



The So-Called Problem of Closure in *Fortunata y Jacinta* and *Tristana* Revisited By Means of Musical Structure

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Critics continue to be puzzled by the closure of both *Fortunata y Jacinta* and *Tristana*. For example, in 1986 Hazel Gold published “Problems of Closure in *Fortunata y Jacinta*: Of Narrators, Readers, and Their Just Deserts/Desserts.” Then she returned to the subject seven years later, still of the opinion that “the question of closure must have seemed an especially thorny one for the author of *Fortunata y Jacinta*” (*Reframing* 51). In 1991, José Manuel del Pino brought forth “El Fracaso de los sistemas de cierre de *Fortunata y Jacinta*.” Similarly with *Tristana*, from “Clarín” and Pardo Bazán to the present day, critics have been likewise engaged.¹ For example, Berkowitz says that Galdós’s *Tristana* is “the unfinished opus of his repertory” (314), and Roberto Sánchez opines that “the novel is somehow truncated, unrealized” (125). More recently, Andrés Zamora has summarized such opinions as these when he says, “[L]a novela ha sido tradicional y sistemáticamente considerada por un amplio sector de la crítica como defectuosa, coja o manca” (193). Thus one is justified in asking why Galdós concluded *Tristana* the way he did; and, importantly, what—if anything—does this allow one to extrapolate from the ending of the novel concerning the author’s view of women’s aspirations in late nineteenth-century Spain? In addition, what are we to make of the ending of *Fortunata y Jacinta*? Why should such a great novel not devote its final paragraphs to one or the other of the title protagonists, rather than focusing upon the unfortunate fate of poor Maxi Rubín?

In spite of Galdós’s great love of music, these critics have failed to include a consideration of musical structure in the elucidation of their perceived “problem” concerning closure. And yet Galdós himself said in 1902 in the *Prólogo* of the play *Alma y vida*, “Tracé y construí la ideal arquitectura de *Alma y vida*, siguiendo por espiritual atracción, el plan y módulos de la composición beethoviana [porque] el más grande de los músicos es quien nos revela la esencia y aun el desarrollo del sentimiento dramático” (900). Further, I have already shown that Galdós’s patterning of his works after musical structures is not limited to the theater, and that it began much earlier, namely in *La desheredada*, and then continued in *Fortunata y Jacinta* and *Tristana*.²

Consequently, the aim of the present study is to expand upon my previous examination of the musical structures in *Fortunata y Jacinta* and *Tristana* to resolve the “thorny problem” of their closure.

Let us begin with *Fortunata y Jacinta*, whose four parts have been demonstrated to parallel those of Beethoven’s *Third* [“*Eroica*”] *Symphony* (Chamberlin, *Galdós and Beethoven*). Both the fourth movement of the symphony and Part IV of Galdós’s novel open with the introduction of a very disturbing, attention-getting new problem. This problem is so marked that the listener to the symphony and the reader of the novel instinctively hope that this intriguing problem can be solved (and it will be by the end of the work).

To be specific, the last movement of the *Eroica* begins (mm. 1-11) “with a short, fiery introduction which asserts a foreign key [G minor]” (Tovey 33). The sound is strange; its effect, disconcerting; something is indeed wrong. Then the music rushes downward with fanfares to a hold, correcting itself as if it had made a mistake. Then the first, or bass, theme appears with solemnity. Calvin S. Brown adds that “the [first] theme is not announced immediately, but its way is prepared by a motif which later serves as its accompaniment” (187). An analogous situation occurs in *Fortunata y Jacinta*. The reader is startled when the final volume of the novel opens with the “motif” of an unexpected, alarming deterioration in Maxi’s mental health (since he was last seen in Part III). Concurrently, one character (Ballester) even imitates a musical fanfare: “tararí, tararí . . . ,” and then he soon repeats it: “tararí . . . , tararí.” (IV, i, 4, 271).³ Thomas and Stock have stated that although the last movement of Beethoven’s *Eroica* is often explicated as theme and variation, underlying the whole movement is basically the sonata-form structure. And they add that Beethoven’s modulations here “are so chosen that it leaves on the mind the impression of the sonata form” (52).⁴ The latter had already been Galdós’s pattern for the structuring, not only of *La desheredada* but also for Part I of *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Typically in such a musical structure, the opening theme, which Beethoven liked to call “masculine,” interplays with a second, or “feminine” theme throughout the entire movement until it—although now modified by the continual interplay—is featured predominately at the conclusion. Thus, analogously, Galdós’s opening “masculine” theme in Part IV, Maxi Rubín—with the introductory motif of his mental illness—is properly the focus of *Fortunata y Jacinta*’s concluding paragraphs. Consequently, as in Beethoven’s *Eroica*, the attention-grabbing problem, which opened the fourth and final part of the novel, has been solved—by Maxi’s entrance into the Leganés mental asylum. Thus if one is open-minded concerning Galdós’s great love of music, his own statement regarding musical structure, and recent studies demonstrating how his statement is also applicable to his novels, then there is no problem of closure at all in *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Galdós knew exactly how he wanted to close his great four-volume novel—and he did so successfully.

