



The *ciego* in the Novels of Galdós: *Costumbrismo, Realism, Symbolism*

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Like many of his contemporaries, both in Spain and other European countries, Galdós utilized many blind characters in his novels¹. Although he was unaware of the fact as he created these characters, he himself would spend his final years sightless. Individual Galdosian blind characters are sometimes mentioned by critics as part of the overall discussion of specific works, but to date there has been no study showing how pervasive the *ciego* is throughout the vast panorama of Galdós's works. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to demonstrate that the *ciego*, and the multiplicity of his novelistic roles, is an important aspect of Galdós's creativity from the first of his *novelas de la primera época* to the last of his *Episodios Nacionales*.² To facilitate presentation and discussion, we have arranged these *ciegos* under the following headings (realizing, of course, that some might well be appropriate in more than one category): *costumbrismo*, realism, realism-naturalism, realism-spiritual naturalism, and echoes of Galdós's career-ending blindness.

Costumbrismo

Since the time of Homer, the blind singer of adventure tales has been a prototype throughout the Mediterranean world (Caro Baroja 35). In Spain the blind singer of ballads had become a *tipo costumbrista* long before the advent of the realist novel. Evidence of this may be found not only in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature, but also in the paintings of Goya, in the *sainetes* of Ramón de la Cruz, in the lyric theater, in *costumbrista* collections of popular types, and in contemporary magazines.³ Thus, it is not surprising to find a *ciego* not only in the first of Galdós's novels, *La Fontana de Oro*, but even in its opening chapter. The chapter is titled "La Carrera de San Jerónimo en 1821" and one of the aspects of local color of this street is a "ciego con su guitarra" (I, 14). In *Fortunata y Jacinta* (in the patio of the dwelling place of José Ido del Sagrario) one discovers how such a musician may have learned his trade. Here one sees a blind child and an older *ciego*, perhaps his proud father. The song the boy is singing concludes: "A Pepa la gitani . . . íí . . . íí . . . [. . .] lla-cuando la parió su madre . . . [. . .] sólo le dieron para narices siete calambres" (I, ix, 7: 353–54). Not only is Galdós here presenting a lively *costumbrista* scene,⁴ but he is also subtly underscoring the maternal theme of the novel by having a child as *ciego* who sings "cuando la parió su madre."⁵

Madrid's *Colegio Nacional de Ciegos y Sordomudos* offered training for the blind, not only with the *guitarra* but also with several other instruments.⁶ Thus, Galdós is accurate when he mentions blind singers playing the *bandurria* (*Canovás* II, 1281), the *clarinete* (*El doctor Centeno* I, i, 5: 1309) and the *violín* (*Nazarín* I, 1680). As a further aid to *ciegos*, only the blind were allowed to sing and recite in public places before the Revolution of 1868.

Among the many types of songs sung by the *ciegos* were ballads about early Spanish history. Therefore, in *El caballero encantado*, La Madre (the spirit of Spain) gives special honor and sustenance at her dining table to a blind singer, Crispulín de Chaorna (XVIII, 298–301). She also gives him permission to compose any “cantos de ciegos” about her he might wish. La Madre's exceptional treatment of Crispulín confirms that he represents a cherished archetype in the Spanish experience. Moreover, this *ciego* also serves as part of La Madre's program of sensitizing the enchanted protagonist (Tarsis-Gil) to aspects of national history and culture, with the view of enlisting him in her national revitalization program.⁷

Additionally, La Madre advises Crispulín that she is now only a “noble hidalga que ha venido muy a menos,” living no better than the average Castilian peasant (XXVIII, 298). Compared to past glory, La Madre tells Crispulín the present status of Spain does not offer much to sing about. And such was the situation in Galdós's time, when many of the *romances de ciego* had degenerated to feature all kinds of anti-hero protagonists, as well as unhappy, melodramatic love tales. Thus, in *Tormento* Galdós can strike a responsive chord with the reader when he has Marcelina Polo fear that the illicit love affair of her clerical brother (Pedro Polo) and Amparo is shocking and scandalous enough to be soon included among “los que cantando, venden los ciegos con relatos de crímenes y robos” (XXXII, 1548).⁸

Female singers are not overlooked by Galdós. For example, in *Fortunata y Jacinata*, Moreno Isla “tropezó con una ciega que pedía limosnas. Era una muchacha, acompañada por un viejo guitarrista, y cantaba jotas con tal gracia y maestría, que Moreno no pudo menos de detenerse un rato ante ella” (IV, iii, 6: 367). In his insomnia that night Moreno Isla remembers the *ciega* and regrets having given her only two small coins. He resolves to try to find her again the next morning; but he never does, because he expires that very night. So, as the narrator may be reminding the reader, doing good, here specifically giving alms, should never be put off.

Some of the blind singers became well enough known to have popular nicknames. One such is mentioned in *Nazarín* as among those who have given Andara false information regarding Catholic doctrine. The eponymous protagonist tells Andara that she must choose between what he tells her and what “Bálsamo” believes. Instantly, she opts for the opinion of Padre Nazarín, who also has asked:

—¿Y quién es *Bálsamo*, hija mía?

—Pues uno que fué sacristán, y estudió para cura y sabe todo el canticio del coro y el responso inclusive. Después se quedó ciego, y se puso a cantar por las calles con su guitarra, y de una canción muy chusca que acababa

siempre con el estribillo de *el bálsamo de amor*, le vino y se le quedó para siempre el nombre *Bálsamo*. (II, ii, 1695)

Even better-known street singers were “Perico el ciego” and “La Ciega de Manzanares.” The former was so popular that a book with his picture on the frontispiece was advertised in the magazine *El Museo Universal*: “Tipos de Madrid—Segunda edición de Perico el Ciego, corregida y aumentada” (V, xxii, 165). Galdós knew that Perico was part of the Madrid scene and mentions him first in *El doctor Centeno* when Felipe Centeno and his friend Juanito are busy running errands: “Apresuradamente corrieron hacia los barrios del Norte, y aunque Juanito quería detenerse a oír los cantos de Perico el ciego, el Doctor se tiraba de él y a prisa le llevaba” (I, ii, 12: 1337). However, in the *Episodio* entitled *Prim*, the protagonist (José García Fajardo) now does have time to listen to Perico. He reports:

Anoche me paré en los corrillos que rodean a *Perico el Ciego*, que es un magnífico trovador [. . .]. Al son de su guitarra canta, no las proezas de los héroes, porque no los hay, sino las vivas historias de bandoleros y ladrones. Atento público le escucha con simpatía y emoción. Yo me he sentido medieval agregándome a este pueblo. Anoche hicieron furor dos o tres coplas de Perico harto ingeniosas. O me engañé mucho, o eran alusivas a nuestra reina, que anda ya en jácaras de los cantares callejeros. Desengáñate, Manolo; aquí no hay más cronista popular que *Perico el Ciego*, ni más poetisa que la *Ciega de Manzanares*. (XIX, 587)⁹

Confirmation of Galdós’s accurate recording of an important *costumbrista* aspect of Spanish life is attested to by fellow novelist Pío Baroja. In his nonfictional “Vitrina pintoresca,” Baroja recalls with an enthusiasm that extends back to his student days, three blind singers, the words and titles of some of their songs, and the popular nickname of one of them, “Romántico” (729–32). Baroja, a seious collector of “romances de ciegos,” remembers specific songs and gives his personal reactions to one of them. Also, in his reminiscences in “Música callejera,” Pío Baroja states: “Cuando yo vivía en la calle de la Independencia, cerca de la plaza de Isabel II, pasaba por delante de casa un tipo de barbas y melenas, con anteojos negros, a quien llamábamos el *Romántico*, y cantaba con poca voz, pero con afinación, acompañándose de la guitarra.” (1134)

Clearly then, the blind musician was an important feature of *costumbrismo* who attracted the attention of important authors.

