order to exalt acceptable emotion, Caballero must establish a benchmark negative emotion, producing the dialectical relationship: “The implicit criterion of true feeling which developed within the tradition of sentiment cannot be fully disentangled from sentimentality in the pejorative sense” (Bell 118). As the neighbor narrates the details of the crime, the reader’s evaluation of emotion is shaped by the ways in which the “throes” of compassion have harmed this character:

Consiguiente a [este defecto español], apenas salió la justicia de aquella casa, cuando me arrojé en ella para prestar auxilio y consolar a mis desgraciados amigos. No, ¡nunca olvidaré, ni se borrará de mi alma, el lastimero cuadro que presentaba! Fue tal la impresión que recibí, que costó la existencia al último hijo que Dios me destinaba. (14-15)

Not only has the neighbor's sense of compassion led her into the home, but it is precisely her sensitivity that induces a miscarriage. As the narration continues, it becomes evident that this psychosomatic response to the murder scene is based precisely on the operations of compassion. The neighbor reacts to the emotions of others: she feels the pain of Rosalía as she convulses with grief and of Don Andrés who is paralyzed in his shock. Not only does the neighbor perceive the pain of her friends emotionally, but the circumstances of the crime scene affect her in the same fashion. She recalls that the cadaver itself was not visible, "¡pero se sentía! Enfriaba aquella atmósfera: ¡la casa olía a sangre!"(15) Although the neighbor's construction of the crime scene is rooted in feeling, which accesses information that reason cannot, Caballero synchronizes these perceptions with rational, objective observations. As the reader follows the footsteps of the servant who in turn follows a trail of blood to Mariana's cadaver, Caballero mimics the precise course by which one would collect evidence:

[Vio] en la tersa pared de la escalera señalada con sangre una mano. ¿Hubo acaso de darle al asesino, al bajar aquellos escalones y al verse cubierto de sangre humana, un desvanecimiento que le obligó a buscar un apoyo en la pared? ¿Conservó ésta la marca de la mano homicida para acusar al culpable y marcar su senda? Subió el asistente desalado, siguiendo el rastro de las gotas de sangre, que de trecho en trecho, y como dedos vengadores, le señalaban por dónde ir a descubrir el crimen. (11)

Through the personalized rhetorical questions, Caballero directs the reader to the conclusion that the marks of blood not only reveal the dead body, but they will display the identity of the murderer. However, these important clues, accessible only through

prudence, are overlooked by the authorities. Lacking evidence and lacking a resolution, the town becomes overcome with terror:

El crimen, con el misterio, se hace pavoroso y crece como el terror en la oscuridad de la noche. La vindicta pública, indignada, gritaba: «¡Justicia!», y los jueces, con la cuchilla alzada, no hallaban sobre quién descargar el golpe. Así, eran vanos los clamores para que se hiciese justicia, en vista de que ésta se la había Dios reservado para sí; pues, repito, que nada se supo entonces, nada se ha sabido después, ¡nada se sabrá nunca! (13-14)

In this passage, Caballero revisits the notion that faith, and the implicit knowledge that a faithful Christian possesses, ultimately overpower the emotional responses that this crisis of knowledge has produced. The concept of justice that Caballero portrays is indeed flawed; although it is a social principle established to combat and indeed stabilize the disordering emotions of terror and anger that surround an unsolved crime, earthly justice depends entirely upon empirical evidence and, for this reason, can be rendered ineffective. However, as the neighbor points out to the foreigner, emotion can overtake the logic upon which the concept of justice is based. For example, the page who delivered the money to Mariana was implicated in the murder, but purely by suspicion: “[S]obre él recayeron violentas sospechas, y aunque nada se le ha podido probar, ha quedado completamente desacreditado. Las sospechas que llegan a hacerse unánimes y estables desacreditan a veces más que un hecho probado y ventilado” (15-16). Again, actions motivated by emotion are dangerous, and in the case that a hasty injustice is committed, the convicted has but one solution, to seek forgiveness: “[E]l interesado, aunque culpable, ha podido emitir descargos, alegar disculpas, y sobre todo demostrar arrepentimiento y

obtener así el perdón”, both from God and his fellow man (16). Here, religion and God’s compassion serve as a resolution between the excess of passion and the shortcomings of empiricism.

As the exposition of the events of the story closes, the foreigner admits that he is unwilling to occupy the home, newly convinced that some truths will go undiscovered. “Aunque hijo de este siglo despreocupado, no ha podido el carácter del positivismo que le preside ahogar las impresiones del espíritu que reina, en alta esfera” (17-18). The privileging of moral sentiment over Positivism that has developed in the dialogue that dominates the first three chapters of the *relación* has thus far guided the reader. The next sections of the *relación* are governed by a narrative voice that penetrates the illusion of happiness that had stimulated compassion from the neighbor, verifying the position that compassion must be exercised with prudence. In doing so, Caballero addresses the reader directly in certain instances in order to confirm the mistrust of empirical knowledge. As the atmosphere of Rosalía’s home is more accurately depicted, Don Andrés is revealed as an abuser, who treats his wife and mother-in-law with respect in the presence of others, but in private, demeans them. This deceptive nature is precisely what links him to the age of Positivism which, as the reader should have realized, is a flawed method of acquiring knowledge; as such he is portrayed as a “preste de la diosa *Razón*, arcipreste de *San Positivo*, gran maestro de Prosopopeya” (37-38). As the narrator explains the constant criticisms of <<Tú no sabes nada>>, the reader is assured that the Christian nature of the women in the home is a source of strength: “Sobre dos cosas nada puede el malévolo e injusto despotismo: sobre el hierro, que resiste siempre con igual fuerza, y sobre el junco, que al punto cede; así era que en aquella casa había una paz profunda, pues el despotismo

que la regía sólo hallaba suaves y débiles juncos” (32). The acceptance of suffering that Caballero expresses through the narration is not praised, but depicted as an appropriate reaction. Patience, and not those “sentimientos efervescentes y violentos,” had brought Rosalía to a state of tranquility (22).

When amongst Don Andrés’s papers Rosalía’s child finds the makeshift will and testament that Mariana had written to her grandson, leaving him in possession of her wealth, Rosalía’s calm is destroyed by the weight of knowledge. She deduces that Don Andrés murdered Mariana in order to gain possession of her wealth. Rosalía locks herself in a room and hides the paper from the light of day, so as not to expose the truth. Through free indirect style, the sequence of events is outlined for the reader:

El velo que por diez años cubría al asesino de su madre estaba descorrido a sus ojos; el horroroso secreto salía de su sombra; la víctima, desde su tumba, recordaba la sangrienta fecha en un documento guardado con el dinero robado, que sólo podía hallarse en poder del ladrón y asesino, y este documento acusador se hallaba en poder de su marido! (41)

Convinced that her husband indeed murdered her mother, Rosalía must now decide how to use this information. The tension that Rosalía undergoes is indicative of the conflicting principles that have been treated throughout the *relación* and, in this moment of climax, the reader is asked to evaluate the ultimate worth of earthly knowledge and its relationship to justice. After hours of desperation in which, pacing like a lion, Rosalía contemplates how to suppress “su rugido” that would reveal what she has learned. Then, “se presentó digna y severa la reflexión, trayendo de una mano a la moderación cristiana, y de la otra la prudencia humana: la primera, con su freno; la segunda, con su anteojo”

(41-42). In this revealing passage, Caballero has grouped Christian morals with reason, and positions the two in opposition with the emotion, desperation and fear, and social principle to which she must reveal the murderer. Interestingly, in the first version of the text, when it appeared as a *folletín*, León de Lara writes: “apareció severa la reflexión, trayendo en pos de sí la elevada prudencia con su freno” (7 June 1850, 2), assigning discipline to the realm of reason. Given the changes of the revised version, Caballero appears to have conflated reason and Christianity in the sense that they both discipline the passions. Although reason is distinguished for its “anteojo,” attention to fact or detail, it seems that given Rosalía’s predicament, the “anteojo” to which Caballero refers might also signify focus, or the quelling of passion, a lion’s roar, in order to make a decision. She ultimately decides that God will execute justice upon her husband, and therefore burns the evidence with a candle, demonstrating the destructive qualities of “enlightenment.”<sup>23</sup>

To what can we attribute this cooperation between reason and faith? An additional comparison to the original text further illuminates Caballero’s curious conflation of their epistemological principles. In a short passage, the narrator informs the reader that despite Don Andrés’s material achievements, he is unloved, demonstrating that the heart will always triumph over reason: “[El corazón] no se somete a la razón, ni que lo hagan trizas; así es que en aquellas organizaciones en las que predomina la razón, acaba ésta por desterrarlo como enemigo invencible, puesto que en su incesante lucha nunca llega a dominarlo” (7 June 1850, 2). Although this passage is omitted in the second version, it provides insight into Caballero’s distinction between operations of the mind and of the

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<sup>23</sup> This moment is reminiscent of a quote in *Elia* which calls attention to knowledge as a double-edged sword: “El entendimiento es un lujo, á veces inútil, á veces nocivo; es una *antorcha* ó una *tea*, segun las manos que lo manejan” (52).

spirit. This perspective shares in David Hume's argument that reason is in fact a particular mode of feeling that can oppose the passion because "we have found [it] to be nothing but a general calm determination of the passions" (583). As such, Rosalía must stifle the information that almost uncontrollably escapes from her body, and in order to calm this passion, she must physically weaken her body:

[T]emía se exhalase en clamores desesperados el tremendo secreto que quería ahogar en su destrozado pecho. Quería además, para lograr esto, perder fuerzas físicas, debilitando su cuerpo con ayunos y lágrimas, y cobrar fuerzas morales en la oración y en su amor de madre. (42)

Rosalía's psychosomatic self-destruction is therefore motivated by her faith in the fact that justice pertains only to God. Her body is debilitated, but not like those sensitive characters whose fear, anxiety and compassion have caused mental and physical disturbances. The weakening of her body comes from a self-imposed draining that symbolizes the contemporary struggle between the value of empirical knowledge and the value of the divine knowledge of faith.

The reader is presented with the depiction of Rosalía's suffering, however there is little narrative indication that the reader should pity her. Stripped of all emotion, the narration provides the physical details of her pain: "El pelo de la joven madre se había encanecido. Sobre sus facciones demacradas se había extendido la palidez verdosa de la ictericia; sus ojos, extraviados y hundidos, brillaban calenturientos en un círculo morado" (42-43). From this point on, the narrator no longer refers to the character by name, but rather "la paciente," "la mártir," "la señora," "la noble víctima," and finally "la santa mártir," all of which hinder the reader's personal identification with the character, but

rather evoke reverence. Although a confessor weeps at her side, Caballero has instructed the reader to respect the suffering, rather than pity them. When the narrator had first introduced the reader to the town, parenthetical reference is made to the operations of compassion particular to this area untouched by Enlightenment. As the townspeople react to the presence of soldiers (with whom Don Andrés first arrives to the town), they are overcome with “una simpatía profunda, en que se mezcla la lástima y la admiración: míranlos como víctimas, sí, pero víctimas consagradas a una santa causa, esto es, la de su religión, la de su rey y la de la *independencia*, no individual, sino la del país” (27). Compassion depends on a value judgment that may yield respect, and is reserved for those who sacrifice themselves to a greater cause, rather than those that seek personal or material gain. As Rosalía “cerr[ó] sus ojos para no volver a abrirlos más” (44), the narrator displays no compassion for a suffering wife, but admiration for a noble martyr.

Nonetheless, the 1856 prologue provides insight regarding the intuitive reactions of the public regarding this final scene. As de la Fuente traces the events depicted in the *relación*, he imagines Rosalía’s internal debate after finding the evidence against her husband, referring to it as “otro terrible, callado y magnífico drama” (xix). De la Fuente laments the absence of a representation of the interior tension within the text: “¡De cuán buena gana insertaríamos aquí el trozo en que se hace la exposición de esta espantosa situación, la relación de estos combates y su término sublime!” (xx). Caballero chooses not to include a sentiment-laden description of Rosalía’s interior struggle and the pain she endures to precisely detract from the excessive quality of that sentiment, and instead provides objective details that elicit no pity. Curiously, the rhetorical choices that Caballero has made throughout the text do in fact provoke an emotional reaction from the

reader who expects an indisputable resolution to the murder plot, especially when evidence has been revealed:

[S]e duele uno y se impacienta involuntariamente de que no se insinúe la sospecha en el ánimo del juez de la causa, o en el de que por la ley es el representante del interés de la sociedad en la acusación, especialmente cuando la Providencia ha hecho que el criminal marque con su mano una huella terrible en las paredes de la casa misma [...] ¡Si al menos hubiera parecido a tiempo aquella plana! (xvii-xix)

Although de la Fuente is an advocate of Caballero's work, this comment is certainly indicative of Caballero's poor adaptation to the discursive expectations of the *relación*, but furthermore it demonstrates the ultimate conflict between social and divine principles of justice with which Caballero has constructed this tale. Rosalía's commitment to faith, and the belief that God will exact justice, undermines the social bonds represented in the *relación*. By destroying evidence, as well as the vehicle that could reveal it – her own body–, Rosalía is acting in complicity with her husband's crime, but will go unpunished. As such, Caballero demonstrates the failure of social principle to mediate between emotional passion and the Positivism which can order and channel them to produce a satisfying result. As evidenced in the *relación*, both elements are problematic; faith in divine justice is employed to reconcile the divide between reason and sentiment.

De la Fuente has aptly depicted a “pained” reader who is frustrated with the inability of the authorities to solve the murder, and this emotion is both a reaction to the plot of the story as well as a reaction to the text itself. As Bell points out, the feeling incited by fiction “exist[s] in a twilight realm between the worlds of the reader and of the

fiction, constantly confound[ing] these conceptually clear categories” (5). The pain to which de la Fuente refers can be simultaneously classified as pity for Rosalía and her innocent mother due to the oversights of the police, as well as disappointment with Caballero’s choice to discount this possibility, particularly considering that numerous clues are acknowledged within the text and the identity of the murderer *is* indeed discovered. The emotional reaction to which de la Fuente refers is echoed in Pedroso’s prologue to the 1857 edition of *Relaciones* in which “La flor de las ruinas” is first published. Pedroso addresses Caballero’s deviation from the description that characterizes her *cuadros de costumbre* to the narration of events that distinguishes the *relación*. Like de la Fuente, Pedroso notices the clash between reader expectation and the narrative twists that Caballero implements. This clash is not necessarily jarring, but certainly noticeable to the reader; he recalls “la gentileza del contraste entre algunos de sus incidentes y el tono general que en él domina (xvi). This contrast, however, is a key component to Caballero’s didacticism. Pedroso comments that Caballero’s limited moralizing throughout a *relación* does not deprive it of a didactic conclusion: “[L]lega el desenlace, y gracias a esta falta de preparación, el castigo providencial que sobreviene sorprende a los lectores con tan inesperado sacudimiento como al mismo que lo sufre” (x). Pedroso’s observation provides the key to the indivisible intra- and extra-diegetic realms of emotion to which Bell refers: the divine justice exacted surreptitiously upon the characters should affect the reader as well, creating for Pedroso an empathetic connection between reader and character. At the same time, Pedroso recognizes that Caballero sets up a narrative that could easily slip into a sentimental style, however the conclusions with which the stories end demonstrates a *resistance* to the genre. Pedroso rhetorically

questions various main characters of the stories, challenging the motivations behind their incongruent actions, drawing attention to the *opposite*, and therefore *expected*, action that would produce a different result for the reader: “Así se fabrican las emociones fuertes” (xiii). Pedroso goes as far as to recognize the unnecessary sentimental characters that are found within the *relaciones*: “Y vosotros, muchedumbre de seres episódicos que pululáis al calor de una vehemnete fantasia [...] ¿Qué derecho tenéis para embargar la mitad de estas páginas con pueriles acciones e insulsos dicharachos que nada añaden al *interés* de la fábula?” (xiii). Pedroso’s ironical treatment of the texts’ characters serves to demonstrate Caballero’s rebellious treatment of the genre, commenting that the author “podría literalmente abrumarnos a fuerza de sensaciones enérgicas” (xiii), but chooses instead to “surprise” the reader with a moralizing culmination of the events.

Although Pedroso concludes that an unexpected plot twist facilitates the reader’s ability to identify with the afflicted character, it potentially creates distance between reader and the text in that it reveals the artifice of the text. By deliberately unraveling and contesting an established narrative direction, Caballero highlights the author’s ability to manipulate fiction. However, as Pedroso notices, this disruptive rhetorical move also serves to undermine the conventions of genre to which Caballero must concede.

Manipulations of discourse, then, serve to affect and instruct the reader by undermining the genre he consumes. Susan Kirkpatrick finds a similar circumstance in *Elia* and notices that “spiritual scheme of values supersedes the values of the social and historical world that heretofore have played an important role in the story” (264). As displeasing as it may be to the reader, Caballero’s method of teasing out alternate possibilities is above all an intriguing aspect of her narrative structure. Instead of constructing a narrative of

“spiritual scheme” from beginning to end, Caballero first presents the promising resolutions based on empirical evidence and moral conduct outlined by society. She presents the merit of knowledge precisely to devalue it in the presence of faith in the unknowable – the promise of divine justice.

### **La flor de las ruinas**

Far from a transparent sermon, “Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte” is an exemplary indication of the complexity with which Caballero envisions the intersection of reason, faith and sentiment, all of which are united by the concept of fiction and its capacity to deceive. As we will see in the subsequent analysis of “La flor de las ruinas,” Caballero instructs her reader to question the validity of idealized depictions of reality through the manipulation of discourse. As such, the choice to position the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 at the center of her tragic *relación* is provocative. Considering that the earthquake struck on the morning of All Saints Day, when the streets were filled with parishioners,<sup>24</sup> one might expect Caballero to express compassion for the victims that once inhabited this place. However, in light of our reading of “Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte,” it follows that Caballero will position suffering as an unquestioned human condition, and as such, the reader should be wary of providing compassion where it is undue. In order to accomplish this, Caballero builds an idealized image of the “flor,” the suffering female protagonist, only to deflate its validity before the reader’s eyes.

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<sup>24</sup> The city was renowned for its high concentration of churches, convents and monasteries. According to Malcolm Jack, there may have been as many as 40 parish church within the city limits (7).

Although Caballero's fiction is typically backdropped by Andalucía, a setting that many consider her literary *raison d'être*,<sup>25</sup> "La flor de las ruinas" takes place in Lisbon. Although some critics attribute this choice of setting to a trip around Europe taken by Böhl de Faber in 1836,<sup>26</sup> I believe the ruins of the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 provide an important epistemological dimension of the *relación*. For many thinkers of the Enlightenment, the Lisbon earthquake was a philosophical watershed in that "it marked the transition from such physical events being regarded as supernatural signals to a more neutral or even a secular, proto-scientific view of their causes" (Téllez 50). Kant published three articles between January and April of 1756 typically referred to as his *Earthquake Papers*.<sup>27</sup> In them, he focuses on the scientific aspects of the event and inquires into the empirical nature of the earthquake's cause. Kant thought it anthropocentric to presume that man could decipher a divine rationale behind the disaster, or to interpret its repercussions as punishment. Martin Schonfeld summarizes: "Such catastrophes, Kant insinuated in the first earthquake paper, do not have a divine cause; as terrible as they were, earthquakes were accidents" (75). Other thinkers indeed attribute a divine source to the disaster. Rousseau suggests a punitive cause of the disaster, citing the materialist inclination of the city as possible cause for the high death toll. Rousseau cites that many people died in the aftershocks because they had returned to their homes hoping to recover their possessions (Villar 208). Debate regarding the repercussions of the earthquake continued into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although for some

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<sup>25</sup> See Sebold 182.

<sup>26</sup> See Herrero whose study attempts to illuminate the authentic roots of Caballero's *costumbrismo* (299).

<sup>27</sup> "Of the causes of the seismic tremors at the occasion of the misfortune that struck the western European countries last year" (January 1756), "History and natural description of the most curious events connected to the earthquake that shook a large part of the earth at the end of 1755" (February 1756), "Consideration of the seismic tremors that have been perceived for some time (Sequel)" (April 1756).

thinkers the disruption had less to do with religion. Goethe was disturbed by the destruction of traditional social order, and compared the events in Lisbon to the French Revolution of 1789.<sup>28</sup>

It is perhaps Voltaire who most famously captured the epistemological repercussions of the quake in his *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* (1756), a poem in which we truly see the questioning of the very existence of a divine plan. Written after the earthquake that brought Lisbon to the ground on November 1, 1755, Voltaire's poem simultaneously represents the desperate cry to understand the impossible, in this case the cause of widespread death and misery, as well as the mourning associated with the recognition of that impossibility. How can an all-powerful and benevolent God allow suffering to befall the innocent? As previously mentioned, Voltaire questions the fundamental Christian concept of Providence, that "the omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal God who created and sustains the universe for supremely good purposes has a plan for mankind" (Ingram 99). However, man's inability to understand a divine plan, despite his capacities as a rational being, seems to lie at the center of the suffering depicted in the poem; we are "thinking atoms, whose far-seeing eyes,/ Guided by thought, have measured the faint stars,/ Our being mingles with the infinite;/ Ourselves we never see, or come to know" (262). The limits of reason, though having reached the heights of the heavens, are insufficient in the face of incomprehensible calamity.

As such, Böhl de Faber's decision to position the "first modern disaster" at the center of her tragic *relación* is provocative. The ruins are the arena of the unjustifiable death and suffering that for many European thinkers constituted a philosophical impasse, and for Böhl de Faber, a curious setting in which to place a suffering woman with no

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<sup>28</sup> See Robert Brown.

foreseeable release. As is likely expected, Böhl de Faber despised the lack of faith implicit in Voltaire's crisis; she once characterized "el horroroso tipo del filósofo volteriano" as "ese tipo sin alma ni corazón, frío, escéptico, sarcástico, amargo, anglómano, materialista" (Heinermann 112). One need only reference Caballero's characterization of the ruins to note that Caballero refuses compassion for the innocent lives lost, and instead shares the critical, anti-materialistic perspective of Rousseau. Caballero takes note of the previous luxury in the city: "Con sus moradores habían desaparecido las bellezas, los adornos y las comodidades," and they have been replaced by thorny shrubs and scraps of cloth where windows have been destroyed. Aside from the "flor" and her murderous brothers, the new inhabitants of the ruins are perhaps ironic echoes of former residents:

En lo que habían sido habitaciones interiores y en los patios y corrales, se veían algunos cerdos arrellanarse como sibaritas sobre camas de inamovibles inmundicias, y algún gallo flaco subido en lo más elevado de los amontonados escombros, cacareando con la arrogancia que gastar pudiera aquel guerreador que hubiese tenido la infausta gloria de haberlas hecho. (206)

The reference to the luxurious and sensualist lifestyle of the Sybarites, as well as the images of pigs and proud roosters, gives the impression that Caballero accuses the former inhabitants of excessive materialism. Ultimately, it is significant that within this description of the ruins, the narrator expresses no compassion towards the victims of the earthquake, or for the untouched remnants of destruction. It follows, then, that the female protagonist, presented to the reader through a synonymous representation with both ruins and destruction, will be afforded little to no compassion by the narrator.

## Flowery rhetoric and dangerous truth

We have examined the ways in which the structured division of discourse in “Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte” contributes to the emotional response detected by de la Fuente. Although the discourse in that particular *relación* shifts from the relating of events through a narrator/character to the narration of the interior condition of Rosalía’s life, we observe an opposite structure in “La flor de las ruinas.” The *relación* begins with a lengthy description of Pedro and his family, and as his story unfurls, the narrator delves into the salient quality of his character: his sentimental connection with reality. Through dialogue between Pedro and his mother regarding his recent return from England, Caballero once again privileges sentimental nature over faculties of reason:

Inglaterra es grande y bella; pero lo es como una estatua de mármol. Tiene el porte digno y frío de una princesa, y no inspira amor y simpatía [...] Y es que ellos aman a su país por reflexión, y nosotros al nuestro por sentimiento. Que hayan los ingleses formado a su país, o que su país los forme a ellos, de ambas maneras preside a esta obra de cabeza la frialdad. Así es que en aquel país se piensa más, y en el nuestro se siente más. (190-91)

Pedro, as the reader learns, follows his heart more readily than his reason. Here, Caballero differentiates between the temperance of moral sentiment and the illusion of the passions: “[Pedro] Apartábase instintivamente de los volcanes y sus ardientes lavas las pasiones; de los fuegos fatuos, de las falsas brillantes ideas, del ruido y de la pompa de la retumbante palabrería” (192-93). The rhetoric with which the narrator depicts Pedro’s aversions is significant; from one standpoint, these descriptors refer to destructive forces – volcano, fires, and thunder – that symbolize the threat of passion.

However, all of these words are used only metaphorically; the volcano emits fiery passions, the “fuego fatuo”<sup>29</sup> refers to fleeting, deceitful attraction, and the thundering refers only to empty words. Therefore, the true danger of passion is its power to deceive. Once again, Caballero establishes a hierarchy of emotion within the text that calls attention to the value of temperate emotion and the disordering effects of passion. Pedro is drawn to the “flor” precisely through the conduit of compassion which, partnered with the focus and “antejo” of reason, can be applied with caution. However, the narrator describes Pedro’s compassion as penetrable by passion: “[C]ada tarde era más marcado el dolor que se iba grabando profundamente en aquel rostro [...] fue arrastrado a seguirla, más por la compasión que las lágrimas inspiran, que no por la seducción que la belleza ejerce” (194). As we have seen in “Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte,” Caballero creates a rhetorical opposition between the objective faculties of reason and the disordering nature of passion, but seems to conflate compassion and reason as a singular faculty of reflection. Affected by the misery of “flor,” the compassion that Pedro feels towards her overpowers his sense of reason: “[ella] le dominaba y seducía, a pesar de su temprana razón y de la severa delicadeza de su sentir” (200).

It is precisely Pedro’s sensitivity to matters of the heart that put him at risk. His evaluation of the “flor” is purely figurative, and this misinterpretation of reality is damaging: he dubs the girl “flor,” a metaphorical emblem of virtuous femininity: “pues mientras existan el amor y la poesía, siempre será la flor el emblema de una hermosa, o de una querida joven” (199). Likewise, when she reveals that “vivía entre ruinas” (199), Pedro interprets this statement as metaphor, imagining that she is an orphan locked in

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<sup>29</sup> Ignis fatuus or will-o’-the-wisp in English, literally a flitting phosphorescent light seen at night, chiefly over marshy ground, and believed to be due to spontaneous combustion of gas from decomposed organic matter.