Let us turn now to *Tristana*, which has been shown to have two interplaying themes throughout its sonata-form structure. The novel begins with a focus upon a masculine character, Don Lope Garrido, and its first theme has already been defined in another study as “the penchant for control and domination” (Chamberlin, “Sonata Form” 85). This theme, which is used most frequently—but not exclusively—in conjunction with masculine characters, interplays with a second theme: the desire for independence and

self-fulfillment. (Chamberlin, “Sonata Form” 85). The latter theme manifests itself first, and most frequently, in conjunction with Tristana (although on occasion it also passes to other characters, including the masculine *personaje* Horacio who needs to gain freedom from his “feroz abuelo” and later from Tristana).

Before entering into the details of how these contrasting themes interact throughout *Tristana*, it will be helpful to note that musicologist Leonard Ratner has pointed out that one of the most distinguishing features of the sonata form is its similarity to a formal argument or debate, with the main parts being the exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda:

The first premise is the home key, represented by thematic material which we shall call A.

The second premise is the contrasting key, represented by thematic material which we shall call B.

The home key makes its point with A; the point is refuted by the contrasting key with B. This refutation takes longer to accomplish than the initial argument; it also makes its final point with great emphasis. [We are now at the end of the exposition.]

The premise of the contrasting key material [B] is undermined by the digressions and explorations of the development.

Home-key A material returns [in the recapitulation] to re-establish the first premise, but in order to reconcile the two contrasting premises, the home key later incorporates the B material, showing that there can be unity, after all, between A and B. To make its point more powerfully, the home key asserts itself with great emphasis in the coda. (Ratner 240)

Galdós’s novel *Tristana* follows a similar structural plan, and the main correspondences between the novel and a typical sonata form can be outlined as follows:

<i>Musical equivalent</i>	<i>Galdós’s chapters</i>
Exposition	One through five.
Initial A theme	First two paragraphs of chapter one.
Initial B theme	Remainder of chapter one and first paragraph of chapter two.
A theme restated	Remainder of chapter two, all of three, and first four paragraphs of chapter four.
B theme restated	Remainder of four and five.

Transition to development	Six.
Development	Seven through nineteen.
Recapitulation	Twenty through twenty-eight.
Coda	Twenty-nine.

Because my previous study has already shown in great detail how Galdós followed the sonata form's usual structure of exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda in *Tristana* (Chamberlin, "Sonata Form"), we shall here concentrate on those details of Ratner's outline which help us understand the situation at the end of the novel, where the denouement may be considered analogous to a Beethoven coda.

The first two paragraphs of *Tristana's* opening chapter, with the penchant for control and domination incarnated in the (masculine) character Don Lope Garrido, present Galdós's initial A theme. The remainder of chapter one and the first paragraph of chapter two shift the focus to Tristana and her growing desire to become free of Don Lope and to fulfill her own aspirations. This constitutes the first presentation of the B theme: the desire for independence and self-fulfillment. At this point the two contending themes have been stated. However, as in the sonata form, each theme is next given the opportunity to restate its premise, this second time with greater extension and climactic emphasis. This certainly occurs with Galdós's A theme restatement, as Lope recounts all the reasons he thinks he has for the right to possess (and exploit) Tristana. The latter, of course, disagrees and restates her case for independence and self-fulfillment at greater length, with a number of subthemes for future development (before she culminates her presentation with great predominative forcefulness). This final rebuttal marks the end of the exposition. The two competing themes have been presented, then restated more emphatically, and all indications are that the B theme is certainly the stronger. Consequently, at this early stage the reader has every reason to believe that Tristana should be successful in liberating herself from Don Lope and fulfilling her emotional and vocational aspirations.

After the presentation of the two competing themes in the exposition, the composer is at liberty in the long development section to unfold and explore the manifold possibilities in each theme, modifying, fragmenting, complicating, and embellishing as much as his or her talent will permit. This is one of the more challenging segments of the sonata form and a place where the composer may demonstrate his or her resourcefulness and imagination. However, there is one thing a composer *must* do. He or she is obliged to gradually undermine the key of the second feminine theme—which had appeared stronger, more triumphant at the end of the exposition—so that its ultimate surrender and subsequent fading away, near the end of the entire movement, will seem logical and readily acceptable to the listener. Ratner states that "as a rule the section called the *development* goes far afield harmonically, creating a great deal of instability; toward the end

the harmony settles so that the cadence to the home key [of the first theme] is first promised, then accomplished at the recapitulation” (238).