Realism

Many critics consider *costumbrismo* a bridge movement between romanticism and realism, often integrating aspects of the preceding or following aesthetic. Thus, any attempt to indicate a demarcation line between *costumbrismo* and realism can only be subjective and arbitrary. Although the initial chapter of part III of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, describing Madrid’s nightly café life, is entitled “Costumbres turcas,” we are choosing to discuss the café’s blind piano player here under the rubric of realism, primarily because he does not appear as a generic type in any of the well-known *costumbrismo* collections.

“El pianista ciego” is the narrator’s usual method of referring to an employee at the Café San Joaquín on Fuencarral Street:

Por el día se dedicaba a finar. Era casado con ocho de familia. Tocaba piezas de ópera y de zarzuelas francesas como una máquina, con ejecución fácil, aunque incorrecta, sin gusto ni sentimiento. A pesar de esto, en ciertos pasajes muy naturalistas, en que imitaba una tempestad o *las campanadas de incendios* que da cada parroquia, le aplaudía mucho el público, y a última hora le pedía siempre habaneras. (III, i, 6: 41)

At times this *pianista ciego* joins a group of the café’s regular *tertulianos*, the latter being dominated by Juan Pablo Rubín. Although the brother of a priest, Rubín uses the establishment for expounding his own brand of atheistic doctrine—which he defends against all comers until the narrator silences him with the *ciego*. The piano player asks Rubín if he is sincere or just showing off his erudition, and the narrator says:

Juan Pablo miró al ciego, y se helaron en sus labios las palabras con que iba a espetarle nuevamente su cruel filosofía. Era Rubín hombre de buen corazón, y le pareció poco humano aumentar las tinieblas de aquella triste y miserable vida [. . . y dijo] «le diré a usted . . . hay opiniones . . . No haga usted caso. Si no fuera por estas bromas, ¿Cómo se pasaba el rato?» (III, i, 6: 45–46)

Beyond a convincingly realistic description of Madrid café life, the main function of the blind man is his effect on another character (Juan Pablo Rubín), a consequence of which is the termination of one phase of a chain of historical philosophical schools, which the narrator has been echoing for some time.¹⁰

As already mentioned, Madrid had a *Colegio Nacional de Ciegos y Sordo-Mudos*. In *Tristana*, the eponymous protagonist sees students from the school out for Sunday exercise:

A la sazón pasaron por allí, viniendo de la Castellana, los sordomudos en grupos de mudo y ciego, con sus gabanes azules y galanonada gorra. En cada pareja, los ojos del mudo valían al ciego para poder andar sin tropezanos; se entendían por el tacto con tan endiabladas gatusas, que causaba maravilla verles hablar. Gracias a la precisión de aquel lenguaje, enteráronse pronto los ciegos que allí estaban los hospicianos, mientras los muditos, todos ojos, se deshacían por echar un par de *verónicos*. ¡Cómo que para esto maldita falta les hacía el don de la palabra! En alguna pareja de sordos, las garatusas eran un movimiento o vibración rapidísima, tan ágil y flexible como la humana voz. Contrastaban las caras picarescas de los mudos, en cuyos ojos resplandecía todo el verbo humano, con las caras aburridas muertas, de los ciegos, picotados atrocamente de viruelas, vacíos los ojos y cerrados entre cerdosas pestañas o abiertos aunque insensibles a la luz con pupila de cuajado vidrio.

Detuviéronse allí, y por un momento reinó la fraternidad entre unos y otros. Gestos, muecos, cucamonas mil. Los ciegos no pudiendo tomar parte en ningún juego, se apartaban desconsolados. Algunos se permitían sonreír como si vieran, llegando al conocimiento de las cosas por el velocísimo teclado de los dedos. (VII, 148–49)

In addition to providing quotidian realism, this scene constitutes an important juncture in the novel, for it provides a mechanism for Tristana to become acquainted with her future lover, Horacio. The latter happens to be chatting with the instructor in charge of the *ciegos y mudos* during the scene described above. If Galdós is suggesting a parallel between Tristana (who has been rendered voiceless by Lope) and the *mudos*, such is not the case vis-à-vis the *ciegos*, because Tristana takes advantage of the opportunity to make initial, but all-important, eye contact with Horacio (VII, 149).

As Galdós repeatedly moves beyond presentations of the blind as *costumbrista* local color, his descriptions increasingly suggest a harsher reality. For example, in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Guillermina and Jacinta notice “ciegos que iban dando palos en el suelo, lisiados con montera de pelo, pantalón de soldado, horribles caras” (I, ix, 2: 323). A harsh reality is also portrayed for the *lazarillos* who accompanied the blind. In *Cánovas*, Crescencia relates how five years of her childhood were made wretched because her mother had rented her out to a blind man: “Desde los cinco a los diez años anduve por las calles, descalza, con un ciego que tocaba la bandurria. Largo tiempo pasé durmiendo en un banco, sin más abrigo que unos trapos indecentes [. . . entre] mendigos asquerosos y borrachines” (II, 1281).

In *Miau*, a realistically described blind beggar is used as part of the character delineation of Luisito Cadalso. The latter had frequently given a small coin to a “ciego muy viejo, con la barba cana, larga y amarillenta, envuelto en parda capa de luengos pliegues, remendada y sucia, la cabeza blanca, descubierta, y el sombrero en la mano, pidiendo sólo con la actitud y sin mover los labios” (III, 105). Now reacting to the heartbreaking fact that his grandfather is a *cesante* with only two months’ employment needed to ensure a pension for survival in his old age, Luisito frequently withdraws into a world of fantasy, in which he imagines that no less a person than *Dios* comes sometimes to chat with him. In the first of these imagined encounters, he is not initially certain whether his comforter is the old *ciego* or *Dios*, but soon he decides that it is the latter (III, 105–06). Thus, clearly the *ciego* facilitates entry into the dynamics of Luisito’s psyche—which from this point onward will be an important artistic component of Galdós’s artistry in the novel.

Realism-Naturalism

In *Lo prohibido*, “his most Zolaesque novel,” Galdós shows the psychological impact of the loss of sight—as well as one way of trying to cope with the situation.¹¹ Youthful Manolo Trujillo, whenever asked about his condition, replies: “Mejor, mejor . . . pasándose una mano por delante de los ojos. Principia a aclarar el derecho. Me veo perfectamente los dedos” (II, xxii, 2: 482). However, the narrator-protagonist José María Bueno de Guzmán knows that this is not the case, and he adds: “Era un dolor verle, con los ojos cuajados y fijos, la cara pálida, ansiosa, queriendo ver y no viendo nada. El pobrecito se hacía la

ilusión de que veía algo, y los amigos cuidábamos de no quitársela por completo” (II, xxii, 2: 481–82).

Another way Trujillo copes with his affliction is to continue to go and sit daily at the stock exchange, just for the familiar sounds and tobacco smell. It is here where the young, talented, former businessman becomes acquainted with the protagonist José María and interacts with the latter while considering a brief, but disfiguring, illness of Eloísa Carrillo. The latter is now not pleasant to behold, as seen in the following description: “[Su cara era] una enorme calabaza cuya parte superior era lo único que declaraba parentesco con la fisonomía humana. Mas en la inferior, la deformidad era tal que había que recurrir a las especies zoológicas más feas para encontrarle semejanza” (II, xxii, 3: 487). However, Trujillo, who was once one of Eloísa’s most discreet yet fervent admirers, has no reluctance about visiting her. As the narrator so aptly says: “Después de su ceguera, la visitaba de vez en cuando, haciendo gala de una especie de inclinación alambicada y platónica, sentimiento muy propio de un caballero que ha visto mucho y ya no ve nada” (II, xxii, 2: 482). And as Trujillo himself adds: “Dicen que es horriblemente desfigurada. Yo, como no la puedo ver, siempre la *veo* hermosa” (II, xxii, 2: 482). Significantly, when Eloísa does not feel like having anyone see her, she may grant visiting permission only to her blind admirer (II, xxii, 7: 507). Thus, although he appears late in the novel and has no importance for the development of the main plot, blind Trujillo and his sincere platonic relationship with Eloísa offer the reader a pleasant respite from the harsh sights, smells, and negative aspects of other characters in this naturalistic novel.