“algún convento o instituto de enseñanza,” “un miembro de alguna familia arruinada,” or that she is the victim of a bad marriage (200). Although the narrator has called attention to Pedro’s mistrust in deceptive language, the deficiency of rhetoric is demonstrated in the incongruity between his idealized version of the “flor” and the base reality of her condition, as she truly lives amongst the forgotten ruins of the earthquake.

Kathy Bacon attributes the inadequacy of rhetoric in such a “de-materializing euphemism” as the flower as a sign of *cursilería*, citing instances in which the hyperfeminine language crumbles when applied to what in essence are old, however pious, *solteronas* (41). Although the metaphorical language employed in Caballero’s text is certainly deceptive, it seems to indicate the deflation of a particular discourse, likely associated with the excesses of sentimentality. The misapplication of the name “flor” is indeed deliberate, as the figurative interpretation of literal statements proves physically dangerous to the mistaken, and mistakenly compassionate, character of Pedro. Although Caballero has established that his sensitivity of heart is a venerable characteristic in that it provides access to the emotional realm of reality that reason cannot reach, compassion can have adverse results. Upon learning that the “flor” is enslaved by her brothers, Pedro demonstrates no compassion: “¡Qué espanto! – exclamó Pedro, desviándose de ella –. ¡Yo he amado a esta funesta mujer, a este reclamo del crimen, a esta sirena de cementerio!” (208) Rather than depict her as a victim, through the eyes of Pedro the narrator conceives of the “flor” as an accomplice to the brothers’ crimes. If indeed the reader has identified with Pedro and his sentimental worldview, this revelation could inspire the same “tedio,<sup>30</sup> el horror y el asombro” (208) that leave him speechless.

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<sup>30</sup> According to the *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana* published in 1843, “tedio” refers to: “aborrecimiento, fastidio o molestia” (692).

However, when the “flor” goes on to lament Pedro’s lack of compassion or willingness to help her, Pedro feels momentarily moved by the truth that she speaks regarding the plight of women; in the words of the “flor”: “¡Siempre empujadas al mal por los hombres, y nunca sostenidas por ellos cuando quieren hacer el bien!” (209). However, before he can respond to her statement, the brothers enter the home, tie Rosalía up and lead Pedro away from the ruins to kill him.

The fact that Pedro does not utter any possible interior compassion for the “flor” indicates a discursive maneuver by which the narrator distances the reader from this position. However, there is further evidence that demonstrates that the reader should not feel compassion for the “flor.” First, the misapplication of the name “flor” is both a demonstration of the deception of sentimental rhetoric as well as an ironical reference to her virtue. Kathy Bacon references the term “flor” as a signifier of a woman’s virtue, and calls particular attention to the typical representation of a dying, virtuous woman:

As well as expected tropes such as the patient bearing of suffering and a lack of fear of death based on faith, we repeatedly read of the crucifix or image of the Virgin clutched lovingly by the dying ‘saints’, and of the edifying spectacle presented by their reception of the Sacrament, before they ‘fly away’ or are ‘transplanted’ into the presence of the Virgin. (43)

According to Caballero’s depiction, it is unlikely that the “flor de las ruinas” will be saved; in response to Pedro’s plea to free her from her metaphorical ruins, she exclaims: “la flor de las ruinas [...] no puede –añadió con tristeza– trasportarse!” (203). Even as she struggles to escape from the ruins to avoid her brothers, the “flor” turns to the Virgin Mary: “¿Qué hacer, Madre de piedad, qué hacer? –murmuró la infeliz, volviendo en torno

suyo sus desatentados ojos como para buscar un medio de salvación, que era imposible” (210). The impossibility of salvation is further determined by the unsavory depiction of a wild, passionate “flor” who threatens her brothers to release Pedro: “¡No sabéis hasta dónde puede llevar la venganza una mujer, que si no tiene vuestra mala alma, tiene en sus venas la misma sangre que corre por las vuestras!” (212) Here, the “flor” reveals that while she and her brothers share opposite morals, they have a common violent passion.

Perhaps most significantly, unlike Rosalía, the “flor” decides to take justice into her own hands, and chases her brothers with a civil guard. This decision itself stems from the compassion that she feels towards Pedro, who has fallen innocently into the brothers’ plot. Martha Nussbaum notes that the empathetic feature of compassion – the “participatory enactment of the situation of the sufferer” – facilitates the inclination to revenge (327). Wild revenge is portrayed in the image of the “flor” as she approaches the men with the civil guard: “Una mujer que, con el cabello suelto, el rostro desencajado y con las muñecas ensangrentadas, corría y gritaba con desgarrador acento: ¡Salvadle!” (214) This depiction of wildness and lack of faith that God will enact ultimate justice embodies Caballero’s disdain for the chaotic effects of compassion. Nussbaum notes that in the Stoic tradition, cruelty is not the opposite of compassion, but its close relation: “It is an excessive form of retributive anger, which, in turn, is simply a circumstantial inflection of modality of the same evaluative judgments that have, in other circumstances, compassion as their inflection” (362). The wildness with which the “flor” portrays her revenge resembles the internal desperation of Rosalía when she discovers the truth about her mother’s murder. However, Rosalía does not let the lion out of its cage; instead she weakens her body to deplete all willingness to reveal the truth.

As such, in the final passages of the story, Rosalía is referred to as “la santa mártir” who has weakened her body in faith that God will rectify any wrongdoings. The “flor” on the other hand is not lauded for dying to save Pedro. Indeed, she saves his life by bringing the police, but is stabbed to death by her brothers, who manage to escape. The “flor”, whose anonymity has certainly not facilitated any identification or compassion from the reader, is in the final pages referred to as “la moribunda” by the narrator (215). Amongst the final laments of her miserable life, the “flor” pleads for God’s compassion, although the reader must assume that this will be unlikely: “¡Juez de los corazones —añadió, alzando sus ya quebrantados ojos—, ten conmigo la compasión que los hombres no han tenido!” (215) Not only has the “flor” been left abandoned by the Virgin, but she has demonstrated a lack of faith in the final judgment of God. At the close of the *relación*, the narrator further insinuates that justice is not exacted with human hands: “Algún tiempo después se ajusticiaban en Lisboa tres bandidos, entre los cuales uno atraía con particularidad la atención de la muchedumbre por llevar la señal de Caín en la frente” (216). The brothers are arrested only as robbers; as indicated by the sign of Cain, God brings judgment upon the brothers for the murder of their sister, a sign that may be read as the compassion-revenge that only God can provide. Earthly justice may be flawed, however, Caballero demonstrates that one should maintain faith that God will judge the brothers in the afterlife.

The fate that Caballero weaves for Pedro further cautions the reader against the throes of compassion and illuminates the dangers of sensitivity. The final words of the *relación* reveal that involvement in such a predicament does inevitable damage to those greatly affected by compassion: “[E]n una de las casas más ricas y conocidas se celebraba

una junta de facultativos por hallarse en inminente peligro, de resultas de unas calenturas cerebrales, el hijo de los dueños” (216). This reaction to the cruel reality disguised by ideal rhetoric echoes Caballero’s warning against compassion deprived of prudence. Not only are the compassionate susceptible to deception, but they open themselves to be invaded: by disease, revenge and irrationality. Therefore, if we reconsider the background before which Caballero chooses to realize the actions of “La flor de las ruinas,” the question of compassion is of utmost importance.

Far from a transparent sermon, these *relaciones* are exemplary indications of the complexity with which Caballero envisions the intersection of reason and emotion, both of which are united by the concept of fiction. Suffering, of course, has the potential to deceive the sympathetic and to influence representation itself: “[E]l dolor incide en nuestra valoración de la realidad, en nuestras decisiones, en nuestro modo de experimentar la mundanidad” (López Sáenz 383-84). Faith is in fact that which allows a reader to access notions of death and pain, as he may perceive them in representation. “Pain enters into our midst as at once something that cannot be denied and something that cannot be confirmed . . . To have pain is to have *certainty*; to hear about pain is to have *doubt*” (Scarry, *Body in Pain* 13). We have seen the ways in which Caballero builds upon the representation of suffering to advocate faith; she illustrates an acceptance of pain by acknowledging injustice and physical suffering which deliberately go unpunished, and prods the reader to comprehend that other silent, magnificent drama, to borrow the phrase from de la Fuente, which goes unscripted in her text: faith in divine justice. The unrepresentability of these interrelated notions of pain, faith and death is precisely what draws them together on the canvas of prose fiction.

Indeed, death makes itself known through the premonitory calling card of death. Authenticity is the hallmark characteristic of suffering, according to Emily Dickinson who poses that “Men do not simulate Convulsion,/ Nor simulate, a Throe.” In representation, suffering is often the only distinguishable manner in which to bring death itself to the page. However, as Scarry and critics of sentimental literature suggest, represented pain inevitably connotes doubt of its authenticity. Ever the enemy of sentimentality, Caballero presents the self-inflicted agony of Rosalía in “Callar en vida, perdonar en muerte” as a pious remedy to the deceitful and unrestrained suffering of the “flor.” In accordance with the Stoic perspective of compassion, the open heart of Pedro allows other chaotic emotions to trespass into and disturb his soul and as such Caballero cautions her readers to become impervious to such suffering. If damage to the integrity of the self be done, it must be by one’s own will and piety, as in case of Rosalía’s self-inflicted deterioration, as an ultimate act of faith.

## CHAPTER 3

### SENSING DEATH IN EDUARDO LÓPEZ BAGO'S *LA PROSTITUTA*

El naturalismo no es la imitación de lo que repugna a los sentidos. . . no copia ni puede copiar la sensación, que es donde está la repugnancia.

Clarín, Prologue, *La cuestión palpitante*

In his essay “Thanatopsis for Critics: A Brief Thesaurus of Deaths and Dyings” Kenneth Burke claims that death “can only be an *idea*, not something known by us as we know our bodily sensations” (369). Consequently, in the essay that follows, Burke enumerates the ways in which death is manifested through synonymous “deflections” – a pseudo-vocabulary with which one speaks of death, i.e. sexual union, an image of fulfillment, or Life– its dialectical opposite. Curiously, Burke dedicates an entire category to disgust, and conjures the tropic image of the sewer as representative of death. “In what Yeats might have called ‘the thinking of the body,’” he suggests, “there is Death as the analogue of corruption, the morally or physically repugnant” (369). Although he claims that one cannot know Death as one knows sensation, Burke claims that the repugnant – a category *defined* by the perception and bodily reactions of the subject – serves as a synonymous sign of death. Furthermore, he characterizes the notion as “the thinking of the body”, which in contemporary criticism would be considered “affect”, a reference to an essay by W.B. Yeats that discusses the relationship between aesthetics, mind and body, and proposes that art inspires one to touch and taste the world. Standing before two scenic paintings, Yeats states: “Neither painting could move us at all, if our thought did not rush out to the edges of our flesh” (qtd. in Burke 212). Therefore, it seems that

although Burke claims that death cannot be known through bodily sensation, it nonetheless speaks to the body. If death is manifested in literature as physical corruption, disgust is the affirmable, irrefutable bodily reaction to its presence.

Theoreticians commonly agree that the emotion of disgust is the manifestation of an underlying instinct to repel death, in spite of the object to which disgust may be directed (J. Kristeva, S. Miller, W. Miller, Rozin et al). As it were, disgust itself functions much like metaphor, in that it presumes an interchangeability of context and meaning. Susan B. Miller echoes Burke's observation that although disgust is directed at the *material*, it is fundamentally a reaction to an *idea*:

Disgust does not primarily condemn the taste itself, the skin sensation itself, the visual image itself. It shares with other emotions the habit of responding primarily to the *meanings of things*, yet it is unique in its heightened tendency to clothe those meanings in sense imagery, which suggests physical contact in the encounter between self and Other. (my emphasis, 25)

Although disgust is primarily associated with the senses (response to a smell, for example), this emotion grounds an *idea* to the material. The senses frequently serve as means of approaching death in Spanish decadent literature; quite often, death is detected on the body of the dying female by the keen senses of a male lover. Reeking of the grave, the dying female is at once a seductive and horrifying figure. As the Marqués de Bradomín carries Concha's frigid corpse through the corridors of the palace in *Sonata de Otoño*, he is tempted to kiss her, excited by her perfumed hair and the warm fragrance of her bedroom (115). The "vaho frío y pestilente de un cadáver" that emanates from Blanca's mouth in *La mujer fría* overpowers and repulses her lovers (183), an echo of the

depiction of the sleeping/dead Iliana d'Ils in *El horror de morir*. It is precisely Iliana's odor that leads the protagonist to believe that the shadow of Death is hovering over her: "Un débil soplo hinchaba su pecho y de los labios entreabiertos escapábase un leve olor de podredumbre" (96). The sense of smell portrayed in these three examples serves both as a sense that is seduced by and alerted to the mechanisms of death.<sup>31</sup>

Lily Litvak suggests that this attention to the senses in Decadent literature is partly derived from Naturalism: "De la literatura naturalista, basada en la exaltación de los sentidos, se aceptó en el fin de siglo la sensualidad y la noción de que ésta lleva en sí el germen del fracaso" (8). Indeed, Spanish Naturalism attends to that which is observed by means of the senses and is consequently documented unadorned, often criticized for portraying humanity "aún más fea, cínica y vil de lo que es" (Pardo Bazán 279). The Positivist examination of society is fulfilled in its most literal sense under the medical gaze of the *novela médico-social*, a genre that arose under Radical Naturalism in the 1880s. As a subgenre of French Naturalism whose advocates interpret *literally* the ideological and aesthetic tenets outlined by Zola, Radical Naturalism inherently constructs a highly metaphorical vision of society, and as such, the *novela médico-social* constitutes a figurative examination and diagnosis of the sick, and often rotting, body of Spanish society. Such a genre provides an exemplary illustration of the ways in which the employment of metaphor and disgust reflect the necessary fictionalization of death in literature. "La Pálida", the protagonist of Eduardo López Bago's *La prostituta* and *La Pálida* (1884), is not only the prefiguration *par excellence* of the weary, menacing and malodorous heroines of decadence to come, but she is an indication of the ways in which death is manifested at a symbolic and affective register. "La Pálida" forms part of a

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<sup>31</sup>See Robin Ragan for an interpretation of revulsion as a visceral reaction to desiring female subject (248).

fictional universe conditioned by materiality wherein otherwise intangible notions – emotions, states of being and language itself – gain strength, flesh and bone. As Miguel Lozano Marco succinctly points out, it is within these two novels that “se potencia lo repugnante” (348).

Bearing in mind the irreconcilable dynamic between the material and ethereal dimensions of death, I propose that death is represented in *La prostituta* through a network of meanings that connect the highly material nature of death and its intangible, unknowable qualities. In his review of *La buscona* published in the appendix of *El cura*, Alejandro Sawa claims that “Por todas sus páginas, absolutamente por todas, se sienten los vagos estremecimientos de la vida que circula” (308). Sawa *feels* the vibrations of life in *La buscona* that exist invisibly on their pages. Taking this insightful comment as a point of departure for my analysis, I assert that death exists in the emotional dimension of *La prostituta* and *La Pálida* and is perceived in particular in the dynamic emotion of disgust. The emotion of disgust, as I will argue, is the point at which concept and materiality are connected, the mechanism by which emotions surrounding the idea of death materialize as revulsion.

Throughout *La prostituta* and *La Pálida*, disgust is not only the overarching tone of the novel, but it is an emotion that serves specific discursive functions. Although López Bago has been criticized for exploiting the conventions of popular literature in order to sell more novels, an analysis of López Bago’s implementation of disgust as an indicator of authenticity demonstrates an overarching rejection of the false, the contrived and the imitated – characteristics for which his novel is criticized. Furthermore, save an implicitly male “john”/narrator, disgust is an emotion that is experienced by the female

characters, and appears to serve as a measure of the mental health of the prostitutes. In addition to these textual operations, disgust functions as a reaction to death. The ultimate root of disgust is rejection of death by distracting the mind with the tangible and material; it is “an emotion that functions to keep away intimations of mortality” (Rozin et al. 71). Fundamentally, *La prostituta* is a novel about the process of dying—about contagion, suffering, rotting, expiration—and the dominance of disgust indicates an overarching impulse to reject this process. Beyond this connection, the meaning-making operations of disgust—its generation of association between material reality and the workings of the mind—reflect the representational quandaries surrounding the paradox of death, particularly its incomprehensibility despite its indelible connection to materiality. Following Bronfen and Stewart’s respective explorations into the dialectic of the ideality and materiality of death and the representational ramifications, I will explore the affective dimension of death as portrayed in these novels, necessarily drawing on theories of disgust and affect of cultural anthropologists and literary critics alike. An analysis of the complex layers of metaphor that comprise *La prostituta* will demonstrate that the “artless” documentation of the knowable, material world in a Naturalist novel necessarily involves the complex representation of the impenetrable and the unknowable not only through overt metaphor, but through the implicit conceptual associations that structure human experience. The fictionalizing processes embodied by the dynamics of disgust throughout *La prostituta* reflect the necessary, yet ultimately unsatisfactory, materialization of death in prose.

### ***Naturalismo radical in Spain: contradiction and controversy***

For a genre that claims to portray reality in the spirit of the scientific method, works of Radical Naturalism have historically been criticized for catering to sales more than substance, and for displaying elements reminiscent of the *folletín*-esque melodrama and sensationalism. Despite his vision to portray the realities of prostitution and disease in Spanish society, the tale that Eduardo López Bago weaves in *La prostituta*<sup>32</sup> certainly smacks of the *folletín*. The first book of the tetraology, *La prostituta*, tells the story of Estrella, a young country girl who, after suffering a life with violent, alcoholic parents, moves to Madrid to become a prostitute at a brothel run by Arístides, *el Chulo*. Forty brothels are owned by the decrepit Marqués de Villaperdida who is dying of syphilis under the care of his physician doctor Pérez, alter ego of López Bago, and spiritual guidance of his priest, Padre Manrique. His son, Luis de Villaperdida, who has inherited syphilis from the father, returns from his studies abroad to live in Madrid where he soon falls in love with Estrella, newly dubbed “la Pálida.” Inspired by greed, the Marqués and Arístides devise a plan by which Estrella’s virginity will be auctioned to the highest bidder who is none other than Luis de Villaperdida himself. However, before she is given to Luis, Estrella is raped by the Marqués in a dark room where she is promptly infected with syphilis.

At the close of *La prostituta*, the Marqués succumbs to his disease while Estrella seeks medical treatment at the hospital. As *La Pálida* begins, Estrella’s name is erased from the public registry and, now committed to a life of spreading disease, she becomes a

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<sup>32</sup> The title *La prostituta* refers to the tetraology authored by López Bago which is comprised of four parts that were published separately over two years: *La prostituta* (1884), *La Pálida* (1884), *La buscona* (1885), and *La querida* (1885). This chapter will focus on the first two novels, as they feature “La Pálida” as the protagonist.

*buscona* and the centerpiece of *La Botica*, a mixed society of syphilitics that celebrate death and disease with orgies and gluttony. Although “kept” by Luis de Villaperdida, Estrella engages in a lesbian relationship with Rosita Pérez, a young girl who joins Arístides’s brothel in order to support her widowed mother and brother, representatives of the *cursi* middle class, as well as the wealthy Duque de Tres Estrellas. *La Pálida* closes with the murder of Estrella at the hands of Luis when he discovers her clandestine affair with the duke. As the determinist cycle of prostitution continues, the life of Rosita becomes the subject of the final books of the tetraology, *La buscona* and *La querida*.

Despite its contrived plot, in which “predomina lo efectista y desmesurado” (Lozano 348), the impetus of *La prostituta* was to apply the tenets of Zola’s Naturalism to Spanish society. Pura Fernández notes that Eduardo López Bago, along with Alejandro Sawa and Juan Bautista Armada y Losada, has traditionally been associated with a truly authentic Spanish Naturalism, “cultivado a imagen y semejanza del francés” (66-67). This group of authors<sup>33</sup> would come to be known as advocates of *Naturalismo radical*, a branch of Naturalism in Spain known for its literal interpretation of the principles outlined by Zola. Enrique Rubio Cremades describes the subgenre as “[la] plasmación literaria de aquel positivismo agresivo que [...] ataca con no poca virulencia todo aquello que es falsificación social o humana y no se ajusta a lo dictado por la ciencia y la naturaleza” (592). The rigid conversion of the scientific method into a fictional text has yielded sparse, yet consistent criticism. The superimposition of the scientific method upon the novel creates a deliberate exaltation of the influences of materiality. As such, the objectivity inherent in the Naturalist school is undermined by “la exuberante

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<sup>33</sup> In another source, Fernández distinguishes the following authors as proponents of the novela médico-social, in addition to those listed here: José Zahonero, Eugenio Antonio Flores, Enrique Sánchez Seña, Hernández Ardieta and Remigio Vega Armentero (“Introducción” 35).

imaginación y el fanatismo de quien desea ver ratificados todos los presupuestos científicos que defiende como verdad indiscutible” (Fernández, *López Bago* 74). Yvan Lissorgues also detects an exaggerated portrayal of a supposedly objective reality: “esta literatura sale por sus exageraciones de los límites del realismo y cae a menudo en una inverosimilitud [...] yace al nivel de lo folletinesco” (39). This allusion to the *folletín*, and by extension to sentimentality and artificiality, echoes Fernández’s characterization of the works of López Bago, as eclectic<sup>34</sup> and contrived pieces that exhibit: “grandes dosis de tremendismo, profusos excursos teóricos que les confieren un carácter de texto médico y sexológico con elementos propios del folletín y del melodrama” (*López Bago*, 68-69). Primarily, Fernández notes the commercial quality of *La prostituta* and therein draws a connection to the *folletín*.<sup>35</sup> By comparing the works of *naturalismo radical* to the sentimental novel, these critics suggest that while the *naturalistas radicales* claimed to depict an unaltered representation of reality, they employed methods of representation that manipulated the reader.

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<sup>34</sup> Although his production of *novelas médico-sociales* gained López Bago his fame, it is worth noting that he had experiences with various genres of literature. Pura Fernández points out that while pursuing a degree in Filosofía y Letras, López Bago was greatly influenced by the literary circles in Madrid and cultivated a friendship with Bécquer, with whom he attempted to publish a novel (Fernández, “Introducción” 22). At this time, he collaborated on *homenajes poéticos*, dedicated himself to translating French *folletines* for the Spanish press, and in 1876 published his first novel *Los amores*, “el dietario sentimental,” which was included on the Index of prohibited works of the following year (“Introducción” 23). He edited a translation of *Sappho* by Alphonse Daudet during the time in which he was developing his first Naturalist novels, *El periodista* and *La prostituta* (1884).

<sup>35</sup> Fernández suggests a practical reason for the reasons for which his *novelas médico-sociales* appear tainted by the *folletín*, “la tradición de la rentable novela folletinesca” (“Introducción” 33). A profitable enterprise, the production of the *folletín* would have undoubtedly alleviated his notoriously difficult economic circumstances in the months prior to the publication of *La prostituta*. In the appendix to her edition of *La prostituta*, Fernández includes a series of letters written in early 1884 by López Bago to Galdós, asking for a loan by which he could feed his family who had gone hungry for two days (365-72). According to Oscar Barrero Pérez, the potential selling power of the shocking and the risqué began to take precedence over loyalty to Naturalist ideology: “En este proceso de monetarización el naturalismo, ya desde sus orígenes, se mostraba interesado en adaptarse a las circunstancias” (85).

Of course, that López Bago's novel should influence or motivate the reader is not completely out of the question. Noël Valis suggests that an objective representation of reality does not necessarily imply a lack of intention from the author. Of the meaningful representations associated with Realism and Naturalism, Valis writes:

[T]he critical realist/naturalist has not taken all that trouble to document, structure, and detail with painstaking care for the sake of art alone. He is a giver of messages, except that the medium is the message . . . Sermonizing may slip in occasionally, but the presentation itself should – indirectly – speak volumes.

(*Decadent* 10)

The reason for which *Naturalism radical* has been criticized, if not dismissed entirely, amongst contemporary critics is perhaps because fundamentally, the subgenre speaks *directly*, and vividly. For example, Lozano notes the overt insistence upon representing the disgusting in *La prostituta*, “Se tiende a presentar, de manera obsesiva, lo más repugnante y sombrío, acumulando miserias y lacras” (348). Yvan Lissorgues echoes this criticism and notes that the interventions from the author/narrator elaborate the already bleak imagery of the text: “[recarga] los tintes negros con calificativos como ‘asqueroso,’ ‘repugnante,’ ‘feo,’ ‘luctuoso’ . . . que se repiten hasta la saciedad” (39). Lissorgues claims that the repeated reference to the repulsive aspects of the reality of prostitution indicates the way in which López Bago shapes his narrative—in order to establish the moral orientation of the text. Indeed, disgust is one of the most prevalent descriptors used throughout the novel, however the modifiers are not employed to simply amplify the shock value of the novel or to, quite simplistically, overemphasize the identification of deplorable characters. While criticism about *La prostituta* has conceived of represented

emotion as an indicator of the novel's likeness to lowbrow literature, I claim that these represented emotions, specifically disgust, are imbued with meaning, and it forms part of the complex meaning-making system established between the material and the intangible throughout the novel. Rather than contributing to an artificial, affected tone typical of a *folletín*, disgust points the authentic reality that López Bago wishes to transmit in his novel.

### ***La novela médico-social: The anatomist, the prostitute and contamination***

Yvan Lissourges argues that *tremendismo*, the exaltation of the grotesque, is the vehicle by which social practices are criticized, if loudly, in *La prostituta* and *La Pálida*. However, metaphor serves as the deceptively overt message-bearing medium that informs this, the first of López Bago's *novelas médico-sociales*.<sup>36</sup> The ultimate fusion of science and literature, the "novela médico-social" revolves around metaphorical connections between disease, death, the woman and society. Pura Fernández outlines the typical format of the *novela médico-social* as follows: "El núcleo temático lo constituye la exposición, desarrollo y evolución de un caso clínico, acompañado de un proceso paralelo en que simbólicamente, se proyecta el mal sobre el también enfermo cuerpo de la sociedad" (1995, 118). Pura Fernández remarks that in *La prostituta*, López Bago "ofrece el desarrollo de un experimento bajo la enseña de la novela médico-social [...] La licencia artística, la coherencia psicológica de los protagonistas, todo se subordina al presunto criterio científico" (López Bago 71). Despite the Positivist thrust of the novel,

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<sup>36</sup> López Bago's other such novels include *El cura*, *El confesionario*, *La monja* (1885); *El hombre-mono* (1885); *Carne de nobles* (1887); *La desposada* (1887) which was the third part of *La Señora de López* but the only part listed as *novela médico-social*; *El preso* (1888); *Carne importada* (1891); *El separatista* (1895)

the success of the “experiment” relies on the success of a *metaphor*: Spanish society is a sick body that the author will examine and diagnose over the course of the novel.

If the novel itself constitutes the sick body, disgust figures prominently both in its design, from conception to reception. The fundamental metaphor that informs López Bago’s literary vision, referenced in the appendix of *La Pálida* is a materialized interpretation of Zola’s claim that the Naturalist author fulfills the role of an anatomist, “que se contenta con decir lo que encuentra en el cadáver humano” (270). Like a surgeon, the author must penetrate the boundaries of the human body and examine what he finds therein. López Bago literalizes the metaphor of author/surgeon in a lengthy, prophetic autopsy of the dying Marqués de Villaperdida in *La prostituta*. Before he begins to describe the ways in which the organs of the syphilitic body will falter and fail, Doctor Pérez claims that he will be unable to censor a single word. However, the language of science is pure, he assures, “como es puro el alabastro, aunque represente desnuda la estatua” (186). The cleanliness of his words juxtaposes the impure nature of his task, for writing itself is equated with contamination. Critics such as Oscar Barrero Pérez have claimed that Eduardo López Bago’s literal interpretation of Zola’s author/surgeon is not only a simple sign of his deficiency as a writer (83), but his interest in ensuring sales through titillation, rather than the pure execution of Zola’s principles (85). I contend, however, that through this metaphor, López Bago unites the realm of metaphor with that of disgust, both of which function to create meaning throughout the novels.

In his study regarding the evolution of disgust as an exclusively human emotion, Paul Rozin and his colleagues trace its affective roots as part of a system of food

rejection. What originated as “a mammalian mechanism for rejecting distasteful and noxious foods” transforms into a “biological and cultural metaphor,” the transferrable emotion of disgust. Adapted from distaste, disgust is derived from the need to protect the body from potential contaminants, from “material invasion of the self,” a notion that evolves to reject concepts as well as objects (68). Susan Miller echoes these findings when she claims its defining characteristic is to protect self boundaries (4), and she acknowledges Darwin’s claim that disgust, identified as one of the six basic emotions, “promotes psychological security” (6). Taking into account this basic function of disgust, to protect the physical and perceived boundaries of the self, López Bago’s seems to suggest that the author sacrifices his boundaries and suppresses his disgust in order to face the repugnant for the sake of knowledge.

At the opening of *La Pálida*, as Estrella dances naked in front of the gluttonous and syphilitic men of “La Botica”, the authorial voice pauses to inform his reader that he has composed a description of the repugnant events that followed three times and destroyed each one out of moral dignity. While López Bago draws the figurative association between the author and the surgeon to emphasize the morally judicious depictions of practices of La Botica, this particular metaphor calls attention to the relationship between the author and death.

Preciso es [. . .] considerar al novelista que estudia las miserias sociales como un operador que a veces tiene que remover sustancias corrosivas, aspirar miasmas, arriesgar su vida en los peligros de la intoxicación o de la asfixia y arriesgarla para producir una enseñanza o un beneficio, como esos héroes y mártires de la Medicina moderna, que estudian en los hospitales las llagas, los

sudores, las tristezas fétidas de la carne, huelen la pestilencia de la enfermedad y se manchan de sangre las manos durante una operación, como el escritor se mancha los dedos de tinta. (32-33)

According to López Bago's metaphor, the Naturalist author by definition will contaminate himself, traverse the boundary between the living and dead, and implicitly suppress a reaction of disgust so that the reader may observe this reality. It is important to note that López Bago elaborates Zola's metaphor in a way that emphasizes the intimacy of materiality to the point of contamination, a quality that defines the relationship between the Radical naturalist author and death. The author/surgeon is not merely exposed to dead bodies, which he will therefore portray to his reader, but he inhales the fumes of miasma and is choked by the stench of rot. Not only stained by blood/ink, the author allows the integrity of his own body to be penetrated, offering "heroicamente sus arterias a las lancetas, para que se las desgarran y tomen los gramos de sangre necesarios para el éxito de una transfusión" (33). The final metaphorical connection drawn between the author and the surgeon depicts the ultimate vision of contamination: "[como] los que en el momento difícil y terrible de las traqueotomías soplan sin miedo en la deletérea garganta de los diptéricos" (33). Not only does the Radical Naturalist author contact the contagious body of the diphtheric with his mouth, he exhales into the body so as to prevent asphyxiation and sustain life. The Radical Naturalist author not only incorporates the essence of the dying into his own body through the nose and mouth, but defies the boundaries of his own body by passing his own essence – blood – to the dying.

According to this depiction, as a genre Radical Naturalism depicts the edge between life

and death by metaphorically inhaling the fumes of pestilence and breathing life into the contagious bodies of its characters.

As one might observe in these references to inhaling and exhaling, the sensorial is the primary conduit by which the author understands and portrays reality; specifically, olfaction and taste in the above example conjure the notion of contamination, as the ink-spattered author draws the fumes of death into his body. Curiously, Alejandro Sawa employs synonymous vocabulary to describe both the texts and the critical reactions that they provoked. Alejandro Sawa states that the society portrayed in *La prostituta* and *La Pálida* is monstrous, ugly and “huele más al pus y a los desinfectantes de las salas” than the aroma of the fields found within other brands of literature (304).<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, Sawa states that critics were disgusted, “la gente de letras vomitando bilis hasta por los ojos” (301). While surely a figurative image, the notion of rejection with which Sawa depicts the critics is an important indicator of the sensational implications of López Bago’s work. In reference to the British context, Winifred Hughes aptly summarizes the extra-literary repercussions of sensational literature, the appeal to the reader’s senses, which provokes “physiological reactions as creeping flesh, shocked nerves, teeth on edge, elevated blood pressure, and even sexual arousal” (260). D.A. Miller comments that the sensational novel must therefore always imply a reading of sensation, insofar as “to make us nervous, nervousness must first be represented” (108). If he reacts at all, does the reader of *La prostituta* feel disgust simply because López Bago litters his text with disgusting adjectives, as Lissourgues suggests? Or, does the reader become nauseous

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<sup>37</sup> Sawa notes that he preferred *La Buscona* “a su madre y a su abuela” because of its more balanced portrayal of society (307).

because he reads nausea? Or, does the reader become disgusted in order to ensure, as Rozin posits, “the protection of the human soul?” (65)

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate that the extent to which metaphor structures human thought processes is so pervasive that the metaphor itself goes nearly undetected. For example, in her description of the portrayal of society in *La prostituta*, Pura Fernández exclusively employs metaphorical terms: “[es] una sociedad malherida y degenerada que encubre sus llagas y desatiende el remedio de sus males” (López Bago 79). Although the motivation of the *novela médico-social* is informed by the scientific method and the execution of this method is achieved in a purportedly objective fashion, the crux of the genre is indeed conditioned by metaphor. While imagining Spain as a sick or dying body is not a metaphor that began or ended with the *novela médico-social*,<sup>38</sup> the ways in which disgust is employed in *La prostituta* demonstrates an alternate method of relating the experience of death to the reader. Death, as Garrett Stewart suggests, is “alternately void and fiction,” a state impenetrable to both the mind and senses that is thus ever-conceived as fiction, as metaphor (5). It is a nothingness that must be filled with knowable, tangible meaning. This way of understanding and representing death is precisely the way in which Lakoff and Johnson propose that metaphor is used to help us understand the world. “We typically conceptualize the nonphysical *in terms of* the physical- that is, we conceptualize the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated” (59). This is particularly true in the case of ontological metaphors, by which we understand experience in terms of objects and substances (25). In this way, an abstract notion becomes an entity and thus, as

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<sup>38</sup> Consider *Cartas marruecas* (Cadalso, 1793), *Peñas arriba* (Pereda, 1895), *En torno al casticismo* (Unamuno, 1895).

Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate with the concept of inflation, allow us to “quantify it, identify a particular aspect of it, see it as a cause, act with respect to it, and perhaps even believe that we understand it” (26). The pervasive employment of metaphor throughout *La prostituta* demonstrates the underlying endeavor to negotiate a representation of unknowable states.

Apart from the foundational, medical-social metaphor upon which *La prostituta* is based, there are several instances in which intangible feelings such as euphoria and sadness are materialized through metaphor. Curiously, the translation of an indescribable, albeit bodily, state is precisely the type of graphic portrayal that condemned *La prostituta* as a pornographic novel. Perhaps the most famous example is the description of Mari Pepa’s first orgasm, a state constituted by sensation that is only made accessible to the reader by the sense of sound. As the other prostitutes listen to Mari Pepa’s intimate encounter, they compare her screams to “el espantoso crujido que en el polo produce el hielo cuando al fine se rompe.” Piercing materiality to its very building blocks, her scream is one that “parece como que destrozan las mismas moléculas del aire” (*La prostituta* 154). While such a representation undoubtedly indicates López Bago’s efforts to make his novel marketable, the manner in which the orgasm is portrayed is not an aberration. In fact, it closely resembles a description of Luis de Villaperdida who, in a moment of deep sadness, begins to cry. His sadness materializes on the body:

Sintió como si una mano oprimiera su corazón, lo arrancara de su sitio y, estrujado y deshecho, resbalando los pedazos de la entraña entre los dedos, cayeran por fin como desde una altura inmensa, como si fueran fragmentos de un astro, aerolitos, en el espacio; e inmóvil esperó aterrado el espantoso choque. De

pronto dijérase que sintió como el chapoteo de las piedras en el agua; saltaron dos gotas de llanto, que no pudo contener, y nublaron los ojos. (265)

These two examples demonstrate the ways in which metaphor grounds an indescribable, albeit physical, state in materiality. The connection between the world of representation, in this case language, and the physical nature of material reality is further negotiated on the body of the prostitute. Rosita, the young novice prostitute of *La Pálida*, contemplates the richness of the word:

¡PROSTITUTA! Tenía para ella esta palabra sonidos extraños; era infamante, sí, pero sólida, maciza, llena de sílabas y como repleta de carne; era una de esas combinaciones de letras que desde que se inventan se agarran a la masa del idioma, se llenan de fibras, pierden toda grasa, se convierten en elemento duro y fuerte. (100-1)

In this passage, the richness of language takes on the richness of the material: the syllables of the word “prostituta” are portrayed as carrying a tangible weight. However, as a firm, powerful body, the letters that form the word “prostitute” are coded as masculine: “son un músculo, un vigor, y sin ellas el lenguaje quedaría débil, raquítico y afeminado” (101). While the physical power of the prostitute is not specifically coded as masculine throughout the novel, the feminine figure portrayed as a sign of a paradoxical connotation – the prostitute is defined by both the material and the ethereal. At the beginning of *La prostituta*, the figure of the prostitute is defined by sensuality, however the emotions provoked by that sensuality are dual. “Ellas eran a la luz del sol las prostitutas; ellas lo asqueroso, lo repugnante, lo nauseabundo.” Under the gaze of day, the prostitutes are defined by the physical reactions that they provoke, particularly in

representatives of medicine, science and hygiene. Yet at the same time, “Ellas eran durante la noche la belleza de la forma, la poesía del desnudo, no la necesidad higiénica, sino el placer de los disolutos” (126). For Luis, these opposing poles are problematic and irreconcilable. Luis imagines the female body as an anatomist might, imagining her as a collection of “carne y entrañas” that is an equally comforting and threatening being. “[C]uando la sangre circula, y la boca respira, y los ojos ven, y el cuerpo se mueve, aquel ser unas veces es una madre y otras una ramera. Pero ¿cómo es esto? ¿Con las mismas formas, con la misma belleza puede ser todo, se pueden ser las dos cosas?” (311). This body has the power to disgust and to attract, and when Luis reconnects with Estrella in *La Pálida*, he is surprised that as opposed to feeling “natural y justificada repugnancia” towards the woman that infected him with syphilis, “sintió, por el contratio, retoñar su primer deseo carnal” (119). To this surprising reaction Doctor Pérez attributes the power of materiality, evidence of the “bestia humana” rather than the soul (120). The prostitute indeed taps into man’s animal nature, at once likened to a lion-tamer (21), the victim of wild animals (22), and an insatiable wolf (27).

In the *novela lupanaria naturalista*, the prostitute is depicted through dichotomy, at once as victim and vile propagator of the same disease that infects society. While the metaphorical status of the prostitute is unchanging, that which she symbolizes is ever moldable. Aurora Riviére Gómez states that the image of the prostitute became secularized in the final third of the nineteenth century; that is, whereas before she had been portrayed as a sinful, fallen woman, she came to be seen as the victim of society, a representation of all that was wrong with it, “el producto de un fatalismo orgánico, de una constitución *degenerada*” (15). Thus, to represent the prostitute meant to criticize, if

implicitly, the society that produced her. It is a profession that, when described in relation to its bearing on society, is inevitably, as if by rote, described *figuratively* in Naturalist literature. Fernández notes that the prostitute comes to represent the working class and the socially ‘disinherited’ (112). Aurora Rivièrè Gómez marks prostitution as “*la representación de una contramoral improductiva y antiburguesa*” (emphasis added, 14). Furthermore, Rivièrè Gómez calls attention to the famous association between the prostitute and a parasite (44), as well as a sewer, St. Augustine’s famous metaphor that outlined the necessity of prostitution to the society: “Suprimid esta cloaca y el palacio entero se convertirá en un lugar infecto” (qtd. in Rivièrè Gómez 13). The prostitute is a symbol of contagion – a metaphorical contagion of vice and the potential carrier of syphilis. As a metaphorical and actual threat to the “body” and bodies of society, the figure of the prostitute is constantly reinforced as a contaminating force. Even physical contamination with a prostitute can enact an invisible contamination: once transmitted to a client, disease can pass silently throughout generations that may inherit the disease.

While sexual contact with a syphilitic would literally spread disease, the prostitute is symbolically adhered to the notion of contamination and to offending the sense of smell. In his study of the social perceptions of prostitution that enabled its regulation in France, Alain Corbin cites the origin of the word prostitute, derived from the Latin *putida*, underscores the common image of the prostitute as foul-smelling. The stench of the prostitute could be inhaled and incorporated into the body, inspiring the imaginary notion of contamination. Considered by Corbin to be the primary factor that inspired regulation, the stench of the prostitute was believed to be rooted in her “excessive sexual relations” and this translated into the notion that a client would risk “the living corruption

of syphilis” (210-11). As such, according to Corbin the prostitute came to prefigure death, as evidenced by her stench: “as putrid body and emunctory/sewer, the prostitute maintains complex relations with the corpse in the symbolic imagination” (211). The association between the prostitute and the corpse is meaningful both in the material and metaphorical sense. Because the prostitute is associated with syphilis, the corruption of the corpse is likened to the diseased, living rot of the syphilitic prostitute, and therefore must also be avoided for fear of physical contamination and the “contamination” of the social structure.

In his examination of olfaction as an indicator of moral and social standing in *La prostituta*, Alrick Clauson Knight Jr. proposes that by using olfaction as a basis for mediating reality, López Bago seeks to evoke an emotional response from his reader that stems from a sensory connection to the class-conscious, modernizing nineteenth-century Madrid (433). While not all of the scents that Knight addresses would independently evoke disgust (the perfumed hair of the prostitutes, or the scent of tobacco on Estrella’s father), all scents are indeed *contextualized* as being unequivocally foul. While Knight seems to suggest that experience of the “real” that a Naturalist novel provides will provoke an equally “real” reaction from its reader, his observations only graze the significance of odors in the novel and their connection to the underlying tone of disgust. Kant postulated that the sense of smell conjures nausea more readily than sight or touch, since inhalation provides the most intimacy with filth: “Filth seems to awaken nausea less through what is repulsive to eye and tongue than through the stench associated with it” (*Anthropology* 45). If the prostitute is associated with offensive odor, and thus the

violation of the physical borders of the Self, the reaction of disgust serves to protect the body from odorous reaches of contagious rot.

The association between the prostitute and death is of utmost importance as one considers the extent to which disgust regiments the representation of the prostitute. The corpse rests precisely on the border between the nothingness associated with death and the referential, material world. In her analysis of the abject, Julia Kristeva notes that the corpse represents ultimate abjection insofar as it defies all codes of meaning-making. The corpse no longer belongs in the world, is no longer associated with a “person” and therefore “no longer signifies anything” (4). Elisabeth Bronfen assumes a slightly different viewpoint and asserts that the dematerializing body marks a unique connection between world and language, in that language itself is also always in danger of losing its referential capacity (55). Ultimately, death inevitably defies that connection to material world. “[It] is both most referential and most self-referential or tropic, a reality for the experiencing subject, but non-verifiable for the viewing/surviving subject” (55). The non-experience of death is only accessible through trope, however the visceral reaction to death is, as Julia Kristeva points out, experienced through the rejection of the corpse. It is “what I permanently thrust aside in order to live” (3); the affective “revolt *against*” – discomfort, unease, dizziness – calls attention to relationship, and separation between, the subject and the Other (10). Horror, in this context, is conceived of as the revulsion, the bodily reaction, to the frightening, i.e. the corpse. William Miller explains that when one is horrified, there is a sense of violation in that the self has been overcome by the impression of the horrifying. If one is disgusted, the boundary between the subject and the horrifying is solid and well-defined. In cases of horror, the boundary cannot be upheld

(175). As one considers the representations of disgust in *La prostituta*, one imagines the figure of the prostitute as a symbol of death to which one reacts with disgust; moreover, she is the figure most easily disgusted, who desires contamination and seeks to disgust others through contamination. The prostitute fulfills the role of a barometer by which disgust, and the authenticity it marks, is measured throughout the novel.

### **A fictional matter: death and disgust in *La prostituta***

As López Bago explains in the epilogue to *La Pálida*, his editors were most perturbed by the “descripción descarnada de la repugnante llaga social” that was represented in his novel (253). Unnamable even by the critics who condemned its presence in the novel, the vice classified as “social wound” is at once unrelenting in its reality—its gaping repugnance—and discreetly obscured behind the metaphor. What, precisely, did the editors determine this “social wound” to be?

Todos deseaban que las repugnancias se hicieran agradables a la vista. ‘Ya ve usted—añadían, – Dumas, hijo, escribió *La Dama de las Camelias*. Es casi el mismo asunto, pero la protagonista ama y siente, es una verdadera heroína que se muere tísica y enamorada. Sólo así se pone a salvo la moral.’ (253-54)

Undoubtedly, the portrayal of Estrella’s immorality, bearing the gruesome signs of syphilis, was cause for condemnation. As another sickly heroine might be slowly and daintily consumed by her disease shrouded in mystery, Estrella is infected by the syphilitic, aging Marqués de Villaperdida, whose corrupt body repeatedly elicits disgust throughout the text. Estrella’s moral corruption is immediately incited, as, once she discovers that she has been infected, she decides that “sería mala . . . enfermar a cuantos

pudiera, extender, propagar el contagio” (303). Sontag notes that when meaning is attributed to disease, it is often a moralistic meaning (58), however those diseases with mysterious causes, such as tuberculosis, cancer or leprosy, tend to function as pliable metaphors; syphilis, she remarks, is a rather limited as a metaphor because its causes are identifiable (60). However, as a disease that gauges both moral and physical deterioration, syphilis constitutes the sign upon which the process of signification in *La prostituta* is grounded, the connection between the physical and the immaterial. The subjects associated with the disease—bodily decay, sexual deviance, corruption, contamination—are equally applicable to the moral plane of the novel.<sup>39</sup> The disease itself, popularly referred to as “el mal de Venus”, is never directly named in the novel, but is referred to ambiguously, labeled as leprosy or cancer throughout the novel (Sutherland 290). Sutherland interprets this ambiguity as one of the many seductive implications planted slyly throughout the novel in order to increase readership. One must also consider the fact that López Bago must avoid explicit, and therefore immoral, reference to the practice of prostitution. However, at the same time, this evasion also creates of a fictional space, a space *entre comillas*, between imagination and reality that powers the signifying processes at work in the novel.

By asserting that the protagonist of the novel is “la Pálida,” one recognizes the obvious presence of metaphor in the novel, however the operations of metaphor are complex. The figure of “la Pálida” is a metaphor that, unlike Zola’s “Golden Fly,” has multiple layers of signification that point to the underlying motif of death present throughout *La prostituta* and *La Pálida*. Although Estrella is noted for having a pale

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<sup>39</sup> Erika Sutherland notes that the “pestilent appearance” of the Marqués de Villaperdida is “physical proof” of his moral and political corruption, however I would choose to label his appearance as a metaphorical reference to his moral corruption (280-81).

complexion in the novel,<sup>40</sup> Pura Fernández calls attention to its properties as a metaphor both for courtesans that walk the streets at night<sup>41</sup> and for the archetypal figure of death. “La Pálida,” a nickname that to Paco “sonaba siniestramente en [los] oídos,” is undoubtedly a symbol of Death throughout the novel, as she becomes the harbinger of death for all those with whom she has sexual relations, once she has been infected with syphilis (*La prostituta* 239). Pura Fernández asserts that Estrella is a symbol of syphilis itself (*López Bago* 93), however the recurrent motif of the dance of death, a dance that leads all walks of life to their end, suggests that Estrella is a figure of death.<sup>42</sup> Once infected with syphilis, Estrella is recognized in *La Pálida* for her voracious nature, her loss of control and an instinct to devour. Dedicated to vice, the more she devours, the greater her likeness to the pale figure of Death she becomes:

[E]ra un resabio de su voracidad adquirida al salir de la miseria y entrar en el vicio, como loba que abandona el monte, pierde todo miedo, y hostigada por el hambre recorre las calles de la aldea. Comía de todo y bebía mucho; pero los grandes vinos extranjeros, lejos de colorear sus mejillas, aumentaban la blancura de su tez. (27)

Even before Estrella becomes infected with syphilis, she is passed amongst men like a fatal contagion. As Aristedes prepares for the auction of Estrella’s virginity, he circulates her picture throughout the city in order to promote interest and imagines her image being bought by “los viejos caprichosos, entre los jóvenes corrompidos, entre los calaveras de todas las edades” (224). This reference to the dance of death is repeated once Estrella

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<sup>40</sup> “¡*La Pálida* la llamaban!” Paco, her boyfriend, remarks. “*La Pálida*, por lo blanca, sin duda!” (239)

<sup>41</sup> Fernández attributes the term “pálidas de la noche” to Alfred Musset.

<sup>42</sup> Fernández also comments that when the cause of syphilis was discovered to be a protozoa in 1905, it was given the name *Spirochaeta pallida* (See note 99 in *La prostituta*).

realizes that she has contracted syphilis from the Marqués de Villaperdida. As she contemplates the “career” that has put her in contact with all ranks of society, Estrella specifically imagines having to kiss the figure linked most intimately with death, the hangman: “le besaría al verdugo lo mismo que el rey, lo mismo que al sabio, lo mismo que a cuantos le pidieran el beso y se lo pagaran” (300). Kissing the hangman indeed conjures images of contagion and mortality – by kissing the hangman, Estrella is not only sealing her fate, but she is aligning herself with the operations of death.

Estrella’s “circulation” throughout the population not only summons images of a figure of Death, but draws an association with contagion and a willingness to surround oneself, or be in contact with, filth or disease. Mari Pepa, the retired prostitute who serves as the *alcahueta* figure in the brothel where Estrella works, describes the tremendous exhaustion that one must struggle to overcome in order to earn money as a prostitute: “A veces dan ganas de matar y cerrar por fin los ojos en la misma cama junto al cadáver” (212). In Mari Pepa’s imagined proximity to the corpse, one notes that the nature of prostitution grapples with contamination and the impulse of disgust; the prostitute is always within precarious reach of the dead, embodied literally by the “rotting,” syphilitic bodies with which she will come in contact. This comment prefigures a scene in *La Pálida* in which Estrella, contaminated with syphilis and under the care of the sisters at hospital of San Juan de Dios in which Estrella discovers the prostitute in the neighboring bed was indeed a cadaver (41). Curiously, the reason that Estrella must take on the nickname “La Pálida” is purely prophylactic. Pura Fernández notes that when a woman publicly registered herself as a prostitute, “perdía sus señas de identidad anteriores, para que no fueran envilecidas con el comercio al que se iba a dedicar, y pasaba a ser conocida

en la mancebía con un apodo” (note 98, 206). Therefore, in order to protect her true self from the corruption of prostitution, Estrella is christened “la Pálida” as if this name created a barrier between innocence and vice. Thus, metaphor itself seems to assume a prophylactic quality, as if the superficial change of identity might prevent a true engagement with the immoral.

Disgust, like metaphor, depends on conceptual associations and operates within the novel in a similar fashion, as it too serves to distance characters from each other, or from certain practices. The pivotal quality of disgust is that it involves a process of signification, in that meaning is assigned to an object or person – and that meaning-making is pliable: “the major event in the cultural evolution of disgust is the expansion or replacement of meanings and elicitors, with the output side of the emotion programme largely intact” (Rozin 78). The inalterable, biologically-rooted signs of disgust are generated due to innumerable associations of the mind. Susan Miller asserts that “the sensory richness of disgust” causes its most powerful and meaningful associations (28). Disgust is an engine that produces myriad associations and meanings that consistently produces the same output: distance, the disgust face and negative associations.

The decaying corpse, as William Miller points out, is the ultimate inciter of disgust, the emblem of menace that attacks the senses as well as the sense of self (1). In its most heightened sense, disgust is the will to preserve the self, a rejection of death. Rozin agrees that disgust serves as a mental blockade, “serving to keep [thoughts of dying] out of the mind” (71). While the mind seeks to repel the inevitable end of the self, according to critics the highly sensory images associated with the potential for the life incite intense nausea. “That nauseous, rank and heaving matter, frightful to look upon, a

ferment of life, teeming with worms, grubs and eggs, is at the bottom of the decisive reactions we call nausea, disgust or repugnance” (Bataille 56-57). The capacity for life, as William Miller echoes, is disgusting, both in a material and conceptual way; death disgusts “not just because it smells revoltingly bad, but because it is not an end to the process of living but part of a cycle of eternal recurrence” (40). As Miller suggests, there is an inevitable and binding link between the senses, in this case the sense of smell, and cognitive processes, the recognition of the cadaver as a representation of the end and beginning of life. Susan Miller identifies disgust’s unique emphasis on materiality as a contributing factor to “its defensive utility in that it diverts our attention from a core disturbing idea to a material event” (26). Thus, disgust springs forth as a visceral reaction that protects the integrity of the self by drawing attention to materiality.