In *Ángel Guerra*, the *ciego* also has a role as Galdosian realism continues to incorporate aspects of Zola’s naturalism, with the latter’s emphasis on heredity and environment—and the resulting need to include descriptions of the seamy, sordid side of life. Such is the case in *Ángel Guerra* concerning Leré’s unnamed father. The latter has begotten four “monstruos, no todos iguales, pues hubo uno totalmente sin piernas y otro con la cabeza deforme, mayor que todo el cuerpo” (I, iv, 3: 1259). This unfortunate procreator’s blindness appears to be a secondary result of bad heredity, with alcoholism being the primary cause. Addiction to drink causes vocational failure, mistreatment of the family, and finally blindness:

[S]e quedó ciego y baldado, y le daban unos arrechuchos terribles de la rabia de no poder ir a la taberna. No había más remedio que darle aguardiente, porque si no, rompía la cama y las sillas, y se arrancaba el pelo, echando por aquella boca unas blasfemias que daban horror. Se murió un Jueves Santo, cantando los salmos del día . . . (I, iv, 3:1259)

Walter Pattison believes that Zola’s *L’Assommoir* is “a work which Galdós must surely have read as its *succès de scandale* was instrumental in bringing Zola to worldwide fame” (*Benito Pérez Galdós* 162n1). In *L’Assommoir*, a hereditary disposition to alcoholism causes the ruin of first the male (Coupeau), and then the female protagonist (his wife Gervaise). Galdós’s presentation of Leré’s father in *Ángel Guerra* indicates that he understood Zola well, and that his *ciego* would not have been at all out of place in Zola’s 1878 novel.¹²

Realism-Spiritual Naturalism

During the late nineteenth-century's reaction against naturalism, which now placed more emphasis on matters spiritual, the Galdosian *ciego* continues to be present and is able to play a vital role in this new aesthetic. For example, in *Ángel Guerra*, the *ciega* Lucía is so dedicated to matters spiritual that she is included among those waiting each morning for the door to open at the Toledo Cathedral. No matter how early one may arrive, she is already there, “hecha un ovillo junto a la verja” (III, i, 6: 1436). “Era joven y había perdido la vista a los doce años de viruelas, que le dejaron el rostro como un rallo” (III, iii, 2: 1472).

Lucía is among a small group subsequently invited by Ángel Guerra to participate in the pilot plan of caring for the needy at the newly founded institution on his estate. Completely happy in her new home, Lucía's only request is permission to go into Toledo on Sundays and Holy Days to hear Mass. Her *lazarillo* on these days is a six-year-old boy named Jesús, who resembles Murillo's paintings of the Christchild—and who also has the distinction of having been born in a manger.

By her gratitude and exemplary behavior, Lucía contrasts sharply with another resident at the institution, namely the *cojo* “Maldiciones.” The latter is always grumbling and repays Ángel Guerra's kindness by trying to seduce Lucía. This attempted seduction of the blind girl seems to have artistic significance in the novel for it presents on a baser level the same feelings which Ángel Guerra, although still unknowingly, has for Leré. In a realistic sense, it predicates the danger of having women and men living in the same building, an arrangement upon which the eponymous protagonist has been insisting.

Lucía is the only one of the blind characters we have discussed thus far who elucidates her dreams. Both of them are of the wish-fulfillment type and concern her sister, who has had a bilateral mastectomy. What Leré experiences in the first dream comes true: Ángel does take her to see her sister. The second dream is more complicated, suggesting that Lucía sometimes may have a special gift for mental-spiritual insights, but also (in the second part) that they may be flawed. Let us consider first the initial part of her second dream. She insists that the Lord (temporarily) restored her vision and, as proof, she accurately describes the furnishings in the room (III, iii, 9: 1491). However, the second part of the dream, that Leré donated her breasts so that Lucía's sister might continue feeding her child does not of course come true. Nevertheless, Galdós has thus now established a precedent for the idea that Lucía, although blind to external reality, does have a rich ideational life—sometimes accurate, but sometimes false. This will be important in understanding the novel's closure.

Moreover, it is important to consider the special relationship between Lucía and Ángel Guerra. The latter sometimes acts as Lucía's guide and then she is:

más contenta que unas pascuas, porque en las tinieblas de sus ojos había empezado a ver en el amo un ser extraordinario, encarnación de todas las virtudes y no ciertamente parecido a los demás hombres. Lo que a todas horas oía cantar de su bondad, de su caridad, de sus colosales proyectos

filantrópicos y cristianos llegaba a su mente *agrandado* en las bóvedas y cavernosas de la ceguera, en las cuales *la imaginación trabajaba libremente, sin que la perturbaran las realidades de la luz*. (III, iii, 9: 1490–91; emphasis added)

Being blind, having an intense inner emotional and imaginative life, and being ignorant of Ángel Guerra's previous experiences because of her late entry into the action of the novel, Lucía perceives only one facet of her benefactor's personality: his spiritual rebirth. She is not aware of the conflicting dualism, implicit even in his name: Ángel Guerra. Moreover, she does not realize the true nature of his feelings for Leré nor his attraction to the Church.

When Ángel Guerra lies dying, the narrator says: “La ciega no quiso abandonar a su señor, y con fidelidad perruna quedóse acurrucada a la parte afuera de la puerta inmóvil y rezando entre dientes interminables letanías y misereres” (III, vi, 5: 1532). She is still there the next day when a messenger brings word that the *viático* arrived too late and that Ángel Guerra has expired: “Lo sabía—replicó la ciega, volviendo hacia él las dos esferas vidriosas, encuajadas, inexpresivas de sus ojos muertos. Poco antes de llegar el Señor, *vi* que el amo se transportaba . . . Se encontraron un poquito más allá de la puerta, y juntos se subieron, recemos . . . por él no; por nosotros (III, vi, 7: 1537).

Thus it is that Lucía closes the three-volume work of *Ángel Guerra* with the above statement that fulfills the main role for which she was seemingly created. Like her prototype, the blind St. Lucy (Santa Lucía) is often depicted with a ring of candles on her head.¹³ Galdós's Lucía is also a bringer of light—light concerning the question of Ángel Guerra's salvation. Her religious piety, her purity, her being led by a *lazarillo* named Jesús, and her rich ideational life unencumbered by sight—all these add up to an understanding of why she is granted the right to proclaim in the final words of the novel Ángel Guerra's salvation. However, other aspects of her characterization, namely her blindness to reality, her loyalty to and over-idealization of Ángel, as well as errors of her inner life (as revealed in her second dream), can be seen as undercutting the certainty of her proclamation. Thus, the reader (as is the case with the ending of other Galdós novels) has the final responsibility of evaluation.

The *ciego* is also prominent in *Misericordia*, the best known of the *naturalismo-espiritual* novels. In fact, the protagonist Benina is first introduced among a group of beggars, which includes *ciegos*. She is not only able to exist successfully in this harsh environment, but she is also able to befriend and sustain many others, including the blind. And late in the novel when financial circumstances are especially difficult for Benina, she herself fakes blindness. On a temporary “third shift” of begging at night, she puts on a “velo negro [. . .] para entapujarse la cara; con esto y unos espuejuelos verdes que para el caso guardaba, hacía divinamente el tipo de señora ciega vergonzante, arrimadita a la esquina de la calle de Barrionuevo, atacando con quejumbroso reclamo a media voz a todo cristiano que pasaba” (XXX, 250).

Among the beggars in the group when Benina is first introduced are three *ciegos*, two of whom we shall consider at this juncture. (The blind Moroccan beggar Almudena will be discussed later.) One is named Cresencia, described as “ciega o por lo menos cegata,

siempre hecha un ovillo, mostrando su rostro diminutivo, y sacando del involtorio que con su arrollado cuerpo formaba, la flaca y rugosa mano de largas uñas” (II, 72–73). More prominent in the beggar group is the *ciego* known as Pulido. He is individualized primarily through physical description, a sense of strong independence, a colorful manner of speaking, and his contributions to *Misericordia*'s continual stream of humor.

First, the reader receives his physical description:

[U]n ciego entrado en años, que debía de tener cuerpo de bronce, y por sangre alcohol o mercurio, según resistía las temperaturas extremas, siempre fuerte, sano y con unos colores que daban envidia a las flores del cercano puesto. [. . . Era] tan insensible a la nieve como al calor sofocante, con su mano extendida, mal envuelto en raída capita de paño pardo, modulando sin cesar palabras tristes, que salían congeladas de sus labios. Aquel día el viento jugaba con los pelos blancos de su barba, metiéndose por la nariz y pegándose al rostro, húmedo por el lagrimeo que en el intenso frío producía en sus muertos ojos. (I, 65–66)

Pulido could find refuge from the cold, as do the other *mendigos*, by being inside the sheltered passageway leading to the church, but this would necessitate associating with “viejas charlatanas que no tienen educación.” Pulido asserts: “mejor se está aquí con la ventisca” (I, 68–69).

Charles Kany argues in *Life and Manners in Madrid: 1750–1800* that the *ciego* was often a source of humor (62–66).¹⁴ Pulido's main contribution in this regard is achieved through his frequent malapropisms and linguistic errors. For example, he says, “*pulpitante*” (“*palpitante*”; 67), “*Congrioso*” (“*Congreso*”; 67), “*universario*” (“*aniversario*”; 68), “*terrimotos*” (undoubtedly he meant to say “*termómetros*”; 68), “*pleniputenciano*” (“*plenipotenciario*”; 185), and “*memueria*” (“*memoria*”; 215).

Additional humor is provided by Galdós when other beggars come to Pulido's home. Believing that the latter has a “poderosa vista interior, que por la ceguera de los ojos corporales prodigiosamente le aumentaba,” the other mendicants want him to tell them which lottery tickets to buy. Pulido obliges: “y en tono profético les dijo que saldría [. . .] premiado el 5.005” (XXIII, 205). Galdós seems to be presenting this scene as a popular echo of the idea—which goes as far back as the character Tiresias in Greek mythology and drama—that the blind man can be a prophet or seer.¹⁵ The great ironic distance between Pulido and his ancient prototype can offer a pleasurable bonus for the perceptive reader. Certainly, Pulido is not concerned with matters spiritually sublime as was Lucía in *Ángel Guerra*, but only with the prediction of lottery numbers.

Returning to the opening chapters of *Misericordia*, Javier Martínez Palacio perceives further delectation in the fact that the two mendicant groups (which include *ciegos*) at the San Sebastián Church may be seen as a parody of the political situation in Spain—a parody which would have been readily enjoyed by contemporary readers. He cites as corroboration the mention of the politician “Cánovas” and authorial word play with the popular sobriquet “*la Burlada*,” the latter having come to be a cynical replacement for “*la*

[*Revolución*] *Gloriosa*” after the Restoration (4–5). Certainly, there is rich and varied humor as *Misericordia* begins its literary seduction of the reader, and the *ciego* is an integral part of this artistry.¹⁶

Symbolism: Juan de Lantigua en *Gloria*

Failing eyesight in *Gloria* suggests no less a personage than Pope Pius IX. Rubén Benítez affirms that, although not specifically named, the Pope is a “figura central” in some of Galdós’s early novels—including his incarnation as “el señor de Lantigua en *Gloria*” (96–97). When Pius IX issued the encyclical *Quanta cura* in 1864, he added a *Syllabus of Errors*. This list of eighty perceived threats to the Church and the Papacy provoked vigorous reaction among liberals throughout Europe. After the first Vatican Council (1870) failed to mitigate any of the ideas contained in the *Syllabus*, Galdós joined the fray. For example, long passages in chapters IV and V of *Gloria* leave no doubt that Galdós had Pius IX in mind. After one discussion with her intransigent father, Gloria muses:

[El] es una *roca*. Malditos sean Martín Lutero, la Reforma, Felipe II, Guillermo de Orange, el elector de no sé de dónde, la paz de Westfalia, la revolución de no sé cuantos, el *Syllabus*, todo esto de que ha hablado papá esta noche. (I, xxvi, 556; emphasis added)

“Roca,” “*Syllabus*,” and “papá” all in the same paragraph forcefully suggest Pius IX. Specifically, Peter means “rock” in Greek and the Papacy bases its claim to have been established by Christ, when he said “Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Further, “papá” and the title “El Papa” both mean father (Latin “*papa*”; Greek “*pappas*”).

Of the several *Syllabus* “errors” reflected also in *Doña Perfecta* and *La familia de León Roch*, two of the most striking in *Gloria* are latitudinarianism (tolerance) and interfaith marriage. Gloria is a lively champion of the former and defends this doctrine against her father for some time; then she decides that “para no lastimar a los suyos” she will feign acquiescence, yet remain (like many of her contemporaries) “*latitudinaria para sí*” (I, xxxi, 567). The idea of interfaith marriage is so abhorrent to Gloria’s father that when he sees his daughter and the Jewish Daniel Morton making love at the end of part I, he has an apoplectic attack and dies. Had Galdós characterized Juan de Lantigua with total blindness, the latter would not have been able to see the lovers—and a different denouement for part I would have been necessary.¹⁷

Lack of vision certainly characterizes both Pius IX and Juan de Lantigua. With further echoes from the life of Pius IX, Galdós’s narrator says concerning Juan de Lantigua:

En la vida de las ideas era donde campeaba su intransigencia y aquella estabilidad de roca jamás conmovida de su asiento por nada ni por nadie. Las tempestades de la Revolución del 48, de la República romana, de la formación de la unidad de Italia, [. . .] la destrucción del poder temporal

del Papa [. . . sirvieron para] cimentar más y más su creencia de que la humanidad pervertida y desapoderada merece un camizón de fuerza. (I, v, 516)

Earlier, Galdós had suggested a parallel between the life of Gloria's father and the latter days of Pius IX, when the latter was trying to regain temporal power: "Con mucha fátiga del estudio, con el continuo hervir de su cerebro y las largas vigiliás, y aquel afán constante en que su viva pasión política le tenía, iba perdiendo la vista" (I, v, 511).

Pius IX was the last of the Church's temporal rulers, since the Papal States were taken away from him by Garibaldi upon the unification of Italy. Had it not been for his temporal loss, he might not have, some believe, felt the need to have the First Vatican Council (1870) proclaim Papal Infallibility. Exhausted from his many struggles, Pius IX in his later years considered himself a prisoner confined in the Vatican, where he continued to write extensively and attempt political involvement. Thus, Galdós's statement concerning Juan de Lantigua is indeed consonant with what is known about Pius IX—who was so disliked that Romans attempted to throw his body into the Tiber River during the funeral procession.

Although Galdós, as a fervent liberal, might have personally believed that anyone opposed to tolerance and interfaith marriage—as in the case of Pius IX and Juan de Lantigua—could be characterized as being totally blind, artistic considerations in *Gloria* suggested failing vision.¹⁸

Pablo Penaguilas in *Marianela*

The surgical removal of cataracts, practiced in ancient times, was rediscovered in the eighteenth century and then greatly improved during the 1860s. Resultant publicity attracted the attention of fiction writers, who saw the possibility of a new, wide-open perspective for creative exploration: What might happen to lovers, if one or both saw the other for the first time after surgery? Louise Blanco has researched and commented on a number of pre-*Marianela* French and British short stories (as well as one play and one comic opera) which addressed this very question. Galdós owned one of these short stories: Charles Nodier's *Les Aveugles de Chamouny*, which had its fifth reprinting in 1875, two years before *Marianela* was published.