Unique in its capacity to unite the starkness of material reality with the operations of imagination (associations and meaning-making), disgust is the most appropriate vehicle by which the notion of death is communicated in *La prostituta*. At the heart of the challenge of representing death is the process of signification, attributing meaning to an event that lacks all meaning. Disgust, a signifying process that depends on the dynamic relationship between reality and the imagination, is perhaps the most appropriate vehicle by which death is communicated in the novel. What lingers on the surface of the impenetrable are the sounds, smells and textures that suggest the presence of the ungraspable reality that exists beyond the reach of our sign system. In *La prostituta*, the fictionalizing process of disgust transforms the concept of death into a sensation, the confluence of material— a physical stimulus— and non-material, cognitive reaction. For example, at the climax of *La prostituta*, Estrella is brought blindfolded to the Marqués de

Villaperdida who will soon strip her of her virginity. As he speaks to her, Estrella becomes frightened for her life:

*La Pálida*, al oír aquella voz desconocida, nerviosamente se arrancó la venda. Sin saber por qué, había sentido un miedo y un terror rápidos e instintivos. Recordó las palabras que ella misma pronunciara: <<Juro que no veo; podrían venir a matarme impunemente>>. Y temió, ¿qué es temer?, estuvo segura que en las vibraciones del aire, en las ondas sonoras agitadas por aquella voz, venía para ella la muerte. (295)

Unable to see, Estrella seems to *sense* death vibrating through the air in the voice of the Marqués. It is worth noting that although she imagines Death in the sound waves of his voice, she does not explicitly *hear* Death but is merely aware of its presence. It is an entity with which one cannot directly engage, a presence that one cannot directly experience, but one that nevertheless exists. Once the act is completed, the Marqués covers her eyes and directs Estrella out of the secret room: “Las manos calenturientas la empujaron, y luego dejó de aspirar aquel olor infecto *que no sabía a qué atribuir*; adivinó la claridad y se quitó el pañuelo” (emphasis added, 297). Just as she had sensed death in the sound waves but not heard it, Estrella smells death on the Marqués, his festering, syphilitic wounds, but cannot define it or even liken it to another smell. Similarly, the brothel itself is described as a coffin in which one can *hear* the operations of death at a previous point in *La prostituta*:

Allí, en aquel silencio, estaban imitados *los ruidos* del sepulcro, *el roer* de gusanos y *el extravasamiento*<sup>43</sup> de la descomposición; y *resonaban* también allí, en los salones cerrados herméticamente, los pasos de la servidumbre en las habitaciones del segundo piso, como deben resonar en hueco las pisadas de los sepultureros sobre el ataúd.

(emphasis added, 175)

In this chilling passage, the sense of hearing does identify particular sounds associated with death. However, all of these sounds embody *absence*. Decomposition, dematerialization and the echoing steps of the living all indicate the absence of he that hears the sounds. Although the presence of this corpse/listener is recognized in this passage, the state of being dead is only accessible through the recognizable sounds that oscillate around the sign of death. Death itself, although approached through the senses, ultimately escapes definition.

Elaine Scarry points out that it is the materiality of sensation that displaces it from the realm of language. For example, in her analysis of advertisements for pain relievers, Scarry remarks that “It may be that the sheer factualness of physical pain inhibits and subverts the inherent fictionalizing process of advertising” (*Resisting* 19). Disgust, however, is situated at the opposite pole: it is an emotion produced by an idea that is transferred to the material. It is in and of itself a fictionalizing instrument. The production of disgust in the reader is not an inherent quality of the object that is marked as disgusting. Rather, the basis of disgust is a purely conceptual, one hinging upon imagination. Thus, the description of a disease is not in itself disgusting but is *perceived* as being so and comes to *signify* something disgusting for the reader. Rozin points out

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<sup>43</sup> Eruption.

that “The conceptual rejection characteristic of disgust is a notable cognitive achievement; disgust depends on the conception of an essence that exists independent of any sensory qualities” (67). For this reason, disgust is the hinge that divides the planes of the real and the imaginary: an object is not essentially offensive, but the very “realness” of an object may be conceived of as offensive.<sup>44</sup> Rozin has determined that since disgust is linked biologically to distaste, its output shares its hallmark facial expression, withdrawal and nausea.<sup>45</sup> However, disgust is defined by a conceptually-based offensiveness, fueled primarily by the protection from contamination (69).

As *La prostituta* opens, disgust is presented as the primary emotional orientation of the novel. The narrator presents the reader with a depiction of the brothel where the story will unfold. As the narrator inches closer and closer to the brothel, he creates a chain of associations that provide multiple levels of disgust to the reader. The first glance, made from the street, provides an initial image of pollution: “Desde la calle veíase, entre dos edificios de mayor elevación y de construcción más moderna, aquella fachada ruinosa, de color gris” (119). From the outset, the brothel disgusts because it is recognized as being different from the newer and cleaner surrounding buildings. Susan Miller explains that by making that unfamiliar association, “the mind becomes active and integrative, and in that creative state opens [a] person to anxiety and thus disgust” (35). The sense of pollution that is inspired by the “out of place” brothel activates the sense imagery of walls marred by a filthy body:

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<sup>44</sup> Susan Miller remarks that true disgust requires three conditions: there must exist an Other, a target of the emotion outside the Self (or a subset of the Self); this Other must be labeled as bad; this badness causes the Self to seek distance.

<sup>45</sup> Schiefenhovel notes that “The full blown disgust face matches very well the facial expression connected to vomiting” (56).

[En la fachada] el tiempo dejó impresa la marca de cansancio con que al pasar, apoyándose en los muros, los manchó con sus manos y su cuerpo de atleta envuelto en andrajos; el cuerpo bañado de sudor, los andrajos cubiertos de fango y polvo. (119)

The building itself is decrepit and disintegrating because it has been tainted with the sweaty, filthy “body” of time.

As the narrator takes another step towards the brothel, the contaminated building transforms into the image of a contaminated, rotting body. Rozin notes that the sense of pollution inspired by an anomaly, such as being out of place, will often be associated with a deformity, such as an amputation or malformation (79). Therefore it is unsurprising that the brothel is further portrayed as the sick body of a beggar:

A cierta distancia, la falta de cal que produjo la caída de grandes cascotes, dejando al descubierto la roja mancha de los ladrillos, da repugnantes aspectos al edificio, recordando esos mendigos asquerosos que explotan la compasión exponiendo en medio de la vía pública desnudeces cubiertas de llagas, miembros podridos, que hacen apartar la vista para contener la nausea, y hurtar el roce del traje para evitar la mancha. (119)

The sentiment of disgust that is projected towards the brothel has effected the association of the decrepit exterior of the building with the image of not only a diseased beggar, but a rotting one. In this image of the beggar one notices the insistent and intolerable quality of disgust (Ngai 333) that wishes us to view and even enjoy it, as Kant hypothesized, which produces the equally emphatic averted glance that will contain the physical nausea. The spectator avoids the invasion of the disgusting upon his senses and avoids contamination

by ensuring the physical integrity of the body by pulling his clothing tighter around him. Here, we see the materialization of the disgust as a protective barrier. Disgust strengthens the boundary between the self and the Other, assuring that *I* am definitely not *that*.

As the examination focuses on the exterior walls of the brothel, López Bago hones in on the culmination of disgust inspired by the brothel:

Luego, la humedad completa el asco,<sup>46</sup> corre por grandes pinceladas de alto a bajo, pinceladas verdosas, negruzcas, terrosas, amarillentas, que serpean simulando derrames y extravasamientos de pústulas, cuya materia, al salir, sigue cauces caprichosos que parten del daño, y manchan, cuando no inficionan la piel sana. (119)

Not only is the brothel a contaminated body, it is one that is constantly contaminating itself, its gaping wounds draining onto the clean, “healthy skin” of its structure; it is a vision of constant contamination and constantly renewed disgust. Above all, the disgust inspired by the contaminated body increases because this body is *wet*. Although the wetness of the brothel is described in visual terms, specifically in colors, wetness itself can only truly be determined by the sense of touch, a sense that the narrator/spectator reveals that he is avoiding at all costs. The sense of oozing wetness is *felt* by the narrator, not through the sense of touch, but through the operations of imagination.

The ability to “sense” without touch is applicable even to the noticeably clean elements of the brothel. The narrator notices the curious condition of the iron railings on

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<sup>46</sup> Although the terms are used interchangeably throughout the novel, it must be noted that the terms *asco* and *repugnancia* refer to slightly different sensations. According to the Diccionario de la Academia Española of 1843, *asco* was a synonym for nausea, “alteración del estómago, causada por la repugnancia que se tiene a alguna cosa que incita a vómito.” *Repugnancia*, on the other hand, described “Oposición o contradicción entre dos cosas. Tédio, aversión a las cosas o personas. Aversión o resistencia que se siente a consentir a hacer alguna cosa.”

the balconies: partially covered in moss, partially shined clean. By sight, the narrator can detect where bodies have pressed against the railing which had “ese desigual brillo no sacado por la mano que frota para pulir, sino por los cuerpos que rozan para descansar; hierros, en fin, antes usados por la pereza que desgastados por el trabajo” (120). Even that which is clean possesses the nearly imperceptible trace of bodily contact; cleanliness itself is deceptive, for it indicates that dirt has rubbed off the railing onto the body of the prostitute. This haptic visuality seems to be employed specifically in order to conjure intense feelings of disgust by channeling the sense of touch, a sense with which disgust is more intensely associated.

The process of signification facilitated by disgust comes full circle as the narrator steps into the doorway of the brothel. What has previously been conceived as the likeness of a festering body transforms into reality: the narrator notices that the doorway is “maloliente y húmedo, con las humedades que allí dejaron los vómitos de la embriaguez y las secreciones de los viciosos” (123). The imagery of a body spewing its contaminating secretions has materialized into vomit itself, the material trace of nausea. Thus, the image of an old building transforms into that of a contaminated building, and then to a contaminated body. The wetness associated with the contaminated body materializes into authentic contamination (vomit). The nausea inspired by an old building is represented in physical terms.

The dynamic relationship between disgust and materiality is further demonstrated when the narrator finally enters the brothel to solicit services. Akiko Tsuchiya has observed that as he contemplates the exterior of the brothel, the narrator is overcome with a disgust that prevents him from penetrating its walls with his gaze; nonetheless he is

drawn in by curiosity and desire, and follows a client inside (167). Tsuchiya rightfully notes that the sex act itself is elided, but nonetheless fails to mention that it is indirectly acknowledged in the *emotion* of the client. He is suddenly overcome with shame and an indescribable feeling that is prompted by the returned gaze of the prostitutes: “llega en cambio el malestar indefinible, la angustia, la repugnancia y la inquietud también, cosas todas que se experimentan al ver aquellas pupilas fijas en nosotros, esperando una sonrisa.” The perceived boldness of the prostitutes’ gaze is the materialization of self-disgust, rooted in the thought of the vice in which he has just participated:

“descaradamente nos mira, es el vicio nuestro y nuestra miseria humana encarnándose fuera del propio cuerpo, en el cuerpo de aquellas miserables” (130). The disgust that is inspired in the Other is truly the disgust with oneself, the idea that the narrator himself is engaging with vice. However, this disgust is founded in imagination, not the sight of disease, for example. Rooted in concept, this disgust is easily projected back and forth between client and prostitute, “Asco sentimos de nosotros mismos, y sospechamos que nuestra náusea contagiosa también ellas la sienten y, como nosotros, la reprimen” (130).

As the prostitutes repress their nausea in order to fulfill their duties, it becomes evident that disgust becomes a marker of authenticity, as it is often presented in opposition to imitation, fiction or parody. Characters who feel disgusted are often reacting to a provocative reality, and therefore the physical disgust serves to distract the mind from the *ideas* associated with that reality (S. Miller, Rozin). The prostitutes, and their clients, repress their nausea and engage with what the narrator refers to as “la parodia innoble y mal hecha, no del amor, sino del sensualismo, es el lupanar europeo imitando malamente las costumbres del harén.” (*La prostituta* 131). The layered

imitations that constitute the act of prostitution inherently distance, like disgust, the practitioners from the reality of the act.

As the narrator insinuates, the prostitutes themselves are aware of the parody that they perform, and their nausea indicates the rejection of death. This reaction becomes clear when Estrella first enters the brothel. She explains to the other prostitutes that she has conserved her virginity not for questions of honor, but because she simply does not like men; in fact, they make her sick (“me dan asco”). While at first the prostitutes laugh wildly at this notion, they suddenly become very serious.

Después de todo, *la Pálida* tenía razón. Ninguna dejaba de sentir lo mismo. ¡Los hombres!... ¡Valientes cochinos! No piensan más que en porquerías. No hay nada más repugnante. Y en cuanto ven una mujer, son como los perros . . . Cuando venían a buscarlas hacían tales cosas, que luego ninguna dejaba de tener arcadas,<sup>47</sup> y muchas veces llegaban a vomitar. ¡Ah, qué marranos! (208)

Once again, disgust is portrayed as a process of signification that transforms a notion into materiality. In this passage, men are not a source of contamination but serve as a reminder of our animal nature; they are repeatedly equated with animals. Rozin notes that the main elicitor of disgust is that of an animal or animal product contaminating food (69), however he also notes that the other cross-cultural elicitors of disgust—poor hygiene, inappropriate sexual activities, gore and contact with death—also serve to remind us of our animal nature (70). This association between the men and an animal manifests itself physically, as the prostitutes often succumb to their nausea. In fact, the disgust that the prostitutes feel is so great, and so poorly conveyed in the name *marranos*, that some of the prostitutes “lo acentuaron escupiendo, y con un <<¡puach!>> que era el

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<sup>47</sup> Physiscal nausea

más alto insulto de los labios” (208). The act of spitting is the materialization of disgust, as if expelling a contaminant from the body.

Curiously, the conversation regarding the disgusting habits of men/animals quickly turns to disease. One of the prostitutes remarks that she might prefer to die of hunger than “morirse de lo que se está muriendo *la Pitillera*,” the syphilitic prostitute that has abandoned the brothel for the hospital that *La Pálida* has come to replace. Through this chain of associations, we see that what began as disgust for men has evolved into rejection of death. As death is the fundamental elicitor of disgust, one of the prostitutes demands that they end the conversation, precisely because “*la Pálida* está comiendo” (208). The reminder of death incites disgust so greatly that it could produce nausea in Estrella, the thought contaminating her food and thus violating the integrity of her body. Therefore, disgust serves as the emotional plane upon which an abundance of associations (man and animal, *la Pitillera* and *la Pálida*) produce a material rejection (vomit, spitting and refusal to eat) that is fundamentally elicited to distract from the thought of dying. By replacing the elicitor of death with that of men, the disgust function serves as a prophylactic to the ultimate reality: that death is inevitable.

### **Three Cases of Female Disgust: Violating and Strengthening Borders**

The female protagonists of *La prostituta* and *La Pálida* are three prostitutes who possess disparate, yet marked, relationships with the emotion of disgust. Each prostitute is situated at a different point along the trajectory of a life dedicated to the *mala vida* – Rosita, the novice virgin, Estrella, the syphilitic prostitute turned *buscona*, and Mari Pepa, the ex-prostitute turned *celestina* – an indication that disgust is tied not only to the

profession, but also a symptom of the condition of hypersensitivity to which the female is predisposed. The essence of the female is linked to sensation, “la manifestación de los nervios y del sentimiento” (Fernández, *López Bago* 82), a simple composition of “carne y entrañas, un soplo de vida que se renueva en los pulmones” (*La prostituta* 311). Therefore, disgust comes to be pathologized in the novel, a negative symptom of the hypersensitive characters that are driven by pleasure.

López Bago portrays disgust towards men and carnal activity as a necessary quality for psychologically sound, healthy virgin women. When Estrella first enters the brothel, she displays “esa repugnancia que la virgen siente hacia el contacto carnal” (37). Although she enters the brothel a virgin, Rosita is portrayed as a woman with boundless desire. “En la viciada virginidad de la huérfana”, fostered by the *folletín* and association with men, “no se habían producido las repugnancias al hombre” (129). The narrator quickly dispels the idea that Rosita suffered from hysteria, and claims that it was “algo peor, más horrible” (*La Pálida* 96). Rosita’s sexual aberrance explodes into nymphomania and lesbian desire, a desire that she carries out with Estrella, her body compared to an explosive volcano. This metaphor materializes on the body of Estrella:

¡Ah! la frase del cursi romanticismo <tengo un volcán en el corazón>, frase que oyó mil veces a sus adoradores del café, era gráfica con respecto a Rosita . . . [era] un terreno volcánico...[el corazón] era el volcán lleno de rojizos resplandores, de llamas que la abrasaban el pecho, calcinaban sus huesos y producían con sus penachos de humo aquellos desvanecimientos y vahídos, aquella asfixia en la bóveda del cráneo. (97)

The body of Rosita has become a living metaphor, much like the body of the Marqués that burns alive with syphilis, scorching the hands that touch him. Both of these characters represent the violation of a border, the first border being that of their own bodies. While Rosita possesses the nervous, overflowing passion of nymphomania, the Marqués symbolizes the threat of contagion, his rotting innards prefigured in a cathartic autopsy. Rosita, however, seeks to become contaminated and possesses the heightened sense of smell that was known to be a trademark physiological sign of the hysteric: “como rasgo denunciador de un temperamento imperioso que necesita satisfacer sus necesidades sexuales, destaca [López Bago] los cartílagos nasales muy movibles” (Fernández, “Moral social” 101). After her lesbian encounter with Estrella, Rosita inhales the traces of her scent, which Rosita carries on her hand: “llevábase la [mano] derecha a las narices para ir oliendo todavía lo que en ella se hubo impregnado al acariciar *La Pálida*, olor a perfume, a polvos de arroz y al sudor de aquellos abrazos frenéticos, dados y recibidos por las dos mujeres” (103). Her skin penetrated by the scent of *La Pálida*, Rosita inhales the scent further into her body, thus completing a violation of her self border. Curiously, in her other hand Rosita carries the money that *La Pálida* had given to her previous to their tryst. Fernández points out that as the woman was considered biologically programmed to seek pleasure through the senses, “está predispuesta a caer las redes del comercio amoroso, pues su sensibilidad, más desarrollada que la del varón, le mueve a desear con mayor fuerza los placeres derivados de la riqueza” (87). Rosita epitomizes female sensitivity to the material world, her first steps into the brothel marked by the scent of perfumed clothing, the touch of the thick rug on her feet and the warmth of the chimney (100).

While Rosita comes to represent the desire to violate borders and engage with that which should remain at a distance, Mari Pepa, an ex-prostitute who runs the brothel along with Arístides, is the character who reacts most violently and readily to the disgusting throughout *La prostituta*. As the novel begins, the reader is introduced to her past, undoubtedly to demonstrate the determinist cycle of prostitution to which Estrella will quickly be introduced. Nonetheless, one characteristic of her early years of prostitution becomes the focus: she experiences “insensibilidad”, and shares no pleasure with her numerous clients. Mari Pepa is but a: “limpio cuerpo que sabía copiar todas las dislocaciones y fingir todos los espasmos; aquellos ojos de mirar profundo, y aquella boca en que siempre brotaba y se repetía el besar frenético y el suspirar apasionado, eran no más que instrumentos de que se sirvió” (146). In addition to her dulled senses, attributed to the frigidity of “enervación mental” (149), Mari Pepa is mysteriously unmarred by syphilis, and her health is attributed, by her doctors, to a secret knowledge of profilaxia (141) or as a possible case of “idiosincrasia refractaria”, a mysterious immunity to disease.<sup>48</sup> In reality, Mari Pepa is dedicated to ritual cleanliness:

una limpieza extremada, con la cual conservó la sana frescura necesaria a la carne, viéndose en aquella andaluza reproducida y copiada la costumbre inglesa del baño frío en todo tiempo, hasta en los días de más crudo invierno, cosa que fue motivo de gran sorpresa y que ninguna tuvo suficiente valor para imitar. (145)

As “el caso más notable de enervación mental” (145), Mari Pepa is described as being both mentally and physically torpid, and associated with the cold. Mari Pepa’s lack of sensitivity is also associated with dead flesh, as her senses are resuscitated by Arístides; her feelings for Arístides simulate “el agradecimiento de la carne muerta hacia aquel que

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<sup>48</sup> See Fernández Note 31 in *La prostituta*.

la resuscita” (164). Like a dead body revived, Mari Pepa experiences a sexual heightening of the senses, her icy insensibility destroyed,<sup>49</sup> and displays symptoms of hysteria:

En ella, las repugnancias de los sentidos, que anulaban antes toda conmoción orgánica, al desaparecer de improviso, originaron tan profunda revolución y alteraciones tales, que, reemplazando la pasividad con fuerzas activas, perdió toda indolencia, adquiriendo en cambio la exquisita impresionabilidad de las naturalezas nerviosas, las frenéticas y terribles expansiones que convierten y modifican el desmayo, dándole los caracteres epilépticos. (164-65)

Repugnance in this context seems to signify a dulling of the senses, or “tedio” as defined by the *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana por La Academia Española* (1843). Her senses enlivened to hysteric proportions, Mari Pepa becomes the epitome of the aberrant female, one that feels sexual pleasure. However, Mari Pepa also becomes overtly sensitive to the disgusting and seeks to distance herself from contamination. Mari Pepa is the only character that verbalizes disgust towards the syphilitic Marqués de Villaperdida. When Arístides seeks her opinion of the Marqués, she retorts: “Ah, qué asco! Vámonos pronto; ¡tengo el estómago revuelto!” (171). Her reaction to the sight of the Marqués provokes a specifically physical reaction. After seeing the Marqués, Mari Pepa retains the sensation of his hands on her skin:

[T]ales ascos sentía por el contacto que tuvieron sus manos con el cuerpo del marqués, que se las lavó en la jofaina de la alcoba. – ¡Vaya, que parece el señor

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<sup>49</sup> Recall the reference to the metaphorical cold and ice in the scene in which she experiences her first orgasm.

un montón de basura! – comentó mientras se daba fuertes fricciones, hostigada por aquel asco que era en ella proverbial. (223)

Whereas previously Mari Pepa was disgusted by the sight of the Marqués, in this passage she is disturbed by her own physical contact with his body, and she draws the comparison between his body and garbage, a metaphor signifying waste and rejection. As a being defined by materiality and sensation, the idea of waste is manifested through Mari Pepa's hand-washing. Mari Pepa's ritual hand-washing is even more interesting when one considers that the antiseptic purposes of hand-washing had only recently been established in the arena of surgery about a decade earlier. Joseph Lister, a British surgeon, published articles on antiseptic surgery through sterilization with carbolic acid and the personal cleanliness of surgeons between 1867 and 1877 (Crowther and Dupree 98). Mari Pepa, however, washes her hands not because she has touched the Marqués, but as a physical manifestation of her disgust at the *thought* of his filth. Her "characteristic" disgust is characteristically feminine, as evidenced by the first description of the Marqués in the novel, conveyed as Aristides's memory. Although he recalls the rotting features of the Marqués, Arístides displays no direct indications of disgust:

Y cerrando sus ojos, volvió a ver, en sus recuerdos de la entrevista, la palidez amarillenta de aquel semblante demacrado, en que la piel era seca y térrea, y en el que eran sus ojos lo único que brillaba, con el brillo intenso de la calentura hética; vio también aquellos miembros enflaquecidos sin duda por los sudores nocturnos de esta misma fiebre subsistente; sintió el terrible calor de aquellas manos, y el olor infecto que, dominando el de los perfumes derramados en la ropa, exhalaba

el cuerpo del excelentísimo e ilustrísimo señor marques de Villaperdida. –Ese hombre está muy malo– pensó, resumiendo sus impresiones. (162)

Arístides describes the heat of the Marqués's body as "terrible", however he is not disgusted, and simply states that the Marqués must indeed be sick, a fact that leads the reader to believe that Arístides is not affected by his appearance.

Aside from Mari Pepa, the only other character whose contact with the Marqués is described in terms of disgust is Estrella who, blindfolded, submits herself to him before meeting the man who wins her virginity in the auction arranged by Arístides, Luis de Villaperdida. Without sight, Estrella experiences the diseased body of the Marqués first through the sense of touch, and she is grabbed by "una mano cuyo contacto quemaba y mojaba, una mano calenturienta" (296). Once Estrella has understood for what purpose she has been led to this dark room with an unknown man, the burning hands become repulsive; disgusted by the thought of having her virginity stolen by this unseen man, Estrella directs her disgust towards the contact with his warm body: "soltó las manos [de él], que tenía sujetas, y cuya sujeción le repugnaba, porque mojaban las suyas con el asqueroso sudor de la calentura" (296). Although Estrella has yet to discover that the Marqués suffers from syphilis, which he will quickly transmit to her, she identifies his body as a source of contamination.

Following her blind encounter, Estrella experiences three distinct occurrences in relation to disgust: de-sensitization, disgust at the thought of the life of prostitution that she has begun, and a nauseous self-disgust. Her body violated, penetrated and contaminated, Estrella "no sintió nada; se cerraron sus ojos, se entorpecieron sus sentidos" (300). This instance of lacking sensation is the seedling of *enervación mental*

that will affect Estrella in *La Pálida* and cause her to sever her relationship with the brothel by destroying her identification card. Juxtaposed with Rosita's virginal lack of repugnance towards men, Estrella displays increasing repugnance in *La Pálida* which the narrator explains is due to "el hastío resultante de la prostitución" (129). However, this disgust, directed at the notion of selling her body and less at the material signs of a disgusting body, is coupled with the lack of affective reaction to her life, a result of the *ocio* characteristic of the prostitute:

Hízose insensible, lo mismo a las caricias que a las afrentas, lo mismo a los abrazos del hombre que a las operaciones del médico, y como llegó a reprimir el grito de la voluptuosidad, llegó también a soportar sin una queja las violaciones del speculum, y los desgarramientos del bisturí [...] La vida afectiva estaba muerta en ella, o cuando más enervada. (46)

Already becoming the "carne muerta" that characterized Mari Pepa in a state of *enervación mental*, Estrella reacts only to the sounds of the brothel and the meaning association with those sounds, the sounds of the "la gigantesca máquina pornográfica" reminding her that the women had to offer themselves to any man, "ser cuerpo alquilado por horas" (300). As she contemplates the muffled sighs, laughter, and "una palabra de amor, dicha en un arrebato con voz demasiado alta," Estrella becomes physically affected: "sintió volver sus ascos y repetirse la náusea" (300). As she recalls the man that she was with, Estrella identifies the vivid senses associated with his body that lead her to believe that he is a leper, the living dead: "Aquel olor infecto, aquellas manos sudorosas y calenturientas, sí, aquello era la lepra" (301). Believing that she has inhaled the repugnant, fetid breath of the devil (301), she develops disgust towards her own body,

which she believes to be infected with leprosy, verified by the painful sores that have appeared on her body. As if attempting to avoid infecting herself, “andaba separando las piernas, teniendo asco de sí misma” (302). Susan Miller points out that self-disgust is typically based on an internal moral conflict (67). In this scene, Estrella is disgusted not only by her disease, but by her inauguration into the condemned life of a prostitute. Therefore, her efforts to avoid her infected leg’s contact with the other in self-disgust is indeed a material manifestation of the self-directed disgust and shame of her state.

In this scene, the reader notices the many ways in which various stages of disgust reflect the rapidly developing associations that Estrella creates between notions of contamination and the senses of the body. The sounds of the brothel ignite thoughts of her life of prostitution, a notion that disgusts her and causes her nausea. At the same time, the physical sight of her infection with leprosy is in and of itself disgusting, as she is unable to soothe or cure the painful sores. Furthermore, Estrella’s disgust with her own body is manifested in her attempts to literally separate from herself, as she attempts to avoid contact between her infected legs. Curiously, this self-disgust turns into a desire to infect others and spread her disease throughout the city: “Vengarse... de la sociedad entera; y puesto que ella estaba enferma, enfermar a cuantos pudiera, extender, propagar el contagio; hacer de Madrid un pueblo maldito de leprosos” (303).

This desire to infect materializes into physical contamination at the beginning of *La Pálida*. The novel opens with the preparations for an orgy of dinner and women by the members of *La Botica*, a group of syphilitic libertines of all walks of society that refuse medical cures and instead accept their fatal disease and participate in ravenous debauchery in the name of Death. ¡Viva la Muerte! and ¡Viva la Pálida! echo throughout

the restaurant as Estrella enters, newly dubbed “la Boticaria.” Consumed by the disease and dedicated to a life of excess, Estrella orders opulent wines only to purposely spill them by the glass full across the tables of the restaurant, an idea that catches on with the rest of *La Botica* who drunkenly imitate her. Now that Estrella has been infected, her relationship with disgust and the notion of contamination has changed. Rather than making efforts to cure herself and avoid spreading the disease, Estrella delights in creating messes and spreading filth:

Volcó los platillos de anchoas y cucharadas de salsa, y aquellas manchas de grasa y vino se extendían con inmenso contentamiento y regocijo de la buscona; pero lo que más la entusiasmó fue la asquerosidad al verterse el tarro de la mostaza, que formaba una gran plasta amarillenta sucia. (29)

As a clear symbol of Death, as noted by the interchangeable chants of ¡Viva la Muerte! and ¡Viva la Pálida! by the members of “La Botica,” the notion of spreading disease is reflected in her relationship with disgust. Her metaphorical stain of syphilis is materialized in her desire to “emborronar aquella blancura” of the tablecloths and “ensuciar tan inmaculada pureza” (28). Not only is she engaged in contamination, she promotes it, eagerly, not carelessly, creating stains and messes and inspiring her fellow libertines to do the same. This symbolic spreading of disease is reflected in her depiction as the fallen woman who is spattered with the filth of vice, a filth that she intends to spread to others, particularly Luis de Villaperdida:

Puesto que toda una grandeza de España al fango iba a buscarla, justo era que la obligase a revolcarse con ella, a oler aquella pestilencia, y así, cuando a ella se le

antojare, podía hacer que este fango saltase y manchara la frente del noble. (149-50)

Her initial episode of infection is recalled twice in *La Pálida* and it continues to be a memory that provokes disgust in Estrella. However, when she returns to the memory, the disgust associated with the disease is framed solely as self-directed disgust: “Estaba enferma, había perdido la salud con la honra, adquiriendo una de esas repugnantes lepras de la carne, que provocan en el que las tiene el asco de sí mismo” (39). As the rape by the Marqués is recounted, Estrella’s body is portrayed as the locus of the operations of disgust, the point of origin and the vehicle of contamination; although it is acknowledged that the Marqués indeed infected her, disgust is directed towards her own body.

After three visits to the hospital of San Juan de Dios, Estrella finds herself with a newly inflamed infection of syphilis and, although she attributes her infection to Luis de Villaperdida,<sup>50</sup> she is disturbed by this cycle of disease. “¡Conque es decir que su destino y su maldita suerte habían de ser siempre lo mismo!” she remarks to herself. “¡Conque es decir que existía algo en su temperamento, que la predisponía al contagio de todo lo más nauseabundo y de los más degradantes dolores!” (197-98). Although she has severed her relationship with the brothel, Estrella’s existence is condemned and her life is predetermined to be riddled with disease and pain. It follows, then, when Estrella learns the identity of the man that infected her with syphilis, she is disgusted by the confirmation that, despite her efforts to protect herself, her life has been designed to destruct since the day she entered the brothel. When Arístides reveals that it was Luis’s father that bought her virginity, Estrella thinks to herself: “Después del padre, el hijo. De manera que todo

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<sup>50</sup> Despite admonitions by his doctor who forbids him to infect and kill a woman for the sake of extending his bloodline (111), Luis continues to have sexual relations with Estrella.

aquello era una consecuencia y encadenamiento lógico de sucesos. – ¡Ah! ¡qué asco! ¡Esto es horrible!” (200). The realization that just as Luis had inherited the title, disease and lover of his father, Estrella too had joined a cycle of condemnation. When Arístides replies to Estrella’s disgust with an indifferent comment that suggests a surrender to the determined path of her life—“¡Qué le hemos de hacer! ¡Cosas de la vida!” — Estrella contemplates the disturbing determinism that conditions her life: “No, no era verdad. ¿Cómo podían suceder tales cosas? En la vida acontecen hechos inverosímiles. Pero si aquello no resultaba inverosímil. Era repugnante” (201). This passage provides pivotal insight as to what disgust signifies in this novel. The fact that Estrella’s disgust is directed towards the overarching social design that has locked her into an oppressive cycle indicates the underlying motivation for the novel in which, as Pura Fernández attributes to the entire group of *naturalistas radicales*, the female is present as “el símbolo de la opresión socio-moral” (“Moral social” 109). Arístides’s casual response to what for Estrella is a shocking, repugnant situation demonstrates his alignment with the powers that perpetuate the cycle, however it is apparent that Estrella is shocked by his attitude precisely because such an everyday occurrence seems unreal, but isn’t. Estrella identifies the development of events as *inverosímil*, an implausible scenario that suggests fiction rather than reality.

In this exchange, the reader notices the important juxtaposition that is established between an “authentic” reality (the events that occurred the night Estrella was infected by the Marqués) and an unlikely, exaggerated situation that does not actually reflect the events that transpired. Disgust is in fact the marker of that reality and incites a reaction that, in the world that López Bago has constructed, connects the mind and body to that

reality. Beyond explicit insistence, López Bago juxtaposes a jarring, disgusting reality with the fictitious veil that shrouds it. As previously mentioned, the “parodia mal hecha” of prostitution is juxtaposed with the shameful nausea of both the prostitutes and the johns that knowingly engage in that parody. In *The Critique of Judgement*, Kant postulated that one could not successfully incorporate the disgusting into a work of art as its hyperreality destroys all sense of illusion. “I am disgusted,” Winifred Menninghaus clarifies, “– therefore I experience something as unconditionally real (not at all as art)” (9).

[I]n this strange sensation, which depends purely on the imagination, the object is represented as insisting, as it were, upon our enjoying it, while we still set our face against it, the artificial representation of the object is no longer distinguishable from the nature of the object itself in our sensation, and so it cannot possibly be regarded as beautiful. (Kant 115)

Curiously, the hyperreality of the disgusting that breaks with an illusion is featured in the visit to the doctor’s office in *La Pálida*. As Estrella looks around the office, she finds that all the paintings consist of various reliefs “cuyos relieves no eran otra cosa que las diferentes partes del cuerpo humano despellejadas, mostrando al descubierto arterias, músculos y entrañas, de tal suerte imitados, que repugnaba a la vista” (224). It is at this doctor’s visit that Estrella comes to the realization that she is going to die of syphilis, and decides to accept her fate (227). Health is depicted as being an appearance, a mask that covers a gruesome, inevitable reality. To emphasize the fiction of health, López Bago repeatedly refers to Estrella as a work of art.

[U]na reproducción de la Venus de Milo, que no era lo que estrechaban en sus brazos la carne sana que se desborda en exuberantes curvas, entusiasmo del pincel de Rubens, sino la carne herida y mal curada cuya opulencia es sólo ficticia, siendo lo real la hinchazón producida por los preparados mercuriales. ¡Ah! ¡la medicina! a todas horas tiene sobre la mesa de su anfiteatro el cadáver del romanticismo. (126)

The sign of reality on Estrella's body is a protruding welt, the anomalous indicator of the true state of the disease that will overcome her body. The medicine that provides a "fictitious life" (241) is referred to as "un procedimiento de falsificación y engaño" that postpones the inevitable end (230). The thought of death is deflected at various points throughout *La Pálida*, considering that the balance leans much closer to death than life for many of the characters. Luis de Villaperdida fills his home with paintings and furniture, "aquel lujo, aquel boato aristocrático hecho para amar la vida y no acordarse de la muerte" (172). The members of "La Botica" engage in a life of consumption so as to counteract the degeneration of their syphilitic bodies: "allí se moría, no como mueren los valientes, sino como han muerto siempre los desesperados. Se moría con la copa en la mano, risueño el labio y rodeando con el brazo la cintura de una mujer hermosa y casi desnuda" (8). Although the copious amounts of food are described in great detail, López Bago calls particular attention to the tiny Viennese rolls: "no sirven para alimento, sino para hacer más verosímil la hipótesis del apetito en los que se sientan a comer sin haber conocido nunca el hambre" (6). Simulated hunger is necessary when the diners are not eating to satiate their hunger but to forget that they will die.

The memory of the auction and the infectious night that followed is particularly painful for Estrella, and she seeks to compensate with laughter in order to block out the thought. When Luis reminds her of that night, Estrella bursts out in laughter: “Era una risa nerviosa, falsa, una carcajada que parecía inextinguible, porque la buscona la necesitaba muy grande, muy fuerte, muy ruidosa para cubrir, para tapar, para ensordecen con ella una herida, ancha y profunda, un dolor intenso (107). As we have seen, Estrella reacts with disgust at the thought that such a seemingly *inverosímil* act had truly taken place. Indeed, the idea of the auction disgusted Luis for the very same reason when he first learned of it in *La prostituta*. Suddenly, the novelesque quality of the brothel and his relationship with Estrella became a sickening, amoral, albeit exotic truth: “Luis estaba asustado de aquella broma grosera, repugnante, brutal. Ahora ya no se acordaba de los cuentos de Boccaccio, sino de los bazares de esclavas en Oriente, de las ceremonias, ventas y contratos del África central entre los negreros y las tribus salvajes” (273). His disgust is indeed a marker of the contemptible authentic in the face of fantasy that López Bago associates with Romanticism. The nausea that surfaces from within those that experience an object, a character, or a notion as *disgusting* is the physical manifestation of rejection: the notion of death.

By conveying a highly symbolic yet materially-grounded reality, López Bago provides a unique arena for conveying the indisputably real through the equally indisputable, yet equally metaphorical, mechanism of disgust. After all, the existence of the Villaperdida brothels is owed to the pursuit of *cleanliness*: after fatally infecting his wife with syphilis, the Marqués seeks to launder his sin by sending the earnings from the brothel to the Vatican. The “agua estancada del cenegal” of vice will be purified in

Rome where “estas inmundicias [...] caen convertidas en flores místicas de la caridad” (329). The juxtaposition of cleanliness and filth in the novel is mediated by emotion of disgust, the conscious negotiation of meaning that manifests as revulsion. This revulsion, as we have seen, is not only the conversion of the conceptual into material, but a physical distraction from the overwhelming threat of the conceptual. In her insightful article “Doing Things,” Jo Labanyi suggested that a study of the workings of affect in the *folletines* and sensational novels of the Spanish *fin de siglo* could provide a significant re-evaluation of the texts (230). Perhaps my reading of *La prostituta* has revealed another side to a novel that has been unilaterally criticized for pandering to the masses with sex, for a blinded (or entirely incompetent) interpretation of the theories of a master French novelist, and for a clumsy pastiche of grime and gunk. We have seen that the grime of *La prostituta* is more than a sensational tool. Yes, disgust makes the body shudder, but in order to reinforce its boundaries, to banish the thought of dying. Disgust is, perhaps, the most vivid metaphorical mechanism that makes the concept of death real to the living, and real on the living body itself. What López Bago provides in his *novela médico-social* is evidence of the ways in which language approaches a representation of death through emotion – an authentic, bodily reaction to the threat of death.

## CHAPTER 4

### “ESCALATING” E/MOTION: APPROXIMATING DEATH IN *FORTUNATA Y JACINTA*

There is scarcely any other matter . . . upon which our thoughts and feelings have changed so little since the very earliest times, and in which discarded forms have been so completely preserved under a thin disguise, as that of our relation to death. Two things account for our conservatism: the strength of our original emotional reaction to it, and the insufficiency of our scientific knowledge about it.

Sigmund Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” 1919

Hay horas en la vida que parecen siglos por las mudanzas que traen.

Galdós, *Fortunata y Jacinta*, IV: 2.4, 1887

Shortly after the death of Mauricia la Dura, Fortunata nervously awaits the viewing of the remains. Through a crack in the door, she catches a glimpse of Mauricia’s feet in the coffin and cannot bring herself to see anymore. “Dábale pena y terror, y no podía olvidar las últimas palabras que le dijo su infeliz amiga: ‘Lo primerito que he de pedir al Señor es que te mueras tú también, y estaremos juntas en el Cielo’”. Startled by the thought, Fortunata encourages herself: “Cada uno se muere cuando le toca, y nada más.” Nonetheless, Fortunata is disturbed by the sight of the feet, and changes her seat to avoid seeing them, “calzados con bonitas botas de caña clara; pies preciosísimos que no darían ya un solo paso” (847). However, as the door swings opens, “Fortunata tuvo un estremecimiento nervioso, creyendo al pronto que era la propia Mauricia que aparecía. . . Pero no, era Guillermina” (848).

Although the publication of *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1887) predates Sigmund Freud by a number of decades, one notes the unmistakable realization of the Freudian theory of the Uncanny in this brief passage. In his 1919 treatise, Freud states that feelings of the Uncanny are provoked by two types of situations: “either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed” (157). Despite her reassuring, Fortunata maintains a lingering belief that perhaps Mauricia’s promise to bring her to heaven *could* be true, and this is evidenced by her expectation that Mauricia might walk through the door. The conflict between the intellect and the reappearance of once-surmounted beliefs generates feelings of the Uncanny (i.e. the return of the dead, or the existence of supernatural power or magic). The uncertainty produced by the confusion between fantasy and reality, inspired by such uncanny phenomena as the Doppelganger or the theme of the life-like doll,<sup>51</sup> also appear in Fortunata’s discomfort at the sight of Mauricia’s feet – although she is surely dead, the new boots give Fortunata the impression that the corpse will rise and walk. This is evidenced later on when in a dream, Fortunata not only fuses the characters of Mauricia and Guillermina, but she sees Mauricia rise and approach her: “[V]eía las botas elegantes y pequeñas de la difunta . . . Los pies se movían, el cuerpo se levantaba, daba algunos pasos, iba hacia ella y le decía: ‘[...] Si no me he muerto, chica, si estoy en el mundo, créetelo porque yo te digo. Soy Guillermina’”(859). The “revival” of Mauricia in the character in Guillermina is a motif is woven through the novel’s discourse and forms part of the overarching portrait of ambiguous or blended identities depicted in the novel.

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<sup>51</sup> See Freud’s analysis of Hoffman’s story “The Sand-Man” (132-40).

The repeated narrative moments that recall previous characters, events and conversations not only reveal the complexity of the interconnected world that Galdós creates, but it calls attention to the careful plotting that effects those connections. In his examination of narrative plotting, Peter Brooks engages with psychoanalysis and postulates that the reading of plot emulates the workings of desire, an impulse that “carries us forward, onward, through the text” (*Reading* 37). Plots themselves represent demarcation; plot is a hermetic entity bound by beginning and end. Therefore, Brooks argues that the drive that pushes us through a plot is imitative of the Freudian death drive. “It is my simple conviction,” Brooks states, “that narrative has something to do with time-boundedness, and that plot is the internal logic of the discourse of mortality” (37). Interpreting Walter Benjamin’s claim that fictional death provides knowledge to the reader that is unavailable to him in his own life, Brooks sees plotting as a race for meaning, a by-product of secularization that effaces and replaces the “sacred masterplot” with a desire for an overarching, traceable explanation (6). In particular, Brooks highlights the great, heavily plotted novels of the nineteenth century as evidence that both writers and readers “were engaged in a prime, irreducible act of understanding how human life acquires meaning” (xii). According to Brooks, this act of understanding depends greatly on recognizably repeated codes, what Barthes describes as the *déjà lu* in *S/Z*, that hinge on the literary competence of both the writer and the reader (19). Bridging this notion of literary competence with the compulsion towards achievement of “the end,” Brooks argues that the death drive reveals itself precisely through the literary tools of repetition that feed the momentum of the plot and reinforce the connectedness of its elements:

[R]hyme, alliteration, assonance, meter, refrain, all the mnemonic elements of literature and indeed most of its tropes are in some manner repetitions that take us back in the text, that allow the ear, the eye, the mind to make connections, conscious or unconscious, between different textual moments, to see past and present as related and as establishing a future that will be noticeable as some variation in the pattern. (99)

Brooks makes a brief reference to the Uncanny, noting that compulsive repetition signifies a demonic undertone, in that perceived repeated phenomena – people, experiences, places, etc. – indicate the operation of powerful unseen forces whose existence has been repressed as primordial superstition. The “involuntary return to the same thing,” illustrated by Freud’s personal account of accidentally returning to the same Italian street three consecutive times, produces a feeling of helplessness by “forc[ing] upon us the idea of something fateful and unescapable [*sic*] where otherwise we should have spoken of ‘chance’ only” (144). Brooks’s reference to the death drive is an interesting way to conceive of the momentum of the plot towards its enlightening end, however I suggest that it is only the beginning of a discussion regarding the implicit “discourse of mortality” that he claims exists in plotting and the process of meaning-making achieved through narrative. The robust emotional reaction that is triggered by a confrontation with death undoubtedly affects narration, and this chapter examines the ways in which emotional dynamics shape the scenes that end in death.

Freud’s discussion of the Uncanny calls attention to the extent to which emotion dominates a confrontation with death, and the ways in which emotion is amplified in the face of the unknown. Freud’s interpretation of the Uncanny depends on a clash between

reason and lingering superstition. He illuminates his discussion with examples of literary fiction, a medium he acknowledges as ripe for blurred distinctions between reality and imagination, but he insists that Uncanny feelings arise in the reader only when “the writer pretends to move in the world of common reality” (159); for if setting or plot seem arbitrary or impossible, the feeling of Uncanny cannot exist. The conflict between reality and fantasy, and the ensuing salience of ambiguity and its disorienting effects in the *oeuvre* of Galdós have been studied by various critics. Peter B. Goldman suggests that his skill lies in “his grasp of the ambiguous, in his ability to see and portray all points of view, all contradictions, all conflicts with a single personality or class” (99). He notes, for example, the confusing, carnivalesque description of the urban milieu with which *Nazarín* begins; “Everything,” he notes, “tells us that things are not what they seem” (101). Jacques Maurice echoes Goldman’s observation regarding ambiguous characters that embody a social class: “no son ni monstruos, ni ángeles, lo que conlleva *ipso facto* el riesgo de desorientar al público lector y a la crítica” (188). The disorienting nature of his works is in some ways related to the task of depicting the fantastic phenomena of the mind through realistic narration (Oliver 250).<sup>52</sup>

Our emotional reactions before such disturbing situations are perhaps so pervasive because, as Freud himself claims, it is the lack of knowledge regarding death that leaves room for superstition to leak back into consciousness.<sup>53</sup> While some critics have

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<sup>52</sup> See Oliver for an analysis of Galdós’s inverted treatment of fantasy and reality in an early short story, “La novela en el tranvía”; see Krauel for an excellent analysis of the inversion of reason and insanity in *Fortunta y Jacinta*.

<sup>53</sup> “We – or our primitive forefathers – once believed in the possibility of these things and were convinced that they really happened. Nowadays we no longer believe in them, we have *surmounted* such ways of thought; but we do not feel quite sure of our new set of beliefs, and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation. As soon as something actually happens in our lives which seems to support the old, discarded beliefs we get a feeling of the uncanny; and it is as though we were making a judgment something like this: ‘So, after all, it is true that one can kill a person by merely desiring his death!’ or,

addressed the significance of ambiguity on a symbolic level,<sup>54</sup> I contend such ambivalence creates a significant feeling of tension and irreconcilability that affects the momentum of the narration. I do not propose a Freudian reading of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, nor do I intend to further characterize the novel's death scenes as emblematic of the Uncanny. Rather, I take the implicit tension of the Uncanny as a point of departure for a discussion of the manifest presence of feeling in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, and the way in which the feeling of foreboding shapes the narration of scenes of symbolic and narrated death.

In his efforts to describe the impossibility of representing the nothingness of death, Garrett Stewart makes an intriguing suggestion: "Mimesis may itself seem inoperable," he remarks, death "being all presentiment, never direct presentation" (55). Stewart's book pursues the ways in which the author stylistically makes death present itself, however his qualification of death as presentiment is provocative. The ways in which death reveals itself, the ways in which one experiences the confrontation of death necessarily *precedes the sensorial*. Stewart's argument relies on the notion that an author must cloak this emptiness with style, classifying death as the utmost in fictional representation. However, how is the foreboding associated with death realized in fiction? If death truly is presentiment, is this innate quality that precedes and leads to absence realized in fiction, and, if so, in what ways? This chapter examines the ways in which death constitutes a preemptive, driving component of narration.

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"Then the dead do continue to live and appear before our eyes on the scene of their former activities!", and so on" (155-56).

<sup>54</sup> See Lott for a discussion of the use of the free indirect style and its affect on the rhetoric of ambiguity in *Misericordia*.

## The Meaning of the Body

In *The Meaning of the Body*, Mark Johnson postulates that all meaning is derived from corporeal experience: “It arises from our feeling of qualities, sensory patterns, movement, changes, and emotional contours” (70). According to Johnson, the meaning that one draws from experience begins and ends in the body: we judge that which is meaningful to us by unconsciously monitoring our bodily state as we interact with the world (57). Furthermore, Johnson draws on the idea of a “felt meaning,” postulated by Eugene Gendlin, to demonstrate the emotional aspect of meaning that precedes cognition: “You *have* meaning, or are *caught up* in meaning, before you actually experience meaning reflectively” (79). Gendlin recognizes strong emotions as instances in which meaning is *felt*, however “because our verbal symbols usually are inadequate, we are aware strongly of felt meaning” (71). Gendlin notes that while we may verbally explicate some meaning, most of what we feel goes unspoken but is nonetheless perceived by a vague, internal, bodily awareness. Gendlin focuses on the nonlinguistic dimension of words, and describes the ways in which “felt meaning” is intrinsically related to words and realized through them. Interestingly, Gendlin assigns a feeling of forward-movement to language, and gives the example of a writer searching for the “right” words:

Our bodies shape the next thing we say, and perform many other implicit functions essential to language. That is how our next words ‘come’ from the body, just as hunger, orgasm, and sleep *come* in a bodily way, and just as food-search comes in an animal. It is familiar that after inhaling the body implies exhaling, and when in danger it totals up the situation and its muscles and blood circulation imply fighting, or quite differently, may imply running, or again

differently, it may paralyze itself and freeze. [...] Our bodies imply the next words and actions to carry our situations forward. (qtd. in Johnson 84)

This passage illustrates the ways in which a “felt meaning” arises before cognition that ushers experience forward. Following John Dewey, Johnson suggests that art exemplifies the intensified and highly integrated experience of meaning. In his singular example of embodied meaning in prose fiction, Johnson analyzes a passage from Camus’s *The Stranger* in which the protagonist follows the funeral procession of his mother down the street in the hot sun. Johnson notes the ways in which the collection of images, colors and sensorial input “carries” the reader by evoking subtle feelings. “We do not really *think* about what is transpiring as we read this passage,” he suggests, “so much as we *feel* and *experience* the qualitative whole that pervades and unifies the entire scene” (224). The endlessness of the procession and the relentlessness of the heat carry the meaning of the passage.

In *Fortunata y Jacinta* there are similar phenomena that often relate directly to a character’s perception of identity. One of the most striking examples is Jacinta’s hesitant identification of Juanito Santa Cruz’s son at the orphanage owned by Fortunata’s uncle. Jacinta desires to adopt the young boy that she believes to be Juanito’s lovechild with Fortunata, especially after she notes a resemblance to Juanito in his face. Yet, they are fleeting; as soon as she notes the features in *Pituso*’s face, “otra vez le pareció que el parecido se borraba” (239). Later, she notes: “cuando la fisonomía del *Pituso* estaba embadurnada creyó Jacinta advertir en ella un gran parecido con Juanito Santa Cruz, al mirarla en su natural ser, aunque no efectivamente limpia, el parecido se había desvanecido” (234). Although his physical features do not change, *Pituso*’s identity

oscillates between the son of Santa Cruz and that of an anonymous child. While later it will be revealed that the true *Pituso* had already died, and that Jacinta in fact was being duped, it is significant that the false *Pituso* assumes a shifting identity – he is and is not the son of Santa Cruz.