While retaining many elements of *Les Aveugles de Chamouny*, Galdós made a fundamental change in *Marianela*: he reverses the gender of the character that undergoes surgery, recovers sight, and marries another. Moreover, Galdós goes beyond all preceding works on the theme and makes the acquisition of sight allegorically applicable to the entire human experience. As Walter Pattison explains:

This novel fictionalizes the positivistic philosophy of Auguste Comte, which became popular in Madrid a few months before Galdós composed *Marianela*. Comte felt that mankind has gone through three stages in development—the theological, in which reality is explained through myths and the imagination is dominant; the metaphysical, when without

observing reality man tries by reason alone to explain his environment, and finally the positivistic stage which amounts to scientific deduction of natural laws from observed reality. [. . .] Pablo Penaguilas possesses a highly developed ability to think logically, but his blindness isolates him from much of reality. He is the metaphysical man, representing a stage, which Comte regarded as transitory and of short duration, hence he must gain complete contact with reality along with his sight. (Pattison, *Benito Pérez Galdós* 57–58).

Joaquín Casaldüero was the first to point out that the title protagonist's imaginative explanation of nature (stars, flowers, etc.) corresponds to Comte's theological stage (Pattison, "Creation" 114–15). Further, Galdós's narrator specifies: "Había formado Marianela en su imaginación podorosa un orden de ideas muy singular, una teogenía extravagante [. . .] y veía en la Naturaleza personalidades vagas que no carecían de modos de comunicar con los hombres [. . . como en] los pueblos primitivos" (XIII, 723). Dr. Golfín, the incarnation of the positivistic scientist, removes Pablo's congenital cataracts and gives him the ability to see. When Pablo, who had imagined that Marianela would have to have a beautiful body to correspond to her beautiful soul, is able to see that this is not so, he is no longer interested in marrying her.¹⁹ She disappears and eventually dies.²⁰ This novelistic experience is the basis for the extrapolation by critics that Galdós is thus suggesting a parallel to the human experience, to mankind's relinquishing of earlier cherished beliefs in favor of a more practical, realistic understanding of the contemporary world.

While agreeing with the above, other critics add that Galdós may have intended also to have Pablo's blindness and cure reflect Plato's three stages of the human soul—with light illuminating reason (Shoemaker, "*Marianela*" 91–92).²¹ However, it is the influence of Comte's positivistic philosophy which is most apparant in *Marianela*; and "Galdós was attracted to it because in his opinion it was true, because it supported his realistic position, and it was a popular novelty of the period" (Pattison, "Creation" 117). These stimuli motivated Galdós to originality with the subject of vision acquired through a cataract operation far beyond anything his British or French contemporaries achieved. Moreover, it marked a turning point in Don Benito's own career. Henceforth, his own novels would focus more on observable reality—and the realist school of writing would predominate during the last third of the nineteenth century in Spain.

Francisco Bringas in *La De Bringas*

Although Francisco Bringas first appears in *Tormento*, the onset of his blindness does not occur until *La de Bringas*. In the latter novel, Bringas's blindness is important both at the plot level and, additionally, at a more transcendent symbolic level. At the plot level, the onset of blindness furthers plot development, complicates interpersonal relationships, creates suspense, and facilitates character delineation. The onset of Bringas's blindness could not have come at a more providential time for his wife, Rosalía. Foolishly compromised by secret indebtedness, she now has an opportunity to pawn the family's silver candlesticks and her own earrings without her husband's knowledge. Then, as she continues to buy more elegant clothing and make unwise loans, she is forced to remove all

the family savings from her husband's money box. When Bringas almost discovers through touch that the bank notes are no longer in the box, his terrified wife decides to cut and substitute paper the size of the bank notes. Hoping that the politician Manuel Pez will rescue her financially, Rosalía also commits adultery. However, Pez does not give her any money causing her to lament: "Ignominia grande era venderse; ¡pero darse de balde . . . !" (XLIV, 1658). Then, when the time approaches for the payment of her husband's medical bill, she has recourse to a second moneylender, Francisco Torquemada. To pay off the latter, she finally must ask the family relative Refugio for money. Because the latter is a prostitute, this request constitutes the ultimate degradation for Rosalía. Ironically, however, at the end of the novel Rosalía herself decides to become a prostitute — and she even offers to sell herself to the narrator.

Interplaying suspensefully with the above money entanglements of Rosalía, the details of Bringas's blindness both move the story forward, and create another kind of suspense. The onset of the blindness, the diagnosis, the treatment, some improvement, a relapse, a change of doctors, worry about the size of the bill— all these are important plot ingredients skillfully developed by Galdós.

But, at a more symbolic level, Bringas is blind to his wife's adultery, to the historical events which are taking place, and to the laws of economic development. To appreciate the symbolism in Bringas's blindness to his wife's adultery, it is helpful to remember that he and his family not only live in the Royal Palace, but have also named the rooms of their apartment to correspond to those of the monarchs' chambers above. Moreover, Rosalía has created a further parallel by naming her children after the Queen and the Queen's heir. Bringas himself carries the same given name as the cuckolded Royal Consort (Francisco de Asís), who turned a "blind eye" to the queen's sexual escapades. Thus, it is clear that Galdós is evoking associations with the royal family— and with their well-known matrimonial difficulties.

In the realm of history an appreciation of the symbolism is enhanced by a reminder that Bringas looks exactly like the Frenchman Adolphe Thiers, the president of the Third Republic, whose picture was well known to those able to read newspapers and magazines.²² In *Tormento*, Galdós had said:

Una coincidencia feliz nos exime de hacer un retrato, pues bastan dos palabras para que todos los que esto lean se le figuren y puedan verle vivo, palpable y luminoso, cual si le tuvieran delante. Era la imagen exacta de Thiers, el grande historiador y político de Francia. [. . .] Faltábale [sólo] lo que distingue al hombre superior, que sabe hacer la historia y escribirla, del hombre común que ha nacido para componer una cerradura y clavar una alfombra. (II, 1460–61)

The sincerity of Galdós's esteem for Thiers as historian is confirmed in *Misericordia*, when he has a character (Francisco Ponte) say that during a trip to Paris: "Me enseñaron la casa de Thiers, gran historiador" (XVII, 168). In *La de Bringas*, Galdós's "Thiers"— purposefully delineated at great ironical distance from his historian prototype— is

completely blind to the fact that the *Revolución Gloriosa* of 1868 is in progress and will drive both the Bourbon and the Bringas families from the palace.

Bringas is also metaphorically blind in the field of economics, another realm in which the French president excelled. Pages turned down in Galdós's translation of Thiers's book *De la propriété* deal with labor and economics in the development and furtherance of civilization (Varey 65–68). However, *La de Bringas's* “gran economista” is blind to these dynamic forces in his exaggerated thrift and petty dominance of the family's economy (XXXV, 1639).

Thus, one may conclude that Galdós's use of symbolic blindness reveals a dual approach to the reader. For the less sophisticated, Galdós provides such obvious connections between the Bringas and the Bourbon families in the royal palace that nearly everyone can have the pleasure of perceiving the symbolism intended. However, in the case of the referent Thiers—in the realm of both history and economics—Galdós is more subtle, so that the more knowledgeable reader is challenged and thus feels an enhanced gratification concerning the symbolic implications.