The fluid identity of *Pituso* causes a vacillating doubt in Jacinta, a doubt that influences the flow of the narration. Feelings of tension and hesitation are present in the narration of Jacinta's examination of *Pituso*'s face. As Johnson points out, "Such felt bodily experiences are not merely accomplishments of doubt; rather, they *are* your doubt" (53). Therefore, readers not only understand Jacinta's doubt through her capriciousness but also through the dynamic hesitation and relief apparent in the text:

Cuando la fisonomía del *Pituso* estaba embadurnada creyó Jacinta advertir en ella un gran parecido con Juanito Santa Cruz, al mirarla en su natural ser, aunque no efectivamente limpia, el parecido había desvanecido. <<No se parece>> pensaba entre alegre y desalentada. (234)

The tension of the wavering similarity between Juan and the *Pituso* remains unresolved, as Jacinta feels a mixture of happiness and disappointment. As she waits to speak with Izquierdo regarding the adoption of *Pituso*, this unresolved feeling coincides with a sense of fear, due to the tiny, cluttered room in which she waits with her servant. This heightened fear is assuaged – "Algo se tranquilizaba oyendo muy cerca el guitarreo" – however the narrator intervenes on the part of the servant Rafaela, who is on high alert as she imagines how they might defend themselves against Izquierdo should he attack them – sticking a poker in his eye (234). As Jacinta surveys the room, she spots a hair portrait which she inquires about; "la curiosidad le alivió por un instante el miedo" (234), and

there is a sense of relief from the fear. This relief shortly builds into excitement; she suddenly catches a fleeting resemblance between Juan and *Pituso*: “Jacinta examinó al *Pituso* chico y..., cosa rara, volvió a advertir parecido con el gran *Pituso*. Le miró más, y mientras más le miraba, más semejanza. ¡Santo Dios!” (235) Building from the ellipsis, a parenthetical space that substitutes Jacinta’s identification the resemblance, Jacinta sees a resemblance, and her conviction builds as she watches him more, culminating in an exclamation that signifies her realization of the potential of this adoption. Her conviction continues to build: “<<Es, es...>>”, she insists. Her certainty solidifies and builds as she devours his image: “Pensó con profunda convicción, comiéndose a miradas la cara” (236).

Nonetheless, her certainty suddenly breaks into anger at the sight of the features of his mother: “Veía en [su cara] las facciones que amaba; pero allí había además otra desconocidas” (236). Interestingly, shortly after, there is a pervasive feeling of intensification: “El ruido de la guitarra y de los cantos de los ciegos arreció considerablemente, uniéndose al estrépito de tambores de Navidad” (239). This sense of mounting drama peaks when Jacinta gives “Juanín” a candy and takes him in her arms: “Otra vez le pareció que el parecido se borraba” (239). At this point, Jacinta decides to proceed with caution and decides that Guillermina will be in charge of determining his lineage. The fluctuation of Jacinta’s doubt and certainty is accompanied by a crescendo/decrecendo of dynamic feelings (happiness, disappointment, fear, anger) as well as dynamic music of the guitar and drums that also build and subside to the rhythm of her doubt. The repetition and intensity of her gaze upon *Pituso* and the correlating mounting certainty should build into a climactic moment of anagnorisis. However, it is

periodically deflated, her certainty punctuated with defeats as the resemblance disappears, and therefore the chapter closes without a resolution.

One might argue that the fluctuating image of *Pituso*'s face is the visual, albeit subjective, manifestation of Jacinta's doubt regarding the identity of the child.<sup>55</sup> However, there are repeated instances in the novel in which, through the use of passive voice – “no se sabía” – it is implied that neither character nor narrator can clearly identify the sound or emotion that they perceive.<sup>56</sup> The inherent “rise and fall” associated with Jacinta's interiority provides meaning to the scene, driving it forward. It is not only the language itself that communicates Jacinta's doubt. The doubt is located in the silence of her hesitations and of the ellipsis, her dynamic emotions in the crescendo/decrecendo of the gerund and imperfect verbs forms (comiéndose, uniéndose, tranquilizaba, borraba), countered with the suddenness of the preterit (“volvió a advertir un parecido,” pareció, arreció). The implied motion of these terms co-assembles with the fluctuating emotions of the scene to complete the meaning of experience. Mark Johnson points out that the emotional meaning of an experience is indissoluble from its practical and intellectual meaning. Although each of these three facets of meaning may come to the fore in particular circumstances, each facet of meaning is equally significant to our understanding of experience.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Barbarita also sees a similarity between Juanito and *Pituso*, but she does not waver as Jacinta does. When Jacinta asks if Barbarita agrees that there is resemblance, she eagerly responds. “¡Que si se parece! – observó Barbarita tragándole con los ojos-. Clavado, hija, clavado... ¿Pero qué duda tiene? Me parece que estoy mirando a Juan cuando tenía cuatro años” (290).

<sup>56</sup> For example, the description of Sor Marcela: “Al andar parecía desbaratarse y hundirse del lado izquierdo imprimiendo en el suelo un golpe seco que *no se sabía* si era de pie de palo o del propio muñón del hueso roto” (503-4). Fortunata crawls into bed: “Al meterse en la cama y estirar los huesos exhalaba un ¡ah!, que *no se sabía* si era de dolor o de gusto” (832). Later, Fortunata hears voices and “*no se podía saber* si eran de gozo o de ira” (834).

<sup>57</sup> For example, Johnson notes that we call an experience *emotional* when we call attention to “the felt quality of its emotional valence,” *practical* when we distinguish the outcome or interests of an experience,

Eugene Gendlin argues that the meaning we gather from experience is largely implicit. Therefore, to “explicate the implicit” by assigning it form is a futile endeavor since form cannot substitute implicit meaning (“Philosophy” 4). When we assign form and signs to experience, Gendlin believes that we neglect the inarticulable complexity of experience. In the case of representing death, one finds a similar quandary – it is an experience that defies symbolic articulation. However, the emotional meaning of death seems to figure more prominently than other bearers of meaning, as language, for example, constitutes a faulty recourse for capturing the experience of death. As Johnson noted in his analysis of the funeral procession in *The Stranger*, rather than think about the scene, the reader understands it through *feeling*. We must ask, then, what is understood by the meaning of irreconcilable images in *Fortunata y Jacinta*? Looking beyond the ambiguity of identity, the liminality of space in the novel connotes a sense of unresolved transition – for example, the space at the edge of the city where Fortunata follows a funeral procession is at once “here” and “there.” This sense of liminality is further depicted when the narrator describes the *sillar* upon which Fortunata sits as “un sillar de los que allí hay y que no se sabe si son restos o preparativos de obras municipales” (884). The giant slabs of stone cannot be identified, by character or narrator, as means of construction or the evidence of decrepitude.<sup>58</sup> I suggest that this particular state of oscillating creation and destruction will come to embody the transitory moment of death in the novel.

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and *intellectual* when we emphasize the thoughts that arise throughout the development of the experience (74).

<sup>58</sup> It is important to note that this precise image is repeated in *Miau*, seen by Luisito as he walks along a large expanse of land, watching troops practice. The land is described in the following terms: “se ve hoy, ocupado por sillares, baldosas, adoquines, restos o preparativos de obras municipales” (155). Although this image has a less significant meaning in *Miau* it is worth noting that the “undecidability” of the image is emphasized in both instances.

In his brilliant study of the treatment of death in Modern British fiction, Garrett Stewart notes that because death eludes mimetic representation in literature, accounts of death provide no insight into the workings of mortality. “Set trembling before the imponderability of death,” he writes, “prose may shiver into ambivalent divisions where it can neither define nor with conviction divine, into puns rather than epiphanies” (56). Purely style, purely form, a representation of death is the ultimate work of fiction. However, in addition to the form – the language and style – that is tasked with the impossible portrayal of death, there is the embodied, “felt” meaning that accompanies it. Garrett alludes to such a feeling when he describes death in terms of movement and time: “Dying may be traversal, grief a going on, but death is always interval – preemptive, empty” (59). In other words, death is embodied by an anticipation and foreboding that evaporate into nothingness. If, as Stewart claims, death is “all presentiment, never direct presentation,” the representation of death is inherently imbued with “felt” meaning, as presentiment and foreboding are *feelings* that precisely precede the awareness of the senses and the cognitive realization of death (55).

Drawing on the sense of “carrying forward” to which both Gendlin and Johnson refer, this chapter will examine the extent to which embodied meaning intensifies the representation of death in *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Like Bronfen, who defines the limits of death as states of emotion, Stewart describes death in terms of a subtle *feeling* – a foreboding, anxiety, a tenacious presence, a building fear. With this notion in mind, I propose that in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Galdós simulates an emotional trajectory that characterizes death as presentiment, particularly through the tone<sup>59</sup> of foreboding and the

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<sup>59</sup> With the word “tone” I recall Sianne Ngai’s definition of the term: “a literary text’s affective bearing, orientation, or ‘set toward’ its audience and the world” (43).

marked absence of climax. Furthermore, I analyze the narratological and symbolic import of the aforementioned scene of “restos y preparativos” and interpret this symbol as exemplary of the paradox of representing the unknowable state of death.

### **A Great Cobweb: interpretations of the presence of death in *Fortunata y Jacinta***

Joaquín Casaldueiro noted that considering the sheer number of characters that populate *Fortunata y Jacinta*, a disproportionate number die within its pages (91).

Casaldueiro finds evidence of death’s tacit presence in the multitude of funeral processions, coaches and coffins that garner no significant attention in the novel. Death itself is dry, emotionless and mechanical: “A pesar de que acudan los confesores y el viático, no hay nada espiritual; al morir, queda un cadáver, pasto para las moscas” (92). The character Moreno-Isla, he notes, is horrified not by death itself, but a dreadful last ride in a *cursi* funeral carriage: “no medita en la muerte, pero piensa en los carros fúnebres” (92). Stephen Gilman echoes this characterization of death in the novel, and considers the deathbed to be the area in which Galdós contemplates the flesh “with the relentless aplomb of the experienced ‘naturalist’” (292).

Although Gilman seems to overstate the detachment of the narrator from the events surrounding death, one might agree that in some instances death is treated with an unmistakable apathy. In fact, the narrator all but tells the reader directly that death should go unnoticed. When Juanito reveals to Jacinta that the true *Pituso* had died, he exclaims quite nonchalantly “¡Cosas del mundo!” (298). The memory of Mauricia “dries up” shortly after her body is taken away to the cemetery: “Pronto desapareció el carro, y de Mauricia no quedó más que un recuerdo, todavía fresco, pero que se había de secar

rápidamente” (856). The narrator reminds us that the death of Moreno-Isla is quite ordinary, being that “Por aquí y por allá caían en el mismo instante hojas y más hojas inútiles” (994). This reference to the omnipresence of death is detached, contrasting greatly with the sentimentalism with which Dickens, for example, addresses the pervasive presence of death in society in *Bleak House*.<sup>60</sup> As Casaldueiro notes, “[A los personajes] les llega el final de la vida dentro de la novela y queda anotado, nada más” (91). Or rather, it is followed by more death. Consider for example the death of Feijóo who, after descending into madness, dies in the final pages of the novel. This unnarrated death is only acknowledged as Maxi and Ballester leave the same cemetery after visiting Fortunata’s grave: “Cuando salían del cementerio, entraba un entierro con bastante acompañamiento. Era el de don Evaristo Feijoo. Pero los dos farmacéuticos no fijaron su atención en él” (1178). Feijóo’s death does not attract any special attention precisely because the flow of death is constant and uninteruptable.

Although he is unconvinced of the narrative weight of death in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Joaquín Casaldueiro qualifies its presence with a remarkable analogy: “la muerte [es] como una telaraña, como una red que envolviera todas esas vidas, toda la vida, está presente constantemente” (92). Nearly imperceptible, death overlays the entire plot. In one sense, this metaphor speaks to the ethereal quality of death. For example, when Jacinta contemplates the death of Fortunata and the bond that has been created between them, she feels compelled to embrace her. What ensues is an interesting interpretation of the coexistence of death and life: “Con la muerte de por medio, la una en la vida visible y la otra en la invisible, bien podría ser que las dos mujeres se miraran de orilla a orilla, con

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<sup>60</sup> At the death of Jo the sweeper boy, the narrator proclaims: “Dead, your Majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with Heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day” (734).

intención y deseos de darse un abrazo” (1170). The invisible world to which Galdós refers here is undoubtedly the world to which Fortunata now belongs; the spiritual, the afterlife, the after-death. Death, in this instance, is represented as the interval to which Stewart refers, the area that like an ocean divides the dead from the living. It is a space that is insuperable, irreconcilable by an arm’s length.<sup>61</sup>

The death/cobweb metaphor also calls attention to the notion of social connectivity that a death brings to the forefront. As Jacinta contemplates the death of Fortunata, Gilman sees an enmeshing of their beings: “Si en la parte primera Jacinta había pensado en su pobre rival con celos y recelo, ahora una Fortunata transfigurada en ella se convierte en una compañera” (315). While Fortunata had been her mortal enemy, through her death and the consequent adoption of Juan Evaristo, Jacinta feels that a sort of reconciliation has been accomplished. On other occasions the death of a character has repercussions on the social body. Imagining death as a cobweb inevitably calls attention to its function as a bearer of social connectivity: death echoes, disturbs, or otherwise

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<sup>61</sup> While this reference to the “invisible world” is a marked reference to the afterlife, it is not the only such reference in the novel. Those critics who have dedicated studies to the chapter entitled “Naturalismo espiritual” (III, 6) have been drawn to the repeated reference to the coexistence of two worlds. There is “el que se ve y el que no se ve”, as Juanito tells Jacinta during their honeymoon (I). Fortunata later repeats the idea: “un mundo que se ve, y otro que está debajo, escondido [...] la máquina que no se ve” (II), and reiterates the thought shortly thereafter: “Hay dos sociedades, la que se ve y la que está escondida” (II). Maurice and Caudet agree that these references embody the Naturalist tendencies of the novel and that this invisible machine that directs the destinies of the characters alludes to biological determinism. As Francisco Caudet notes, Fortunata is inspired by the thought that nature reigns superior over social circumstances, and believes herself to be the rightful wife of Juanito de Santa Cruz in that she can bear his children. For Caudet, this flight of the imagination is the illuminating example of what “naturalismo espiritual” means to Galdós: “una huida de la realidad que era, en definitiva, un fenómeno determinado por <<les événements de la vie et du milieu>>” (100). Stephen Gilman offers a similar interpretation, but finds that Fortunata’s self-designation as an angel at her deathbed demonstrates the potential of the spiritual to overcome social milieu: “ella no sólo ha hallado su propia salvación, sino también posiblemente la nuestra [...] la recuperación de la espiritualidad perdida en nuestros tiempos novelísticos” (318-19). Jacques Maurice offers a less sweeping interpretation and finds that Galdós’s allusions to the invisible world signify that “el novelista tiene derecho a tratar de manera naturalista de las <<cosas del espíritu>>” (181). Undoubtedly, the fact that Fortunata’s “pícara idea” is featured in a chapter entitled “Naturalismo espiritual” influences an interpretation of the term to indicate the tension between the laws of nature, the laws of society and the power of the imagination.

affects the social relationship between the deceased and the survivors, or amongst the survivors themselves. For example, the words and presence of Mauricia and Moreno-Isla resonate throughout the novel in the memories and decisions of the characters that survive them. Gonzalo Sobejano notes that once Moreno-Isla dies, his presence lingers in the text; it is after his death that Fortunata becomes convinced of Jacinta's loyalty to Santa Cruz, and later, Jacinta dreams of the life she could have had with Moreno (222-23). The death of Mauricia la Dura is significant in relation to the overarching narrative in that it provides an opportunity for the encounter between Fortunata and Jacinta. Quispe-Agnoli notes that Mauricia's character serves as "un marco para la unión de Fortunata y Jacinta" (354). As Fortunata holds vigil at her deathbed, Jacinta appears with Adoración, Mauricia's daughter, so that she may bid farewell to her mother. Furthermore, her death leaves Fortunata abandoned and helpless. Camille Cruz Martes notes that her death "enfatisa la falta del vínculo social que la joven necesita para autorrealizarse" (162). Fortunata's own death, as Cruz Martes points out, allows her to establish her own social position, proclaiming herself "angel" in the final moments of her life (144).

Casalduero's metaphor of the cobweb shares in the symbolic significance of the "gran árbol" from which Moreno-Isla falls like a leaf when he dies. Dying is portrayed as breaking apart from a larger social organism. Just as Moreno-Isla "se desprendió de la humanidad," Maxi relishes the thought of dying and freeing himself from a world of suffering: "¡Morir, acabar de penar, desprenderse de todas estas miserias, de tantos dolores y de toda la inmundicia terrenal!" Fortunata echoes the same sentiment and wishes to dislodge herself from the social fabric: "desprenderse de las lacerías de este

mundo” (1012).<sup>62</sup> The literal sense of “lacería” reinforces not only the sense of dying as coming loose from the social body, but also refers to her desire to overcome her condemned position in the social hierarchy.

The repeated trope of dying as “coming loose” is significant for various reasons. As we have seen, this metaphor emphasizes the ways in which the social contours of the novel are influenced and social relationships reworked when a death occurs in the novel. Furthermore, conceiving of death as a “dislodging” calls attention to the tension between the material circumstances of the novel and its spiritual dimension. By dying, the characters free themselves from restrictive material or social circumstances and pass into a state not bound by materiality. The moment of death is portrayed as a chaotic transition from the realm of materiality to that of the spiritual or immaterial that is irresolvable by witnesses. The ambiguous final words of the dying constitute paradox at the deathbed: Mauricia is heard to have said both “Más,” a request for more sherry, and “Ya,” a sign of her ascension into Heaven. Geoffrey Ribbans finds that this moment questions “whether [Mauricia] died with her mind on spiritual or material things,” and notes that Fortunata’s death provides a similar moment of ambiguity (108). While the last words of the dying provide insight into their final contemplations, the ambiguity also indicates the indecipherable passage into the spiritual realm. Beyond these connotations, the metaphor of death as a “desprendimiento” illustrates a representation of death as a *feeling*. This portraiture of death highlights the physically-rooted nature of its expression. As we shall see in the following section, this notion of death as a release is illustrated in the most detailed depiction of death in *Fortunata y Jacinta*.

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<sup>62</sup> Notably, the hemorrhage that causes Fortunata’s death is described in a similar fashion; she observes that “se le desprendía algo en su interior” (1155).

### **“Subir, subir siempre”: The felt sense of ascent in the death of Moreno-Isla**

Curiously, the most intimate portrait of death depicted in the novel is that of Manuel Moreno-Isla, a decidedly secondary character. The nephew of Guillermina, Moreno-Isla visits Madrid from London, the adopted homeland he cherishes and, as he repeatedly reminds the other characters, one he unquestionably prefers over Madrid. Like many of the secondary characters in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Moreno-Isla's brief presence in the novel is only significant in that it relates to or in some way affects Fortunata and/or Jacinta.<sup>63</sup> Beyond the narrative function of his character, the degree to which his death is portrayed is striking; not only is his death scene portrayed in great detail, the reader is provided with access to his interior thoughts as his death approaches. Gonzalo Sobejano notes that this portrayed interiority of Moreno-Isla's character elevates him from a secondary character to one with a more significant role (223). The presence of Moreno-Isla's character in the novel suggests a felt sense of dynamic movement, specifically ascent/descent, forward/backward and frustrated movement, characterized by Moreno-Isla as “impaciencia... hormiguilla...” (972). From his appearance in the fourth part to his death, Moreno-Isla's presence is underscored by a crescendo of meaning that inevitably pushes the character towards his climactic death.

The presence of Moreno-Isla is repeatedly characterized by movement, pulsations and faltering, as if the narrator were holding the text to his pulse. This “felt sense” that embodies the scenes in which Moreno-Isla figures contributes to the crescendo of movement that drives inevitably towards the climax of his death. This crescendo is already in motion even as Moreno-Isla first appears in the novel, when he literally enters

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<sup>63</sup> Gonzalo Sobejano points out that he serves as a possible husband for Jacinta, just as Segismundo Ballester is for Fortunata (223). Furthermore, the rumor that Jacinta was involved in an affair with Moreno-Isla causes Fortunata to feel a kinship with Jacinta.

the reader's view in mid-ascent. Coming to visit the home of Barbarita, Moreno-Isla ascends the stairs into the home: "Subía despacio y jadeante, a causa de la afección al corazón que padecía." The felt sense of upward movement is characterized by quickened, rhythmic breathing, as he is panting due to his aforementioned heart condition. The felt sense of ascension is punctuated by the first words he speaks: "¡Oh, puerta del Paraíso! ¡Qué manos te abren!... Dispense usted... Me canso horriblemente – dijo Moreno, saludándola con tanta urbanidad como afecto" (681). At the sight of his secret love Jacinta,<sup>64</sup> Moreno-Isla makes a hyperbolic reference to Heaven. In this way, his tiring climb up the stairs ends in the respite of Heaven, and the ascension itself a symbol of death. In his brief portion of the scene, one notices the dynamic swells and deflations that accompany the trajectory of Moreno-Isla's introduction in the novel.

This same sense of rise and fall continues to permeate Moreno-Isla's existence. As previously mentioned, he makes constant reference to his imminent return to England; Moreno-Isla comments "no veo la hora de volverme a marchar" the longer he stays in Spain (685). This sense of anticipation corresponds with Sobejano's evaluation of hope as being the central quality of Moreno-Isla's character. In his analysis of Moreno-Isla's solitary death, Sobejano ultimately claims that hope – particularly his hope for Jacinta's love – is portrayed as in constant battle with death: "La esperanza del hombre dura tanto como el latido de su corazón" (236). However, although his character is constantly looking forward in expectation of the future, the notion of "future" is innately confused by the simultaneous sense of "return" – he is, after all, looking "forward" to retracing his steps back to England. This sense of forward movement is constantly underscored by the

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<sup>64</sup> Moreno-Isla's frustrated pursuit of Jacinta is also described in terms of movement. He remarks to himself: "Las pocas veces que la cojo sola, no *adelanto* nada" (emphasis added, 965).

physical dimensions of Moreno-Isla's heart condition: his character is constantly experiencing palpitations. In one particular instance, he makes reference to the circulation of his blood:

Cuando tomaban el café, notaron todos que Moreno se sentía mal; pero él disimulaba, y llevándose la mano al corazón, decía otra vez: –Algo aquí... No es nada. Nervioso, quizá. Lo que más me molesta es el ruido de la circulación de la sangre. Por eso me gusta tanto viajar... Con el ruido del tren no oigo el mío. (685)

This reference to his circulation calls attention to the underlying momentum of his body; it is the constant movement of blood pulsating beneath his skin that, like the train, drives him forward. The sound of his pumping blood corresponds to the rhythmic, driving sounds of the train. The underlying meaning of the scene is derived from this feeling of constant movement that is driving Moreno-Isla towards a climax. However at the same time, the fact that the sound of coursing blood – the sound of his life – is bothersome to Moreno-Isla is a sign that his momentum is approaching a breaking point.

Climbing proves to be a consistent physical problem for Moreno-Isla due to his heart condition. In fact, he refers to his heart as “un fuelle roto” which, one imagines, does not have the integrity to force air out properly (960). The sense of crescendo continues as the chapter “Insomnio” begins; this is the chapter in which Galdós inaugurates the display of Moreno-Isla's interiority as he is taking a walk around the Retiro. The first thoughts to which the reader is exposed are thoughts of stalling; Moreno-Isla comments on how tired he feels despite the short distance he has traveled: <<Muy mal debe andar la máquina cuando a mitad de la calle de Alcalá ya estoy rendido>>. Here again, there is a sense of tension in the forward momentum of Moreno-Isla's experience

and story, as well as a reference to his ever-postponed train ride back to England.

Curiously, he attributes his tiredness to an uphill climb: “¡Tal vez consista en estos endiablados pisos, en este repecho insoportable! [...] Ésta es la capital de las setecientas colinas” (958-59). Later, he says of the hills: “Gracias a Dios que he subido el repecho. Parece la subida al Calvario, y con esta cruz que llevo auestas, más...” (959). In addition to the continued references to climbing, the crescendo builds with the depiction of his stream of consciousness. Not only do the transitions between thoughts power the narration, but the half dialogues – “Adiós, adios... Vengo de dar mi paseíto... Estoy muy bien, hoy no me he cansando nada...” (960) – create a sense of dialectical pull. At last he arrives at his apartment: “Ahora, escalera de mi casa, sé benévola conmigo. Subamos...” Although he does make it to the top of the stairs, there is a sense that his hill has not yet been crested; telling himself to step slowly, he remarks “Si no llego hoy, llegaré mañana” (960). Furthermore, when he enters his home, the feeling associated with ascent surpasses the ascent itself– “La fatiga del paseo y de la escalera le duraba aún” (961). In this, the second scene in which the reader witnesses this character painstakingly reach the top of a staircase, Moreno-Isla once again makes reference to the climb culminating in death.<sup>65</sup>

Instead of meeting Jacinta, symbol of Heaven, he meets the doctor Moreno Rubio, who has come to examine him. With a foreboding analogy, Moreno-Isla tells him that he’ll stretch out like a cadaver on a dissecting table (961). As the doctor listens to his chest, tension begins to mount again when he tells him that he hears something wrong; Moreno-Isla guesses twice what it may be, the doctor provides cryptic responses, until finally he tells him that he is suffering from love (962). This crescendo of threat ruptures with the

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<sup>65</sup> The climb to the top of the stairs is certainly reminiscent to Christ’s ascent of Mount Calvary.

doctor's joke, as the reader's tension plummets into relief and Moreno-Isla maintains an heightened emotional state of anger.

The palpitations that Moreno-Isla feels often coincide with these heightened emotional states. Later, the reader is exposed to his racing thoughts in a stream of consciousness as Moreno-Isla lies awake, disturbed by his insomnia. In long paragraphs, he talks to himself debating his return to England, his frustrated relations with Jacinta, and his desire to have a child with her. Suddenly at the height of his frustration, his heart stops the flow of his thoughts:

La palpitación que sentía era tan fuerte que tuvo que sentarse. Se ahogaba. En la región cardíaca, o cerca de ella, más al centro, sentía el golpe de la sangre con duro y contundente compás. Era como si un herrero martillase junto al mismo corazón, remachando a fuego una pieza nueva que se acababa de echar. (972)

The imagery in this passage recalls the notion of rhythm which under normal circumstances would continue unacknowledged in the rhythm of his body, but which for Moreno-Isla is a jolting reminder of his mortality. Contemplating his surroundings, he sees “un lebrele que corre tras la caza” in a pile of papers, and he hears the constant sound of running water from the fountain outside (974). His mind is focused on the sound of the few coaches in the street, and he remembers his coach in London “mi *cab* corría como una exhalación” (974). This image of rushing air melts into thoughts of departure: “Me ha entrado de repente y con un empuje... No veo la hora de que amanezca para mandarle a Tom que haga el equipaje” (974). After a restless morning in church with Guillermina, who is perturbed by his aimless walking around during mass (980), Moreno-Isla finds that climbing the stairs to his apartment is strangely easy. The absence of a labored ascent

seems to facilitate his decision about a departure and he tells his servant to pack their things because they will leave the following day (983). Linda Willem has brought attention to a brief passage that appears in the galley notes but was later omitted. This passage follows Moreno-Isla's decision to leave Spain and includes an internal debate over whether or not he should say goodbye to the Santa Cruz family before leaving. Curiously, this passage includes another reference to his battle with stairs; his ascent to the Santa Cruz home is quoted as follows in Willem's article:

Al subir la escalera de la casa, se cansaba otra vez horribilmente. Su mejoría era puramente ilusoria. «Es que en ninguna escalera me canso como en la de esta maldita casa... Siempre que la subo, parece que voy á echar el último aliento... Ya estoy arriba. Gracias á Dios». (Willem 179)

This additional reference to Moreno-Isla's arduous climb and his relief upon reaching the top alive further indicates the mindful depiction of Moreno-Isla and the tension between his upward movement and his physical condition. Willem suggests that deleting the passage and condensing it into one line, in which Moreno-Isla ironically decides he has time for goodbyes the next day, Galdós is able to retain the sense of irony and avoid repetition (180).

While I agree that irony is preserved in the single line, I find the repetition a curious indicator of ways in which Galdós uses the felt sense of foreboding, not the ironic statements about dying but in the notion of ascension to announce the impending death of the character. Had Galdós included this passage, the repetition might have been noticeable indeed, as shortly thereafter Moreno-Isla meets Jacinta by chance in the street. Together with her, he ascends for the third time the stairs to his apartment, and after they

have reached his floor he asks her if she would like to go back down again “para volver a subir,” prolonging his time with her, but also postponing the culmination of his metaphorical ascent into death (987). This constant reference to ascent and descent drives the narration forward in two ways: first, the condition of Moreno-Isla’s heart cannot survive the repetition of strenuous activity, and therefore his death looms imminent. Second, the underlying attention to motion not only gives momentum to the narration, but it collides with his dynamic emotions.

In his study of the neuroscience of emotions, Antonio Damasio states that the fundamental role of an emotion is to gauge the current state of the body and in this way, emotions assist the organism in maintaining life (51). “At their most basic, emotions are part of homeostatic regulation and are poised to *avoid the loss of integrity* that is a harbinger of death or death itself, as well as to endorse a source of energy, shelter, or sex” (my emphasis, 54). With this in mind, it is perfectly reasonable that emotional sensitivity accompany Moreno-Isla’s physical ailments; his heightened emotions inform him about the state of his organism. Therefore, when Moreno-Isla asks Guillermina if Jacinta had told her about their conversation on the stairs and she responds that they hadn’t mentioned his name at all, a feeling of disappointment overwhelms him: “sintió que la horrible pulsación de su pecho era anegada por una onda glacial. En aquel punto tuvo que sentarse porque le flaqueaban las piernas y se le desvanecía la cabeza” (988). The attention to imagery of movement rushing forward is enacted to indicate that his emotional distress – in this case disappointment – affects his physical condition by literally pulling him down.

The relationship between his physical state and the uplifting feelings and crushing emotions he experiences is clearly demonstrated in the moments preceding his heart attack. Again, his stream of consciousness draws the narration forward, his ideas colliding into one another. For example, as he contemplates buying a blanket for a British colleague, “la idea de las mantas llevó a su mente, por encadenamiento, el recuerdo de algo que había visto aquella tarde” (991). He recalls the image of the blind musician to whom he regretfully gave a pitiful quantity of coins, the thought of which inspires “un remordimiento indecible” (992). Here the narrator states that Moreno-Isla’s emotional sensitivity is linked directly to his physical condition: “Era tan grande su susceptibilidad nerviosa que todas las impresiones que recibía eran intensísimas, y el gusto o pena que de ellas emanaban le revolvían lo más hondo de sus entrañas” (992). The depiction of Moreno-Isla’s interiority is decidedly restless: his feelings tumble around inside him and the music that he recalls vibrates in his soul. However, these restless feelings do not yet climax with an outlet: “Sintió como deseos de llorar...” (992) Rather, they remain restless inside him until his final climax, “un estallido vascular.”

Moreno-Isla’s final attack literally stops him in his trajectory. As he contemplates his return to Spain the following April, Moreno-Isla rises from the table “y después de dar dos o tres pasos, volvió a sentarse junto a la mesa donde estaba la luz porque había sentido una opresión molestísima. Las pulsaciones, que un instante cesaron, volvieron con fuerza abrumadora, acompañadas de un sentimiento de plenitud torácica” (993). The language with which this fatal attack is described is imbued with imagery of movement – tightening, expansion, an overwhelming rush of his heartbeats after a brief respite – all of

which culminate in the moment of death. As the narrator describes the feeling of death coming over him, one notes the pervasive uses of metaphorical references to rising:

Tuvo que ponerse rígido porque desde el centro del cuerpo le *subía* por el pecho un bulto inmenso, *una ola*, algo que le cortaba la respiración. Alargó el brazo como quien acompaña del gesto un vocablo, pero el vocablo, expresión de angustia tal vez o demanda de socorro, no pudo salir de sus labios. *La onda crecía*; la sintió pasar por la garganta y *subir, subir siempre*. Dejó de ver la luz.  
(993)

In this passage, which illustrates the physical moment of death more profoundly than at any other point in the novel, death is expressed in a particular image that connotes unresolved feeling, of a rising wave that never crashes. At this point, the consciousness of Moreno-Isla is no longer penetrable and the narrator describes from without the final moments of his life: “Puso ambas manos sobre el borde de la mesa, e inclinando la cabeza, apoyó la frente en ellas exhalando un sordo gemido. Dejóse estar así, inmóvil, mudo. Y en aquella actitud de recogimiento y tristeza expiró aquel infeliz” (993-94). It is in this final act of release, of exhalation, that Moreno-Isla meets his end. The narrator reveals the cause of Moreno-Isla’s death: “La vida cesó en él a consecuencia del estallido y desbordamiento vascular, produciéndole conmoción instantánea, tan pronto iniciada como extinguida” (994). Finally, the sense of restlessness and ascent has reached its climax in what is fittingly described as burst (*estallar*).

It is important to note that a lack of resolution is imbued in the text even after Moreno-Isla dies. As Aurora explains to Fortunata the following day, his body was found seated, leaning over the table, with its eyes open. Instead of laying him onto the floor or a

bed, “Le habían incorporado en el asiento” (1003). Curiously, when Moreno-Isla had met with the doctor, he was very anxious to lie down so that Moreno Rubio could examine him more efficiently. That way, he comments, “me tienes como un muerto, con las manos cruzadas” (961). In this sense, Moreno-Isla never achieves the peaceful repose of the dead, and instead is seated at a chair covered in blood with his eyes open. Unlike the four other characters that die in the novel (Arnaiz el Gordo, Mauricia la Dura, Fortunata and Feijóo), Moreno-Isla’s funeral procession is not narrated. Even the burial of the true *Pituso*, whose death is not narrated, is recounted when Juanito reveals his existence to Jacinta: “miré desaparecer por la calle de la Montera abajo el carro con la cajita azul” (298). Therefore, despite the fact that Moreno-Isla’s presence in the novel has suggested a feeling of imminent climax, the climax itself does not break the tension. “Subir, subir siempre” is the phrase that depicts Moreno-Isla’s last conscious evaluation of what was happening to his body. Unsettling as this may feel, this is accurate depiction of the feeling to which Garrett Stewart refers regarding death as “presentiment” as opposed to a directly narrated event. Aside from the references to his premature aging and poor physical condition, the narration of Moreno-Isla’s presence in the novel indicates that he appears in the novel only to leave it. The dynamic movement of his character conducts him towards his climax whose apex is never directly represented.

### **The Case of Mauricia la Dura**

Moreno-Isla’s presence in the novel seems to sizzle with a sense of restlessness and forward movement that builds to the eventual climax, to the literal “burst” and dissipation of the character’s being. The pervasive sense of mounting climax is featured

in the scenes depicting the protracted death scene of Mauricia la Dura, particularly in the explicit anticipation of her final Communion, an event whose every detail is orchestrated by Guillermina. In the novel's third part, the reader learns that Mauricia is nearing death at the end of Chapter 5, and it is not until Chapter 6.9 that her death is announced. Chapter 6 closes with Mauricia's body en route to the cemetery, as Fortunata prepares to meet with Guillermina. Mauricia's dying, death and funeral procession serve as the backdrop for what are perhaps the most significant events in the narration that propel the course of the rest of the novel. Quispe-Agnoli observes the theatrical suspense with which Mauricia's death is depicted: "El gradualismo que demuestra el narrador en su manejo de los preparativos también anuncia el ambiente de una posible culminación narrativa. Finalmente el espectáculo se presenta de manera semejante al suspenso teatral" (351). While I agree with Quispe-Agnoli's observation of the sense of climax, the spectacle to which she refers is not the death itself, but the spectacle of preparation in itself. The moment of climax – Mauricia's long-awaited death – passes through the narration entirely unmentioned: "Guillermina y Severiana le acercaron un espejo a la cara y lo tuvieron un ratito... Después todos empezaron a hablar en alta voz. Ya estaba Mauricia en el otro mundo" (845). The ellipsis represents not only the moment in which Mauricia dies, but it also substitutes a narrated explanation: in this way, "narrative becomes the very vessel of death as an understood event" (Stewart 74). The ellipsis serves as a duplicate sign of Mauricia's death: the ellipsis is an implied sign that substitutes the mirror which is in itself a sign that indicates death. As no breath appears on the mirror, it is implicit that Guillermina and Severiana understand that Mauricia is no longer breathing. The ellipsis, then, carries the meaning of death that the text itself does

not utter. Beyond that, the ellipsis embodies the interval that Stewart takes as the temporal representation of death. The ellipsis is the hiccup of time, the glossed-over moment between the moment of death and consciousness of the fact. The narrator does not tell us that Mauricia had passed to the other world, but that she had *already* passed into the other world.

The question of time in this chapter is vital to the underlying feelings of climax that move the chapter forward. One notes that the characterization of Mauricia is informed by rhythm and the notion of a cycle of anticipatory events that build into climax. When Fortunata first encounters Mauricia at the Micaelas convent, the reader learns of her periodic outbursts. Like the preparations for her death, Mauricia's tantrums are also referred to as performances: "Era un espectáculo imponente y aun divertido el que de tiempo en tiempo, comúnmente cada quince o veinte días, daba Mauricia a todo el personal del convento" (501). As the narrator indicates, not only does Mauricia "perform" an emotional outburst with regularity, this cycle of outbursts has specific stages of crescendo. "Inciábasele aquel trastorno a Mauricia como se inician las enfermedades, con síntomas leves, pero infalibles, los cuales se van acentuando y recorren después todo el proceso morboso" (502). This stage of anticipation, "el período prodrómico" as the narrator puts it, is characterized by warning signs that over time become more prominent and more foreboding of the outburst that is to come. Once the nuns intervene in Mauricia's confrontation with other sisters, "Mauricia callaba al fin quedándose durante dos o tres horas taciturna, rebelde al trabajo, haciéndolo todo al revés de cómo se le mandaba [...] A este período seguía por lo común una travesura ruidosa y carnavalesca" (502). This stage of playful pranks escalates into an explosion of anger

when the Mother Superior announces that she would be locked up in a cell for insubordination: “Aquí fue el estallar la fiereza de aquella maldita mujer” (502). This reference to explosion recalls the description of Moreno-Isla’s heart attack, and reflects the sense of climax that has been building. Later, the narrator elaborates with great detail on the cycle of Mauricia’s behavior:

Después de cumplir una condena, *lo que ocurría infaliblemente una vez cada treinta o cuarenta días*, la mujer napoleónica estaba cohibida y como avergonzada entre sus compañeras, poniendo toda su atención en la obligaciones, demostrando un celo y obediencia que encantaban a las madres. *Durante cuatro o cinco días* desempeñaba sin embarazo ni fatiga la tarea de tres mujeres. *Pasadas dos semanas*, advertían que *se iba cansando*; ya no había en su trabajo aquella corrección y diligencia admirables; empezaban las omisiones, los olvidos, los descuidillos, y *todo esto iba en aumento* hasta que la repetición de las faltas anunciaba *la proximidad de otro estallido*. (emphasis added, 509)

In this description of Mauricia’s cyclical outbursts, one notes that otherwise erratic and unpredictable behavior yields to the notion of regularity, of consistent stages of crescendo, climax and decrescendo. When Mauricia’s health begins to decline, her physical symptoms do not retain this sense of cyclical attacks, but rather a mounting climax that will not reach its breaking point: “de rato en rato le daban como ataques de asfixia, siendo su respiración muy difícil y quejándose de irresistible calor [...] estuvo la Dura un ratito *como quien desea romper a toser y no puede*” (791). This notion of a building tension that cannot be released is evoked throughout the scene that precedes Mauricia’s communion. Not only is the sense of foreboding emphatically represented

through the felt sense of pace, but the impossibility of representing climax – the climax of death – is achieved through the omission of the death scene.

The sense of pace and rhythm is sustained throughout the events that lead to Mauricia's communion. Aside from preparations that Guillermina has executed that add to the sense of mounting climax, there is a notable attention to the rhythm that characterizes the flow of the events. Vernon Chamberlain has examined the influences of music on the structure of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, and he focuses on the fashion in which the novel closes. Chamberlain attributes the novel's closure with the character of Maxi to its mirroring of the structure of Beethoven's *Eroica*. Up to this point, we have noted the ways in which music influences the flow of two scenes: the background rhythms and music at the orphanage heighten the intensity of Jacinta's emotions, and the thought of the music of the blind beggar initiates Moreno-Isla's fit of emotions that precedes his heart attack. In the case of Mauricia's death scene, music and the notion of pace have a direct relationship with a sense of distance and motion. Near to death, Mauricia will partake in the Viaticum, the communion given to the dying.

It is important to note that the term "Viaticum" is closely related to the sense of movement – not only is it given to those who are approaching death, but the term has an additional connotation as the provisions necessary for a journey.<sup>66</sup> In addition to the sense of movement that is implicit in the term, the Viaticum arrives at the home in the form of a procession. The arrival of the Viaticum has been greatly anticipated, and the symbolic nature of the Eucharist is implied in Guillermina's references to the arrival of God. She tells Mauricia: "Mañana tenemos aquí gran fiesta... ¿Te parece? Viene a visitarte el que hizo los Cielos y la Tierra" (792). Guillermina scolds the neighborhood boys for

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<sup>66</sup> The word "Viaticum" derives from the Latin *viaticus*, meaning belonging to a journey, *viare* to travel.

cluttering the entryway and on the stairs that lead to Mauricia's room (798). The sense of truncated flow is apparent in Guillermina's description of the procession. She is interrupted twice as she tries to explain that God is arriving at the home. The arrival of Father Nones interrupts her admonition: "A la cárcel van atados codo con codo si no se portan hoy como es debido, hoy que viene a honrar esta casa el..." (799). In conversation with Father Nones, Guillermina explains her attention to cleanliness on this particular day and is interrupted by a guitarist playing nearby. While the tense mood of Jacinta's scene at the orphanage is heightened by the musicians in the background, this guitar has a different effect on the narration:

Claro que no importa; pero ¿por qué no hemos de tener limpieza y decoro delante del Señor, siquiera por estimación de nosotros mismos? Si limpia la casa cuando viene el teniente alcalde y el médico del Ayuntamiento con sus bastones de borlas, y se ha de dejar sucia cuando viene el... Pero ¡cállese usted, hombre, por amor de Dios! (799)

The lack of completion of Guillermina's thought and the precise lack of climax – of revealing who will arrive – reflects the sense of anti-climax that accompanies the scene. Just like the errant guitarist, Leopardi the musician provides the same element of disrupted pace with his trombone playing. As Ido explains, with Guillermina's blessing Leopardi "se pondrá en la escalera cuando pase el Santísimo y tocará la marcha real" (800). Guillermina roundly refuses and wants to eliminate music during the procession which, as we shall see, is accompanied by its own sounds.

The interruptions of music are pitted against the regulating pace associated with the Viaticum. The arrival of the Viaticum procession and Mauricia's communion is

referenced in the text with regularity. Both Chapters 6.2 and 6.3 (the chapter in which the procession arrives) begin in anticipation of the event; the first reference marks a specific time frame – “Dos horas antes de la señalada para que Mauricia recibiera a Dios” (796), and the second, the mounting anticipation – “Se acercaba la hora, y en el patio sonaba el rumor de emoción teatral que acompaña a las grandes solemnidades” (803). The excited sounds of the crowd that signal the heightening of anticipation diminishes at the arrival of the priest. The manner in which the procession is described is of utmost importance; the increasing anticipation is portrayed in terms of the sign of pace – both in sound and distance – that is perceived by those waiting with Mauricia above:

Llegó el momento hermoso y solemne. Oíase desde arriba el rumor popular, y luego, en el seno de aquel silencio, que cayó súbitamente sobre la casa como una nube, la campanilla vibrante marcó el paso de la comitiva del Sacramento [...] El *tilín* sonaba cada vez más cerca; se le sentía subir la escalera entre un traqueteo de pasos; después llegaba a la puerta; vibraba más fuerte en el pasillo entre el muge-muge de los latines que venía murmurando el acólito. (804)

The sound of the tolling bell embodies the foreboding of death, each toll implicitly insinuates the following toll that will continue the pace. Significantly, the mounting anticipation is realized through an intangible, yet intense presence; the narrator fixates on the sounds of the atmosphere, rather than the sight of the approaching procession itself. Instead, the sound approaches, ascends the stairs and arrives at the door. The actual anticipated moment – Mauricia’s communion – is itself omitted from the narration. Just as the bell had signaled the arrival of the procession, the narrator describes its departure and cohesive descent down the stairs: “Poco después salió la comitiva, *precedida de la*

*campanilla*, entre la calle formada por mujeres arrodilladas, con velas o sin ellas. Se sintió que bajaba, que salía y se alejaba por la calle” (my emphasis, 804). The crescendo and decrescendo of sound that demarcate Mauricia’s communion precisely de-emphasize the experience of climax itself; as in the death of Moreno-Isla, the sense of building intensity is the way in which the reader experiences approaching death.

After all, Mauricia’s communion, along with its bookends of dynamic intensity, is *in itself* a building block of the intensity that leads to Mauricia’s death. Her state worsens as her symptoms of paralysis become increasingly grave: “La parálisis agitante crecía de una manera aterradora” (823). To intensify the crescendo of her agony, a peculiar sound accompanies Mauricia’s escalating condition. Guillermina notes the distant playing of Leopardi: “— ¿Oyen ustedes ese trombón que toca la marcha real?’ En efecto, se oía bien clara, aunque lejana, la marcha real, tocada con verdadero frenesí por Leopardi, que en la repetición le ponía un lujo escandaloso de mordentes y apoyaturas” (823). The sound of Leopardi’s trombone enhances the representation of Mauricia’s agony in that its depiction of intensity and chaos embodies an aural climax. Although he plays a royal march, a duplication of the pace of the Viaticum procession, he includes frenetic trills and embellishments that intensify the repeated verse. Furthermore, these improvisations also insinuate a brief disturbance of time and pace that resolves into harmony. The trill typifies repetition, a building of note upon note that implies a resolution. At the same time, the *appoggiatura* implies the infringement of one note upon another: it is an ornamental note that precedes another, temporarily displacing part of the second note’s duration until it resolves into that note. This note itself embodies the liminality of death, in that it is a temporal transition from one note/state to another. Therefore, these

particular aspects of the distant music that accompanies the agony illustrate a movement towards resolution, an analogy of Mauricia's agonizing approach towards death.

The relationship between sound and the notion of movement is repeated in a later scene that depicts an echo. As she lingers between sleep and consciousness, Fortunata listens to distant church bells and she imagines the sound moving across space. This intriguing depiction of time<sup>67</sup> and space illustrates the implicit association between forward movement and rhythmic sound:

Oía claramente algunas campanadas; después, el sonido se apagaba alejándose, como si se balanceara en la atmósfera, para volver luego y estrellarse en los cristales de la ventana. En el estado incierto del crepúsculo cerebral, imaginaba Fortunata que el viento venía a la plaza a jugar con la hora. Cuando el reloj empezaba a darla, el viento la cogía de sus brazos y se la llevaba lejos, muy lejos...Después volvía para acá, describiendo una onda grandísima, y retumbaba, ¡plam!, tan fuerte como si el sonoro metal estuviera dentro de la casa. (1043)

This passage depicts the tolling bell creating a parabola of movement, and portrays the tolling as a repetition of crashing waves; the sound draws back to its farthest limits and returns with a force that seems to crash against the windows of the house. Curiously, Galdós employs a similar trope in a closing scene of *Nazarín* (1895) that depicts distant church bells at dusk. Beatriz, disciple to father Nazarín, questions the significance of the bells, “a esta hora en que no se sabe si es día o noche” – twilight. Father Nazarin tells her that the indecipherable intention of the bells – to mark sadness or happiness – imitates the paradoxical quality of both twilight and life itself: it is sad because one is closer to death, but happy for the satisfaction of a completed day. Nazarín finds that the approaching

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<sup>67</sup> See Ortiz Armengol (5-16) for an analysis of the role of the clock in *Fortunata y Jacinta*.

night also brings hope: “porque toda la noche es esperanza y seguridad de otro día, del mañana, que ya está tras el Oriente acechando para venir” (122) The forward-movement of time implicit in the tolling bells and the dimming twilight serves as a metaphor for man’s constant march towards death. While death would be the end, the cessation of the march and forward-movement of time, Nazarín imagines a continuation beyond death: eternity. “En esto [...] debéis ver una imagen de lo que será el crepúsculo de la muerte. Tras él viene el mañana eterno” (122).

This passage from *Nazarín* facilitates our understanding of the significance of sound, time and the felt sense of movement in the representation of death in the case of Mauricia la Dura, as well as that of Moreno-Isla. The moment of death is necessarily elided either by omission or metaphor, and instead through the depiction of mounting climax, the narration reproduces an authentic experience of death: a foreboding that evaporates into the unknown. At the same time, if death itself is *not* the climax, as Father Nazarín suggests, but constitutes a point on the continuum of infinity, then the salient representation of un-fulfilled climax is less a product of representing death, but a remarkable expression of the notion of eternity. Time itself is portrayed as being elastic in the scenes that depict death. For example, when she returns from a night’s vigil over the dying Mauricia, she comments: “Me parece que he estado un año fuera de mi casa” (819). Likewise, when Mauricia dies, Fortunata “no recordaba haber llorado nunca tanto en tan poco tiempo” (856). The disturbances of pace and the stalling of climax point to a apex that will never be realized, but they also call attention to the continuum of time itself. The trajectories that lead to death for both Mauricia and Moreno Isla are characterized by feelings rooted in the physical: waves, rising, ascension, beating, rhythm

and climax itself. Such representations therefore depict the unknowable experience of death, and the inconceivable notion of eternity through physically-rooted expressions.

### **Climax and Paradox: Fortunata contemplates the cemetery**

As we have seen, the mounting tension that builds towards the deaths of Moreno Isla and Mauricia la Dura provides a more salient and dynamic expression of death than the moment of death itself. If, as Stewart suggests, death is “all presentiment and never direct presentation,” then the respective death scenes of these characters eliminate the pinnacle of the trajectory towards death, providing a connection to anticipation rather than culmination. Although the death of Mauricia la Dura is not represented as a narrative climax, the death scene itself serves as a building block in another climax: the meeting between Fortunata and Jacinta. The revelation of Fortunata’s identity, her simple yet powerful statement, “Soy Fortunata,” is the climactic point in which their two separate histories collide. In this sense, the death of Mauricia la Dura is a carefully plotted, the essential turning point that affects the social map of the novel.

At the same time, death in *Fortunata y Jacinta* is not exclusively represented as a moment of social transition, transference of power, or “la mayor sustitución” in the greater discourse of exchange that Cruz Martes notices in the novel (171). At the level of representation, the symbol of death itself is embodied as a transition between two states that connotes both presence and lack. The inscrutability of death is at the root of its necessarily metaphorical representation in art and literature: “death is the limit of language, disrupting our sign system and image repertoire. Signifying nothing, it silently points to the indetermination of meaning so that one can speak of death only by speaking

other” (Bronfen 54). Death represents the crisis of meaning, and this crisis is symbolized as the liminal area between the countryside and the city that borders the cemeteries. A materialization of the notion of transition, this area serves as an arena in which Fortunata considers death and the infinite.

As Akiko Tsuchiya has pointed out, Fortunata is considered a socially marginal character in the sense that as a prostitute she walks the line between two worlds; she is “simultaneously inside and outside of marriage, occupying the liminal space between the private and the public” (72). Like Fortunata, Isidora is an equally marginal character who walks a similar line in *La desheredada* and comes to associate symbolically with her surroundings. As she meanders the outskirts of the city near the Manzanares valley, where women go to wash their clothes, Isidora becomes the apotheosis of “residuos, desechos, carne de cañón” (Caudet, “La falacia” 80). Like Isidora, Fortunata’s marginal social position is symbolically embodied by the outskirts of the city as well, a location where she can be found at crucial points throughout the novel. One of those instances occurs at the end of Part 3 when, after following a funeral procession to the city limits at the Manzanares, Fortunata contemplates the cortege as it winds through the fields before her. In and of itself, this scene is unremarkable. Fortunata does not interact with another character, nor does she spend very much time at this location. Nonetheless, the symbolic significance of the scene is undeniable. It is a “moment of mortal contemplation” according to Stephen Gilman. He interprets her contemplation of the burial grounds and the tolling of the church bell as a sign for what is to follow for Fortunata in the fourth and final part of the novel (292).

If Gilman imagines the moment at the Portillo de Gilimón as a symbolic bridge to the fourth part that prefigures her death, then the resonance of this scene throughout the novel has a singular function: to announce the eventual death of the novel's protagonist. However, upon further examination of the scene, one notes other significant narratological functions. Fortunata's contemplative niche on the edge of the city is described here in its entirety:

[S]e fue a la esplanada del Portillo de Gilimón, desde donde se descubre toda la vega del Manzanares. Harto conocía aquel sitio, porque cuando vivía en la calle de Tabernillas íbase muchas tardes de paseo a Gilimón, y sentándose en un sillar de los que allí hay y que no se sabe si son restos o preparativos de obras municipales, estabase largo rato contemplando las bonitas vistas del río. Pues lo mismo hizo aquel día. El cielo, el horizonte, las fantásticas formas de la sierra azul, revueltas con las masas de nubes, le sugerían vagas ideas de un mundo desconocido, quizá mejor que este en que estamos pero seguramente distinto. El paisaje es ancho y hermoso limitado al Sur por la fila de cementerios, cuyos mausoleos blanquean entre el verde oscuro de los cipreses. (884-85)

Indeed, strategic in its position before the fourth and final Part, this symbolic scene certainly presages Fortunata's demise at the novel's close. However, at a closer glance, this moving scene constitutes a climax in itself, bookended with significant events that mirror one another with marked precision. This scene at the edge of the city is the metaphysical knot around which questions of life and death oscillate.