Rafael del Aguila in *Torquemada en la cruz* and *Torquemada en el purgatorio*

Torquemada's brother-in-law certainly represents that facet of the aristocracy that cannot accept or adjust to changing social conditions in nineteenth-century Spain. At the time of events in the novel, Rafael del Aguila has been blind for six years and this affliction (as well as his severe emotional problems) commenced in his twenties, when his father speculated in confiscated church lands and lost the family fortune (I, iv, 945). Even greater distress occurs when his sister Fidela is forced by economic necessity to marry the wealthy usurer Francisco Torquemada, who has his origins in the lowest of the social classes. Rafael's blindness protects him from seeing the *nivelación de clases sociales* taking place in Spain as many aristocratic families found it necessary to seek through marriage an infusion of capital from the rising lower classes. A family friend, José Donoso, tries to help Rafael adjust to the changes that have taken place during the period of his blindness:

Tú no vives en la realidad. Si recobraras la vista, verías que el mundo ha marchado y que te quedaste atrás, con las ideas de tu tiempo amojamadas en la mollera. Te figuras la sociedad conforme al criterio de tu infancia o de tu adolescencia [. . .]. Abre tus ojos; digo los ojos no puedes abrirlos; abre de par en par su espíritu a la tolerancia, a las transacciones que nos impone la realidad, y sin las cuales no podríamos existir. (II, ix, 996)

In contrast to Rafael, his sisters, Fidela and Cruz, personify that part of the aristocracy that is willing to accept the new social realities. Thus, Fidela marries Torquemada and is not unhappy, while Cruz is able to dominate her brother-in-law and extract from his great wealth enough money to allow them to live more aristocratically than ever before.

Rafael, however, never makes this adjustment. His anger is emphasized early on:

En los tiempos que vienen, los aristócratas arruinados, deposeídos de su propiedad por los usureros y traficantes de la clase media, se sentirán impulsados a la venganza [. . .]. Nosotros los señoritos, los que siendo como yo, tengan ojos y vean dónde hieren, arrojaremos máquinas explosivas contra esa turba de mercachifles soeces, irreligiosos, comidos de vicios, hartos de goces infames. Tú lo has de ver, tú lo has de ver.” (II, xvi, 1015)

To this anger Rafael has to add, subsequently, his realization that his sister’s marriage, although far from perfect, is succeeding, proving that the amalgamation of social classes can take place. His blind logic, upon which he has relied in multiple ways, has also failed him.²³ And, in spite of getting to know Torquemada as a person, and enjoying some rapport with him, Rafael finds that life is still so odious that he prefers suicide, the act which brings closure to *Torquemada en el purgatorio*. Galdós’s message suggests that one cannot be blind to social change. Intransigent aristocracy should adapt or exit the scene.

Almudena in *Misericordia*

In addition to the *costumbrista ciegos* already mentioned, there is another in *Misericordia*; this one, Almudena, is differentiated by becoming a major character—and by having symbolic significance. On the plot level, blind Almudena is one of the most important of all those who need to be cared for by the protagonist Benina. And at the end of the novel he has become the exclusive recipient of Benina’s help and companionship. Almudena appears mostly in the company of Benina and, while original and colorful in his own right, he serves primarily as a foil to the protagonist Benina.

Critics are in general agreement that Benina is an allegorical symbol of practical Christianity, climactically not only healing the sick, but also even speaking (unknowingly) the words of Christ himself (“Final” 318). In consonance with Christianity’s retention of its Jewish origins, Benina remains with Almudena as his only companion at the end of the novel. Because the “Jew,” often allegorized as “Sinagoga” in (mandatory) theological debates and in cathedral sculpture, is usually depicted as blind,²⁴ Almudena’s gradually-revealed ethnic origin is made more recognizable—and more acceptable as culturally authentic—for Galdós’s contemporary Christian reader because he is depicted as blind.²⁵

Additionally, Almudena not only symbolizes traditional religion vis-à-vis the practical, providential, and socially-committed good works of Benina, but he also incarnates aspects of the three great religions of Spanish history: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian.²⁶ Moreover, with his plans to go to Jerusalem late in the novel, this “Wandering Jew”²⁷ can point the educated reader toward the fact that Spanish newspapers were discussing Theodore Herzl’s 1896 proclamation of a Jewish state, and the fact that the Jewish return to the ancestral homeland was well under way.²⁸

Thus, Almudena (as critics generally agree) is one of the more memorable of all Galdós's *personajes*— and his blindness is a successful characterization enhancement, rich in symbolism.

Rodrigo de Artista: Potestad in *El abuelo*

The age-related blindness of Rodrigo Arista-Potestad, Conde de Albrit, the protagonist of *El abuelo*, is important on both the plot and the symbolic levels. On the plot level the Count needs someone to care for him in his sight-impaired and impoverished old age. More importantly, family name, honor, and purity of blood are so important to Albrit that he has returned to his former estate with an obsession to discover which of his two granddaughters, Nelly or Dolly, was fathered by his late son. After considerable vacillation, believing first one and then the other to be his true biological descendant, he finally discovers that Nelly is the one having Albrit blood. This discovery, however, does not bring happiness to the old Count, for Nelly prefers to see her grandfather put away in a monastery, so that she can accompany her mother to a pleasurable life in Madrid. Then Dolly, the spurious granddaughter, courageously saves the despondent Albrit from suicide and sincerely declares that she will devote her life to caring for her blind grandfather.

Thus, one sees that in addition to his almost complete physical blindness, Albrit (like Shakespeare's King Lear) has been blind to matters of the human heart and spirit.²⁹ Albrit had said early on concerning Nelly and Dolly: “[S]i por mi ceguera no acierto descifrar los rostros, leeré en la invisible cifra de los pensamientos, penetraré en la hondura de los caracteres, y no necesito más, pues los caracteres son el temperamento, la sangre, el organismo, la casta” (III, vi, 55). However, he learns in the end that love, kindness, and loyalty are more important than honor, lineage, and blood. Because Dolly has taught him this by her unselfish devotion and sacrifice, at the end of the novel the title protagonist is no longer symbolically blind and can say: “Ya veo que de nada valen los pensamientos, los cálculos y resoluciones del ser humano. Todo ello es herrumbre que se demorona y cae. Lo de dentro es lo que permanece . . . El ánimo no se oxida” (V, xvii, 112). Significantly, as Shoemaker reminds us: “Dorotea (Dolly) means, with anticipatory appropriateness, gift of God” and textual evidence suggests that God has put her in Albrit's heart—and that she is the light dispelling his darkness” (*“El abuelo”* 222, 218).³⁰

As Berkowitz has pointed out, *El abuelo* also contains echoes of the problem of illegitimacy in Galdós's own family circle. Indeed, one might even go so far as to extrapolate the idea that Galdós considered his own mother to be metaphorically blind to the inner qualities of his adolescent love object: Sisita Tate. To break up this relationship, Galdós's mother intervened forcefully, causing Sisita to be sent to Cuba and Don Benito to Madrid. Subsequently, Sista married and died in childbirth; Galdós did not visit his mother for many years, long wore a locket-picture of Sisita, and never married.

Confirmation of Galdós's successful artistry with *El abuelo* may be seen in the fact that, five years after the publication of the novel, it was adapted to the theater. Here it was received with praise by the press and the younger members of the Generation of 1898. At its twenty-seventh performance, which was in honor of Galdós, the Spanish royal family attended (Berkowitz 288–89). And most recently, a film version—with subsequent release

on video—testifies to continued interest in the story and moral teaching of Galdós's only blind eponymous protagonist.³¹

Echoes of Galdós's Career-Ending Blindness in *Cánovas*

At an advanced age, Galdós himself suffered failing eyesight, cataract operations, and then complete blindness. Already in 1910, Galdós was forced to dictate parts of *Amadeo I* to his secretary; while working on *La primera república* in 1911, he underwent his first unsuccessful cataract operation. A second surgery occurred the following year, after which he never regained his sight. Some of his personal affliction is reflected in *Cánovas*, the final *Episodio* (1912). For example, the narrator-protagonist Tito Liviano describes the hallmarks of cataracts (without use of the medical term): “Después de Semana Santa empecé a notar que mi vista se nublabá, sentía como arenillas en los ojos. [. . . También] crecía la fotofobia, y ni aun amparando mis ojos con gafas negras érame posible resistir la viveza de la luz en plena calle” (XII, 1319). Tito also tells about the doctor's examination, treatment, and the unfortunate outcome: “Mi ceguera llegó a ser absoluta, mis ojos inflamados dábanme la sensación de dos ascuas mal contenidas dentro de las órbitas.” Most importantly, the narrator then confesses: “Mi existencia no era más que una sombra encerrada en ancha caverna, que ya me parecía roja, ya de un tinte violáceo, surcado de ráfagas verdes. En tal estado llegué a perder, según he podido apreciar, la conciencia de la realidad” (XII. 1320).

From this point onward in *Cánovas* the identification of characters, time, and space becomes confused. Diane Urey has argued convincingly that not only *Cánovas* but also the three preceding *Episodios* (*Amadeo I*, *La primera república*, and *De Cartago a Sagunto*) reflect a new aesthetic by Galdós because of his vision problems. He is not now describing external reality, for which he was so renowned, but rather he is working with unstable, impressionistic conventions and myths—to the point that “literal blindness is only a hyperbolic manifestation of the inability to see through the web of myth and lie” (208), and “blindness itself may be a metaphor for writing and reading” (190).

Conclusions

Over a period of forty-two years, from his very first novel to the last of his *Episodios Nacionales*, Galdós utilized the *ciego* in a variety of ways. The blind character worked well for him in every one of the subdivisions of the realist movement, and at every level of character formation and function—from *costumbrista* local color to the fully developed eponymous protagonist.

One learns a great deal about the circumstances of the blind street singers, how they might be trained, what kind of songs they sang, how they treated their guides, and the nicknames they sported. Moreover, one learns about Madrid's *Colegio de Ciegos y Sordo-Mudos*, and the awful poverty of the blind mendicants as well. While many *ciegos* might be admired for being self-supporting through the singing and selling of songs, those who did not—as *Misericordia* teaches—merit aid friendship regardless of race or religion.

Galdós was well aware of the ancient Greek idea that the blind have a special gift of prophecy. His versatility enabled him to utilize this notion both in a serious spiritual context and in the popular belief that the blind man might foresee the correct lottery number to purchase. He was also aware that, *vis-à-vis* Christianity, the Jew was often depicted as blind. Moreover, he went far beyond the scope of his European contemporaries in showing what might happen to lovers after a cataract operation. Ironically, thirty-four years later in *Cánovas* he would share his own pain and suffering as he himself struggled to cope with cataracts.

Certainly blindness in a symbolic sense is an especially important aspect of Galdós's creativity. The characters Juan de Lantigua in *Gloria*, Pablo Penaguilas in *Marianela*, Francisco Bringas in *La de Bringas*, Rafael del Águila in *Torquemada en la cruz* and *Torquemada en el purgatorio*, Almudena in *Misericordia* and the Conde de Albrit en *El abuelo* are a vital aspect of Galdós's didacticism.

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Notes

¹ For example, Flaubert in *Madame Bovary*; Balzac in *Facino Cane*; Dickens in *Cricket on the Hearth*, *The Uncommon Traveler*, and *Barnaby Rudge*; Zola in *L'Assommoir* and *Le Rêve*; Pardo Bazán in *El ciego* and *En Tranvía*; and Luis Coloma in *Ranoque*.

² Our focus is primarily on the social novels, with supplementary examples from the *Episodios*, when deemed interesting or illustrative.

³ For seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature, see Caro Baroja (45–70). Goya first painted “El ciego de la guitarra” in 1778 and then some forty years later again included a similar figure in his “Romería de San Isidro.” Ramón de la Cruz has some blind singers earning their Christmas *aguinaldos* in the *sainete* “La plaza Mayor de Madrid” (281). Antonio Ferrer del Río and Juan Pérez Calvo coauthored “El Ciego” for *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* (Ucelay da Cal 216). In the lyric theater it is known that Antonio Rosales created two *tonadillas escénicas*: “El ciego fingido y la burla de Coronado” and “El ciego fingido y payo” (ctd. in Subirá, *La tonadilla escénica* 61). Also extant is the unpublished *tonadilla teatral* “Los ciegos” by Luis Misón, with plot summary and music furnished by Subirá, *Tonadillas Teatrales Inéditas* (33; addendum 1–36). The magazine *El Museo Universal* presented a pencil sketch of the well-known Madrid street singer “Perico el ciego” (vol. 5, n. 21, 165); and *La Ilustración Española y Americana* called attention to “el popular ciego de Binéfar, que situado indefectiblemente en la estación de dicho pueblo a la llegada de todos los trenes echa al aire con la voz enronquecida graciosas coplas aragonesas” (1873; n. 2, 652 [sketch], 643 [caption]).

⁴ The complete scene is as follows:

[Había] un niño como de diez años, ciego sentado en una banqueta y tocando la guitarra. Su brazo era muy pequeño para alcanzar al extremo del mango. Tocaba al revés, pisando las cuerdas con la derecha y rasgueando con la izquierda, puesta la guitarra sobre las rodillas, boca y cuerdas hacia arriba. La mano pequeña y bonita del ceguezuelo hería con gracia las cuerdas, sacando de ellas arpegios dulcísimos y esos punteados graves que tan bien expresan el sentir hondo y rudo de la plebe. La cabeza del músico oscilaba como la de esos muñecos que tiene por pescuezo una espiral de acero, y revolvía de un lado para otro los globos muertos de sus ojos cuajados, sin descansar un punto. Después de mucho y mucho puntear y rasguear, rompió con chillona voz el canto:

A Pepa la gitaní . . . í . . . í . . .

Aquel ííí no se acababa nunca, daba vueltas para arriba y para abajo como una rúbrica trazado con el sonido. Ya les faltaba el aliento a los oyentes cuando el ciego se determinó a posarse en el final de la frase:

lla-cuando la parió su madre . . .

Expectación, mientras el músico echaba de lo hondo del pecho unos ayes y gruñidos como de un perrillo al que le están pellizcando el rabo.

¡Ay, ay, ay! . . .

Por fin concluyó:

sólo para las narices
le dieron siete calambres.

Risas, algazara, patalecos . . . Junto al niño cantor había otro ciego, viejo y curtido, la cara como un corcho, montera de pelo encasquetada y el cuerpo envuelto en capa parda con más remiendos que tela. Su risilla de suficiencia lo denunciaba como autor de la celebrada estrofa. Era también maestro, padre quizás, del ciego chico y le estaba enseñando el oficio. (I, ix, 7, 353-54)

- ⁵ It is a pleasure to thank Linda Willem for this insight concerning the maternal theme.
- ⁶ Additionally, Madrid's *Colegio Nacional de Ciegos y Sordo-Mudos* had an orchestra. Its forty-five young *ciegos* not only played for their own graduation exercises, but also lent their services to other public events, including the *Exposición Nacional* held in Madrid in 1873. The purpose of this orchestra was "proporcionar a aquellos desgraciados, a su salida del establecimiento un medio decoroso de ganar la vida" (*La Ilustración* XVII [1873]: 296; picture of orchestra, 696).
- ⁷ This patronage continues when La Madre subsequently has at her table people recalling El Greco's painting *Entierro del Conde Orgaz* (XXXV, 334). National revitalization is one of the most important themes in *El caballero encantado* (and was the reason why it was twice translated into Russian following that country's civil war). La Madre had told Tarsis-Gil that she would make the rural village, where the *ciego* (whose affliction prevents emigration and further depopulation) appears, her new capital in a revitalized Spain.
- ⁸ The best painting which shows how the blind singer and his guide carried, and had ready to sell, the *romances* they sang, is that of Domínguez Bécquer (1805–41), according to Caro Baroja (52).
- ⁹ As part of the character delineation of young Maxi Rubín, the narrator in *Fortunata y Jacinta* reports that he also liked to "vagar por las calles [. . .] viendo escaparates y la gente que iba y venía, parándose en los corros en que cantaba un ciego, y mirando por las ventanas de los cafés" (II, i, 2: 460).
- ¹⁰ For details concerning the philosophy theme and its relation to Galdós's chapter title "*Un curso de filosofía práctica*," see Chamberlin, "Idealism" (143–55).
- ¹¹ For detailed discussion of the naturalistic elements in "Galdós's most Zolaesque novel," see Shoemaker, "*Lo prohibido*" (240–42).
- ¹² Later in life, Galdós remembered a time, "admirando mucho a Zola y haciéndome sentir y pensar mucho sus novelas" (Shoemaker, *Crítica literaria* 88).
- ¹³ St. Lucy, *Santa Lucía* (Latin "*lux*," "light"), is the only saint retained by Scandinavian Lutherans (as a nostalgic echo of all-important pre-Christian winter solstice rites). Lucy is also the patron saint of the blind and those afflicted with eye problems ("Lucy, Saint" 1–3). Thus, it is no surprise that Francisco Bringas in the depths of his affliction should invoke the name of "Santa Lucía bendita" (*La de Bringas* XXX, 163).