This scene occurs amidst the negotiation of Fortunata's "pícara idea" – which stems from the notion that a wife who cannot bear children is not a wife (Jacinta) and that

conversely, one who bears his children is the true wife (Fortunata). Fortunata reveals this notion to Guillermina, unknowingly in the presence of Jacinta, and a volatile confrontation ensues. Enraged, she takes to the street and sees a funeral procession for Arnaiz el Gordo and, believing that Juanito is in one of the coaches of the procession, Fortunata follows it to the Portillo de Gilimón,<sup>68</sup> where she gazes upon the land between the city limits and the Manzanares River.

The events that frame the scene at the Portillo are bookended with the “crafty ideas” of both Fortunata and Maxi. In the following chapter, the reader observes Maxi through Fortunata’s eyes as he fumbles around the bedroom and proceeds to check the dining room and kitchen for intruders: “Era que le acometía la pícara idea de que alguien entraba o quería entrar en la casa con intenciones de robarle su honor” (900). Although Maxi’s suspicions seem to be part of his madness, his idea is truly rooted in reality, as the reader knows that Fortunata and Juanito had reignited their relationship. Like Fortunata’s “idea,” while it appears to be a ludicrous statement, it becomes a reality, as she will eventually give Jacinta her son in order to save herself and become an “angel.” Both Fortunata and Maxi also display a paranoia that indicates an imaginative engagement with reality. Enraged by the accusations of stealing Jacinta’s husband, Fortunata marches home where she begins to mistrust those around her, believing that Doña Lupe and Papitos might betray her as did Guillermina: “No les podía ver. Eran sus carceleros, sus enemigos, sus espías [...] Se sentía vigilada” (879). To complete the cohesion of events

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<sup>68</sup> In *Manual de Madrid* (1833), Mesonero Romanos describes the Portillo de Gil Ymon as one of the twelve *portillos* that border Madrid. Of the *portillo* he writes: “Inmediato al convento de San Francisco, mirando casi al mediodía, que tomó su nombre del célebre licenciado Baltasar Gil Ymon de la Mota, fiscal de los Consejos y gobernador del de Hacienda en 1622, que tenía allí sus casas. Es de una puerta sola, y se ha reconstruido últimamente con sencillez” (319).

surrounding the scene at the Portillo, Maxi becomes highly suspicious of Doña Lupe and Papitos, and believes them both to be “encubridoras” of dishonor (901).

One notes that there are multiple pairs of events that mirror each other from either side of the scene at the Portillo de Gilimón and which create a unique parabola of events that represents a curious interplay between fiction and reality, as well as a correspondence of symbolic meaning with narrated events. The scene at the Portillo de Gilimón unfolds after Fortunata awakes from a dream in which she meets Juanito again, and then resolves to find him and follow through with her “idea.” She sits up, “apoyada en un codo y mirando a los ladrillos,” and as she looks down her eyes fix upon a small object on the floor: a three-holed button, a sure sign of “mala sombra” (883). Distracted by the sign, Fortunata amends her resolution to win back Juanito, and decides that if he rejects her, she will commit suicide. She thinks: “No vivo más así. Yo veré el modo de buscar en la botica un veneno cualquiera que acabe pronto” (883). Her dynamic emotions are mirrored as she leaves the Portillo feeling hopeless and then goes to pray at church where “sus ojos, al resbalar por el suelo, tropezaron con un objeto que brillaba en medio de los baldosines de mármol” – a four-holed button, sign of good luck (885). The following day, Fortunata encounters Juanito in the street, as in her dream, and tells him in a moment of romantic hyperbole “Me muero por ti” (890).

Therefore, the scene at the Portillo of Gilimón serves as a moment of conversion, a point at which illusion begins to convert into reality, and in material terms, where the city/life becomes the countryside/defunct. It is of course a *portillo*, a liminal gateway of sorts that serves as both an entrance and an exit. This space is highly symbolic of the border between the land of the living and the land of the dead. Intriguingly, the stone that

occupies this space is representative of its liminality. The image of the stone is provocative and significant when one considers its indefinable quality mentioned by the narrator:

Harto conocía aquel sitio, porque cuando vivía en la calle de Tabernillas íbase muchas tardes de paseo a Gilimón, y sentándose en un sillar de los que allí hay y *que no se sabe si son restos o preparativos de obras municipales*, estábanse largo rato contemplando las bonitas vistas del río. (my emphasis, 884-85)

The stones are unidentifiable by the narrator; the description is paradoxical and recalls Bronfen's designation of death as a failed sign: it remains outside any definable category and instead "points to the indetermination of meaning" (54). The stone upon which Fortunata sits represents an arrested state of creation and decay, an indiscernible sign of de/composition that marks both the beginning and end of a process. The *sillar* is a death-like, marginal space of incongruity that for all its ambiguity nonetheless connotes change. Curiously, the outskirts of Madrid are portrayed with similar imagery in *Nazarín*, as Father Nazarín leaves the city and begins his journey in the countryside. He is given shelter in a hovel shared by other vagrants and beggars, and one notes its properties of de/composition: "La mujer que lavaba en la charca le señaló un solar, en parte cercada de ruinosa tapia, en parte había un principio de construcción, machones de ladrillo como de un metro, formando traza arquitectónica y festoneados de amarillas hierbas" (75). The combination of elements of construction and the noticeable decay characterize this liminal area as a transition between two states, much like the *sillar* upon which Fortunata sits.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> One notes the notion of de/composition in the famous description of the church at the convent of Las Micaelas: "Cada día, la creciente masa de ladrillos tapaba una línea de paisaje; parecía que los albañiles, al

And it is from this indefinable space that Fortunata contemplates death and the infinite. Facing south, she contemplates the view, “limitado al Sur por la fila de cementerios, cuyos mausoleos blanquean entre el verde oscuro de los cipreses” (885).<sup>70</sup> This metonymical representation of death defines its quality as a limit of our understanding: from this vantage point, Fortunata can only see as far as the cemetery and cannot conceive of what lies beyond it. However, as she watches the funeral procession wind through the fields, Fortunata’s gaze falls upon the horizon and she contemplates another world: “le sugerían vagas ideas de un mundo desconocido, quizá mejor que este en que estamos pero seguramente distinto” (885). Here, one understands that Fortunata not only contemplates the infinite, what lies beyond death, but she imagines a truly different world that might afford her happiness and relief. As the church bell tolls, she is jarred back to reality, a reality in which Juanito cannot be hers: “<<Estará con su papa—pensó ella—, y aunque al volver me vea, no ha de decirme nada>>” (885).

Fortunata’s gaze upon the cemetery and her contemplation of the infinite raise issues that will surface later in the novel. While in one of his manic flights from reason, Maxi talks to Fortunata about his desire to die. After her tells her that dying is like freeing oneself of earthly pain and hardships, Fortunata is interested to know what happens *after* death. “— ¿Y después? —dijo Fortunata, que, aun sabiendo con quien hablaba, oía con mucho gusto aquella manera de considerar la muerte.” Maxi tells her that one feels purity and becomes part of the infinite. This notion of endless happiness inspires Fortunata, her

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poner cada hilada, no construían, sino que borraaban. De abajo arriba, el panorama iba desapareciendo como un mundo que se anega” (510). Although this imagery represents the manifestation of the sense of isolation and enclosure, it is worth remarking that the notion of constructing is imbued with the paradoxical sense of erasure.

<sup>70</sup>This cemetery is associated with the Puerta de Toledo which Mesonero Romanos identifies as being one of the two principal cemeteries in Madrid (the other being *el cementerio de la Puerta de Fuencarral*). He describes it briefly: “El otro campo-santo de la Puerta de Toledo está adornado de soportales y árboles al rededor” (179).

thoughts themselves take flight, “perdiéndose en los espacios invisibles y sin confines.” The sense of liberation that accompanies the infinite excites her and Fortunata imagines that she would feel the same as if she were alive, but “gozando todo lo que hay que gozar y amando y siendo amada con arrobamientos que no se acaban nunca” (1012).

The insurmountable notion of the infinite is approached in the scene at the Portillo through Fortunata’s symbolic liminal position as she follows the burial procession with her eyes and into the beyond. While Fortunata is still restricted by her social position, she nonetheless considers the potential, ever-expanding freedom of the infinite that lies beyond death. This contemplative brush with death and the unknowable realm that lies beyond it serves as a climactic turning point that leads to her reunion with Juanito. However, it also serves as a narrative peak that grazes the infinite in which Fortunata directly negotiates the ethereal notions of death and the beyond.

Does death provide resolution or further questions in *Fortunata y Jacinta*? Peter Brooks’s claim that the momentum of narration is powered by the death drive would imply that the end of the narration supplies cohesion and confers meaning upon the text. Hazel Gold notes the enormity of ending such a complicated novel:

[H]aving propelled his readers through the four lengthy volumes of *Fortunata y Jacinta* and demonstrated the impossibility of ever appropriating the inexhaustible totality of social portraiture and psychological probings that all good 19<sup>th</sup>-century realist writers are claimed to have pursued, Galdós was then faced with the equally onerous task of sealing off between title page and endplate the fictional world of his invention. (229)

The propulsion through the novel has led to the death of Fortunata and in the novel's final pages, as Maxi and Ballester return from the cemetery, the pharmacist makes an analogy that positions death as a part of the life cycle: "en el trabajo digestivo del espíritu no puede haber ingestión sin que haya también eliminación" (1174).<sup>71</sup> Death is framed in the novel as instrumental to the perpetuation of life. Through death, as Cruz Martes points out, productive life-giving connections are created. After all, the novel itself centers on the desire to perpetuate a family bloodline: the quest for another generation of the Santa Cruz family. Indeed, death may form part of the life cycle, however, it is also forms part of another never-ending continuation: the trajectory to the infinite.

This is certainly not to say that in *Fortunata y Jacinta* Galdós elaborates a commentary on the existence of the after-life. The novel is, of course, an elaboration about the social order, social circumstances, and the materiality of being. Ballester likens the life cycle to digestion: a process in which the material does not simply disappear but changes its *material* form. Nonetheless, this close reading of the death scenes in the novel demonstrates that, while the limits of materiality mark the limits of our knowledge, the allusions to movement *beyond* are undeniable. The feelings of ascension, climax and rhythm that shape the scenes of death, and the scenes that feature symbolic death, contribute to the underlying notion of a forward movement that surpasses the physical. The pervasive sense of irresolution, caused by allusions to forward movements that never reach culmination, illustrates the impossibility of capturing the moment of death in representation. The emphasis on the anticipation of death, with all its programmed pomp and pageantry, calls attention to the materiality of the conditions of death. However, at the same time, the inherent presence of feeling – the bells that implicitly herald the

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<sup>71</sup> See Gold for a discussion of food imagery and its relation to the conclusion of *Fortunata y Jacinta*.

following tolls, the incessant ascension that finds no end point – serves to foreground a climax that itself never materializes.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

As I hope to have demonstrated in the previous chapters, death is in the details of Spanish Realism. Even when the consequences of syphilis are detailed in an anticipatory autopsy as in *La prostituta*, the liminality of death is expressed through the nuances of disgust that linger throughout the text. As we learn in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, death is rarely portrayed directly, but comes to the reader through a second-hand narration, as in the death of Mauricia la Dura which is witnessed by Doña Lupe and recounted to Fortunata. When a character dies alone, as we have seen in the case of Manuel Moreno-Isla, the discovery of the body and the details of the funeral are also recounted by other characters. Aurora describes to Fortunata the events of the morning when she found Moreno-Isla's servant calling for help and the horrible state of his body as she entered his apartment (Part IV: 3.2). However, the details of his funeral that Aurora mentions are nearly hearsay: "—Hoy ha sido el funeral. ¡Cosa estupenda, según me ha dicho Candelaria! El catafalco llegaba hasta el techo y la orquesta era magnífica; muchas luces..." (1002).

The first-hand experience of death, as "told" from the perspective of Moreno-Isla, is marked by the sensation of ascension that never reaches its climax within the narration; the reader is left with the notion of "subir, subir siempre." As Aurora informs us, Moreno-Isla does in fact continue "rising," until upon its catafalque his corpse reaches a concrete impasse. Indeed, the final presence of his body in the narration reminds us of the materiality of death: if in dying his spirit rises limitlessly, Moreno-Isla's corpse reaches its physical peak at the ceiling of the church. Like the intricately wrought cenotaph of *La*

*de Bringas*, the scaffolding beneath the casket of Moreno-Isla calls attention to the hyperbole of Aurora's statement and the inherent "above and beyond" that substitutes the impossible mimetic representation of death.

In this image of Moreno-Isla's body, hyperbole stands in for unnarratable transcendence in that hyperbole itself connotes a sense of infinite movement. From the Greek *hyperballein* "to throw over and beyond," hyperbole itself connotes a limitless trajectory that reaches no peak. Therefore, the hyperbolic description of Moreno-Isla's elevated body demonstrates our limited resources for representing the transcendent: like his corpse, representation is limited precisely because we cannot depict mimetically what remains a mystery. While the excessive rhetoric associated with hyperbole seems to further preclude the achievement of mimetic representation, its inherent sense of infinity implies the transcendence that is otherwise unrepresentable. Excess of style and form in the face of loss partially informs Valis's characterization of *cursilería*. Indeed the exaggerated description and potential extravagance of Moreno-Isla's funeral calls attention to his, now ironic, abhorrence of a *cursi* funeral procession. However, if we consider the implicit sense of heightening associated with hyperbolic rhetoric, we find not meaning in excess, but a glimpse of "untranslatable" feeling that is reaching for release.

The sense of movement nascent in representations of death is markedly fluid; there is no sense of beginning or end, but constant upward movement. This movement is not limited to ascension, as I have thus far suggested. In fact, the artifice and embellishment associated with the Decadent movement at the turn of the nineteenth century connotes the sense of descent. In this case, movement is an important bearer of

meaning of the fast-approaching “end” – the close of the century and the close of life – as well as the impression of literally declining (*cadere*). Notably, it is a fixation on downward movement, rather than finality itself. The medieval leitmotif of the *danse macabre* achieves a similar association. The “dance of death” not only instills the belief that death spares no one, but the movement inherent to the notion of dance denotes the inevitable forward-movement conducted by an outside force. Swept into the dance, the unrelenting cadence marches us all towards the grave. Any classic harbinger of death – Freud’s *doppelganger*, for example – is “sent ahead” to herald *approaching* death, not the arrival of death itself. As I have demonstrated in the chapter on *Fortunata y Jacinta*, the focus on the anticipation of death supersedes the moment of death itself precisely because it is the only possible experience of death that lends itself to mimetic representation.

Although the experience of grief has not been treated directly in this dissertation, it bears importance in the trajectory of death. We might expect a representation of grief imbued with the sense of descent, as it is positioned opposite anticipation on the emotional parabola associated with death. Taking Caballero’s “El dolor es una agonía sin muerte” (1865) as an example, grief is portrayed as virtually interminable. Curiously, the climax of death is once again elided when Consolación, the mother grieving a son she believes to be lost in battle, exclaims that she will never die because her unending grief will keep her alive. Being that her son has indeed survived, Consolación dies instantly at the sight of his presence. If Consolación’s survival is contingent on the tumult of her grief, it follows that she will die at the sight of her son. The reader also should presume, however, that Consolación meets her end for her imagined, faithless certainty of his death, and this *cuento de costumbres* should serve as another example of Caballero’s

belief in the dangers of emotion. Nevertheless, the appearance of death in the story is without herald, without indicators of its approach. It is a climax that lacks all rhetoric of culmination. Regardless of the reason Caballero chooses to strike down Consolación so suddenly, we see that the rhetoric of anticipation and climax converts to a sense of interminability in the aftermath of death. After all, if death is not the climax, then what is?

This unnarratable climax of death represents a boundary – or what Stewart refers to as an “interval” –between two states of being: alive and dead. It is precisely this void that produces a crisis of meaning; it is the uncertain demarcation between life and death, for example, that sparks the pervasive feeling of the Uncanny before apparent death or a life-like doll. To uphold this chaotic boundary is to defend the fragile self against the contamination of death. Repugnance, according to Kristeva, establishes the self against the loathsome abject, which in its height takes shape as the corpse. I have shown that the emotion of disgust straddles the line between the ideal and the material in my chapter about *La prostituta*. Disgust defends the self against death to the extent that it deceives: the thought of death is redirected to something immediate, foul and tangible.

This curious interplay between the workings of the mind and materiality reveals itself in the emotion of compassion. The potential to empathize with another involves the blurring of the boundaries of the self insofar as to imaginatively recreate the pitiable circumstances of another entails the transference of pain onto the self. In the narrative imagination of Fernán Caballero, this pain is destructive; compassion blazes a trail for other chaotic emotions such as anger or revenge, and the mental pain associated with compassion has physical repercussions. The extreme, self-destructive piety of Rosalía

and Mari Pepa's neurotic hand-washing strengthen the border of the self against the disordering effects of suffering and death. In the face of the philosophical impasse of suffering and the terrifying void of death, the body is the domain of vigilance.

It is the implied chaos of meaning of the "restos o preparativos" in *Fortunata y Jacinta* that illustrates the liminality of death. The arrested decay and growth situated at the border between the city and the cemetery is a picture of the crisis of referentiality that death connotes. The vocabulary assigned to death in art and literature translates between an unspeakable context and the realm of tangibility that makes death accessible, yet still ungraspable, to readers. While laden with meaning, the insufficiency of metaphor is insuperable: we will never depict the inner workings of death, the consciousness of the moment in which one's life expires. What I have demonstrated in the preceding chapters is that emotion provides an extra step towards an insightful representation of death. To the extent that emotion deals in the same liminality between the ideal and the material, emotion brings us closer to representing a meaningful experience of death.

Likewise, brimming with immediacy and vigor, emotion reflects the "brutal factuality" of death, in the words of Stewart. Emotions are undeniable in and of themselves, however their authenticity is difficult to convey to others. As Scarry tells us in *The Body in Pain*, "To have pain is to have *certainly*; to hear about pain is to have *doubt*" (13). This doubt that questions the validity or degree to which someone feels pain is precisely the aspect of sentimental literature, or any emotionally-charged text, that renders it vulnerable to criticism. In his account of a man who is buried alive, Edgar Allan Poe remarks that it is precisely the story's authenticity that excites the reader: "As inventions, we should regard them with simple abhorrence" (1). Claims that insist upon

authenticity tend to exacerbate distrust and abhorrence. Consider the footnote at the end of the 1865 publication of “El dolor es una agonía sin muerte”: “Este verídico sucedido nos ha sido referido por el coronel del regimiento, testigo de vista del suceso” (300). That anyone might take Caballero’s picture of grief and intense shock as truth is questionable. Nevertheless, hyperbole serves another function in the story that is unrelated to the authenticity of the events: the hyperbolic portrayal of the tormenting truths of family, loss and war reflects the immeasurable pain and unattainable expression of what it means to lose a son. Alarcón reminds us in “Los seis velos” that emotions resist a “translation” into concept and explanation; they are “verdades que se sienten y no se explican” (118). The crux of mimesis is precisely to reproduce the truths of reality through authentic artistic portrayal. The emotional dimension of represented experience is precisely where a mimetic replication of what one *feels* is located; it is in the implied ascension of the infinite, the “felt” descent of doubt and despair, the distancing rejection of disgust.

As in any “discourse of mortality,” I must now ask the inevitable question: where do we go from here? Part of what I have attempted to show is the importance of a reevaluation of the place of emotion in literature. For example, the disgusting elements of *La prostituta* are typically recognized as the immoral and indecent factors that led to the prohibition of the novel’s sale. However, disgust “does” more than disturb the reader in this text: it is a prominent meaning-making operation in the novel. Therefore, instead of asking how these representations make us feel, we must ask: what do these representations make us understand? Sianne Ngai suggests that the mere representation of disgust does not provoke it in the reader: “we can speak of a literary text whose global or organizing affect is disgust, without this necessarily implying that the work represents or

signifies disgust, or that it will disgust the reader” (30). In the case of *La prostituta*, the narrative disgust evoked by grotesque scenes signified disgust with the text itself.

Following Ngai’s suggestion about the ways in which emotion may govern a text without necessarily evoking that emotion from the reader, we can examine the role of emotion as a vehicle of meaning-making within a text.

In this way, to study the representation of emotion would be to resist the repetitive criticism that has pervaded the studies of sentimental literature and of authors such as Fernán Caballero. The connection between the body, emotion and reason can be traced farther back in the trajectory of Realism in the Spanish tradition. Consider a scene from the third *tratado* of *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554): on his way to the market with a coin from his master, a desperate and starving Lazarillo crosses paths with a funeral procession. He backs away from the corpse, and after overhearing where they are taking it – “¡A la casa triste y desdichada, a la casa lóbrega y oscura, a la casa donde nunca comen ni beben!” – Lazarillo runs back home in terror, coin in hand. His master laughs heartily when he realizes that Lazarillo believed that the corpse would be coming to *their* dark and hungry home. Lazarillo remarks that although they ate well that day, “maldito el gusto yo tomaba en ello” (n. pag.). Although this scene is surely illustrative of Lazarillo’s naïveté, it demonstrates that fear can supersede all conditions of the mind and body, even relentless hunger. Emotion trumps all: this informs the anthem running through Caballero’s texts as well, and it indicates how Caballero envisioned the relationship between mind, body and soul.

That the intense fear of the proximity of a corpse could intervene upon the most immediate and relentless of bodily processes demonstrates how emotion straddles and

closes the “divide” between mind and body. As the interpreters between the state of the body and the operations of the mind, emotions depend in large part on material circumstances. The works that I have examined in this dissertation indeed demonstrate that the emotions are deeply ingrained with the materiality of the body. The *Relaciones* of Caballero demonstrate that compassion is linked to the body to the extent that empathy involves the *imaginative* recreation of the circumstances of another. The vulnerability of the body is illustrated in the compassionate characters whose “disturbances” of mind and body are provoked by scenes of suffering and murder. At the same time, in the character of Rosalía, Caballero demonstrates that the *deliberate* destruction of the body mimics the dismissal of empirical evidence; both the body and material evidence are sacrificed in the name of faith.

My examination of *La prostituta* demonstrates that the disgust one might feel in the presence of a corpse is an emotional deflection away from the idea of death. For López Bago, the disturbing idea of death does not disturb the body, as it might according to Caballero, but protects it by refocusing attention onto the materiality that is only metaphorically related to it. For all its attention to the bodily repercussions of syphilis, *La prostituta* features an autopsy that is purely preemptive: Doctor Pérez explains to the Marqués what will *inevitably* become of his syphilitic body, right down to the expected color and consistency of his bile (*La prostituta* 188). Although the interior of the Márques is never directly “exposed,” the physical, yet invisible, presence of inevitable decomposition that we all carry *within* us is a notion far more disturbing than the narrated sight of a splayed corpse. In *La prostituta*, the weight of disturbing ideas such as death and contamination, and feelings such as sadness and lust, are in constant dialogue with

the images of materiality (ice, comets, volcanoes, handwashing, etc) that “speak” in their place.

The primacy of materiality in the world portrayed in *Fortunata y Jacinta* persists in its intimately depicted death scenes. In fact, the inherent vulnerability of the body is precisely what destroys each of the three characters whose deaths we witness. Mauricia has poisoned her body with alcohol; she brings her body to its limits until it finally gives out. Moreno-Isla’s fatal flaw is his weak heart, which both metaphorically and literally cannot withstand further pounding. The birth of Juan Evaristo causes an internal rupture and hemorrhage in Fortunata; her body literally surpasses its own boundaries through profuse bleeding. Each of these characters experiences a death from *within* that is rooted in the very flesh of their bodies. Nonetheless, the driving force behind these scenes is the feeling of anticipation that moves them forward. The implicit feelings embedded in the images that connote anticipation —climbing, forward and backward movement, rhythmic repetition and the disturbances that affect it— are ultimately meaningful because such feelings are rooted in the body.

Therefore, in these texts the unknowable and intangible state of death is indeed represented through attention to the materiality of the body; however, this materiality possesses an underlying connection to the *ideal*. While each text demonstrates the fragility of the flesh, each also reminds us of the larger issues to which the flesh is connected – to faith, to rejection, and to the inevitable rhythm of passing time. It is through an attention to the narrative mechanism of represented emotion that the connections between mind, body and environment are illuminated.

Brad Epps published a fascinating article in 2002 regarding the pervasive presence of the rotting corpse in the Catalan Modernist novel. He finds that these shocking, putrid images contrast with the graceful withering present in literature of the *fin de siglo*, and finds that the cadaver, as a site of uncertainty, is precisely an emblem of disjointed, fragile progress. Epps emphasizes the materiality of the corpse, emphatically reminding us that death is not just a theoretical “negative,” but a presence – “dead bodies are *somewhere*” (37). While Epps appreciates the rhetorical complexities surrounding the representation of death, the dead body is assigned to the metaphorical realm: it is progress, specifically “the destiny of progress, its inescapable aim, its *telos*” (36). Although my project deals in metaphor to an extent, I have demonstrated that there is a necessity to look *into* the properties of metaphor itself and consider other elements of rhetoric that function as metaphor does. As Johnson and Lakoff suggest, metaphor is more a matter of thought than it is of language. As such, rather than a poetic device, metaphor is at the foundation of human understanding. In this sense, metaphor is liminality: it is the hinge between the ideal and the material that makes meaning possible.

It is precisely the pervasive question of liminality that informs a representation of death. Death is the imperceptible fissure between the states of being alive and “being” dead, and as Poe reminds us, the boundary between life and death is “at best shadowy and vague” (1). But there are other questions of liminality that death connotes. Representations of death also remind us of the boundary between reality and fiction. Regina Barreca posits that death is the jarring, alienating representation that strengthens the boundary between the represented death of the Other and the reader’s sense of mortality. She notes quite bluntly: “Just in case you thought there was no distinction

between representation and reality, there is death” (174). The division between reality and fiction is indeed brought to light in a representation of the death of another, a “not I.” However, it is our emotional engagement with the meaning of a text that traverses that division. We “feel” Jacinta’s wavering doubt, we “rise” with the Viaticum procession as its rhythmic bell signals its ascent up the stairs. We are invited to feel and to understand through depictions of death, at times forcefully. Isn’t that precisely what agitates those that accuse Fernán Caballero and Eduardo López Bago of artificiality? Our rejection, our “simple abhorrence,” as Poe puts it, is a refusal to feel, believe or experience on command; it is a refusal to relax the border between our reality and an imagined one.

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