¹⁴ According to Kany:

It was a popular belief that many of the alleged blind had good eyesight and were exploiting the Spaniards bent for almsgiving in order to live a more carefree and independent existence. For this reason, blind men are again and again the butt of ridicule in the *sainetes* which depict popular customs and foibles. They are frequently introduced as eyewitnesses against malefactors, or they are used as guides to show strangers about the city.

“Can you accompany any piece of music by ear?” a blind man is asked. “Yes, even by sight,” he replies (62–63).

Thus, blind men were also considered fair game for practical jokes.

¹⁵ For the prototypical blind soothsayer in Greek mythology and drama, see “Tiresias” (1–4).

¹⁶ We have said elsewhere:

The colorful malapropisms and other linguistic errors of the beggars help set a humorous tone, which, in turn, signals to the reader what should be expected in the rest of the novel. We are not to be put off, Galdós seems to be reassuring, by the novel’s title (quite appropriate for a sermon or moral treatise), nor are we to be depressed by the awful poverty of the beggars. On the contrary, reading *Misericordia* will be fun—we will catch the humor and we (who of course do not make such linguistic errors) will have a comfortable feeling of superiority vis-à-vis these *personajes* as we accompany them on their fictional adventures. (“*Deleitar enseñando*” 213–14)

¹⁷ As Shoemaker affirms: “*Gloria* is a deeply Romantic novel and ill-starred love story” with frequently occurring, highly melodramatic, emotion-packed events (“*Gloria*” 66–83). The denouement in which Gloria’s father dies after actually seeing his daughter and Daniel in embrace together in keeping with this aesthetic.

¹⁸ Galdós, of course, was not the first writer to stigmatize the officials of the Church as “blind.” One remembers, for example, that Don Benito’s esteemed Friedrich Schiller did so in his characterization of the *Grossinquisitor* in *Don Karlos, Infant von Spanien* (276–84).

¹⁹ Although Pablo has never observed physical beauty, he instinctively prefers his beautiful cousin Florentina. Ironically, Pablo had earlier insisted to his father that there is only one beauty that contains all beauties and that beauty is “la Nela” (VII, 705–06). However, this was at a time when he had also told Marianela, after praising her many virtues: “[N]o veo lo de fuera, pero veo lo de dentro” (VI, 704).

²⁰ Although the fate of Marianela seems very cruel, Galdós believed it was necessary. Pattison explains: “[I]magination (i.e., mythological explanations of phenomena) must give way to scientific realism, as symbolized by the death of Marianela when Pablo’s eyes are opened to reality. It is with regret that Galdós sees the destruction of beautiful, but warped and untrue, fantasy [. . .], but at the same time he says regretfully that the charm of fantasy must be sacrificed” (“Creation” 117).

²¹ Plato’s three stages of the soul was first suggested by Mario Ruiz, and subsequently seconded by Shoemaker.

- ²² One of Thiers's most spectacular and publicized exploits was escaping from besieged Paris in a balloon during the Franco-Prussian War.
- ²³ Because Rafael was blind to personal adaptations and social changes, he relied greatly on his own thought processes and arrived at conclusions that he maintained must be true because they were logical. Indeed, his forte was logic, but this collapsed in the concluding pages of *Torquemada en el purgatorio*, when he perceived that he had been wrong in all his major assumptions (II, 10: 1108–10). These were:
- a. That Fidela would almost immediately find Torquemada odious and repulsive as a marriage partner.
 - b. That she would, therefore, turn to a younger, more personable lover.
 - c. That Torquemada was not capable of social adaptation and refinement and, therefore, would embarrass his sisters so greatly that they would abandon their new status.
 - d. That nature would not permit a child to be born of the union of Fidela and Torquemada, which he considered a *mismatching* of species: “ángel y bestia.”

As an extension of the latter belief, Rafael's logic told him that if such a child were to be born, it would have to be a monster. Only in this regard was Rafael's logic fulfilled, yet he cannot see that the child appears to be a macrocephalic idiot, with long hanging ears, and knock-kneed bow legs.

Rafael's anger greatly increases after the birth of Fidela's child, because everyone pays more attention to the latter than they do to him. This anger and jealousy are important factors leading to his unexpected suicide in the denouement of the novel. Clearly Galdós's characterization of Rafael, including his blindness, has effected an adept blending of *lo individual* and *lo social*.

- ²⁴ For a statue of blind “Sinagoga,” see “Catedral de Burgos;” for triumphant “Ecclesia” facing the defeated, blind “Synagoge” in the Strassburg Cathedral, see Röhm and Thierfelder (24–25); for blind “Synagogue” with the devil in the Bamberg Cathedral, see Barasch (84, fig. 13).
- ²⁵ The depiction of the individualized Jewish character as *ciego* in Spanish literature may be documented as early as Gonzalo de Berceo in the Middle Ages (Kelley 131–55).
- ²⁶ For details, see Chamberlin, “Significance” (195–202). Additional symbolism is explicated by Ángel del Río:

[L]a ceguera representa la exaltación imaginativa del hombre que no ve [. . .]. El ciego incapaz de percibir la realidad del mundo mira hacia adentro y dentro de sí mismo descubre la sustancia ideal-poética de la vida... Almudena en *Misericordia*, de acuerdo con el ambiente religioso de toda la novela llegará a revelación casi apocalíptica de un nuevo Sinaí sentado sobre un montón de basura en las escombreras de Madrid [. . .].

En cuanto a la cualidad histórica, la condición semítica de Almudena obedece a una idea del momento. El hombre occidental en sus dudas empieza a sentir la nostalgia de la tranquilidad espiritual y a sospechar en el oriente, antes despreciado, una sabiduría de orden superior. (29)

- ²⁷ Almudena traveled to various towns in Morocco and Algeria before spending time in Marseille and passing through Valencia on his way to Madrid. This is not surprising because Galdós had, according to Pattison, incorporated aspects of Eugene Sue's *Wandering Jew* into his characterization of Daniel Morton in *Gloria* ("Creation" 90–91) and used other aspects of that novel while writing *Marianela* ("Creation" 130–31).
- ²⁸ Blasco Ibáñez, for example, wrote an article entitled "La nueva Israel" concerning the First Zionist Congress and the Jewish aspiration for a homeland in Palestine (Smith 172–75).
- ²⁹ For additional similarities beyond the blindness of the two protagonists in *El abuelo* and *King Lear*, see Pattison, *Benito Pérez Galdós* (138).
- ³⁰ Shoemaker sees here an echo of Plato's need for light both in the physical and spiritual sense ("*El abuelo*" 218).
- ³¹ For the totality of moral teachings in *El abuelo*, see Alonso and Gallego (43–73). *El abuelo* has been adapted to the screen four times (twice with the title *La duda*). José Luis Garci's 1998 interpretation was of such high quality that *El abuelo* became Spain's entry for an Oscar award in Hollywood, and since 2000 it has become a popular video. For an excellent comparative study of the novel, drama, and film versions, see Kronik (113–46).

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