Galdós’s extensive development section (chapters seven through nineteen) gives him ample opportunity to undermine the initial B theme, that is Tristana’s desire for independence and self-fulfillment. Specifically, in the early stages of the development section the eponymous protagonist does appear to be gaining independence from Lope as she successfully defies him, leaves the house daily, becomes sexually intimate with the painter Horacio, and blossoms intellectually and emotionally. However, Tristana’s opportunity for independence and self-fulfillment are soon perceived to be undermined by a number of factors, including her own desire to dominate rather than yield to Horacio, her negative views regarding matrimony, her ambivalence toward Don Lope, and her wide-ranging mood swings; then the onset of the painful, immobilizing leg affliction causes her to be confined once again to Lope’s house. She perceives that she is once again his “esclava” and that her illness is “como un grillete que la sujeta más a su malitísima persona” (XIX, 239). Thus, analogous to the situation at the end of the development section in a sonata-form structure, Galdós’s B theme is now weaker than it was when it concluded the exposition and started the development section.

As noted in Ratner’s outline, the development section is followed by a recapitulation. In the latter both the exposition and development are reviewed (recapitulated). The B-theme’s weakness, manifested at the end of the development, is confirmed and further expounded in that part of the recapitulation section which restates (with artistic variations) the development section. Again Tristana gets to see Horacio, but now only with Lope’s permission and only in his home. Once more she expresses her disdain for matrimony, and it is again evident that she and Horacio have incompatible personalities. She is also still ambivalent regarding Lope; and, very importantly, the amputation of her leg confirms that her original desire for independence from Lope and vocational success can never be attained. Thus as in the sonata-form structure, the B theme is not only weaker than it was at the end of the exposition and beginning of the development section, but it is now also weaker than the A theme.

Significantly, it is in the recapitulation section—the final space before the coda or end of the novel—that Galdós chooses to have Tristana actually playing Beethoven sonatas. Certainly, the author’s focus here is primarily on music, as he prepares to begin the conclusion of his novel. And it is here that Galdós has Tristana say, “Soy el mismo Beethoven, su corazón, su cuerpo, aunque las manos sean otras” (XXIII, 267), suggesting that *Tristana* may be read (and enjoyed) as being analogous to a typical sonata-form composition. Now let us consider the coda, which in *Tristana* is the final chapter. Willi Apel and Ralph Daniel define the coda as “a concluding passage or section falling outside the basic structure of a composition, and added to obtain or heighten the impression of finality” (62). The coda at the end of a sonata-form composition traditionally emphasizes the A theme in order to demonstrate that—although the latter was overshadowed at the end of the exposition and throughout the development section—it has indeed triumphed and has the right to a final statement. However, the A theme itself, because of its constant contention and interplay with the B theme, has now ended up being considerably changed also.

Such a change is certainly noticeable in Galdós's final chapter. Don Lope, the old "guerrero de amor" (IV, 125) is not allowed to enjoy his victory unscathed. A nephew of Lope's, an "arcediano" of the church, informs him that two wealthy aunts are willing to subsidize Lope's senescent old age, and also provide for Tristana if she outlives him—if he will but renounce his present "amancebamiento criminal" and enter into Christian matrimony. This presents Lope with a major problem, one which the narrator sums up as "inverosimilitud, sarcasmo horrible de la vida tratándose de un hombre de ideales radicales y disolventes, como don Lope!" (XXIX, 301-02). However, in order to provide for Tristana's security, Lope finally accedes and enters into Christian matrimony. Tristana has become at last, according to nineteenth-century Spanish law and custom, Lope's personal property as the A theme triumphs. However, there is an ironic twist here, because (as early as chapter four) Galdós had firmly established in his characterization of Lope that the old man "aborreía el matrimonio; tenía por la más espantosa fórmula de la esclavitud" (IV, 127). With marriage, Lope himself must renounce his freedom and also be tied down.

Thus one sees that the two nonconformists, Tristana and Lope, who struggled so hard against each other and society's restrictions, are both overcome and—like two contending musical themes—their original strong impulses are now literally and figuratively played out. They must accommodate to one another and enter into harmonic resolution. On the plot level this is accomplished by the marriage, and the forgetting of former desires and goals in favor of simple, mutually compatible, domestic interests. The novel achieves closure through its musical structure, without the need for a "fracaso de la mujer" or "su glorioso triunfo" or even "una clara indicación de una acción social y literaria destinada a acabar con las desigualdades sexuales" (Zamora 195).⁵ These issues are superfluous to its structural resolution.⁶

This is not to say that one can rule out the possibility that there might not be a special, highly personal, extractable message at the end of *Tristana* for one individual: Galdós's mistress, Concha-Ruth Morell. Their intimacy began in 1891 at a time when Concha was living with an older man and trying to establish an acting career in Madrid. While continuing to live with her "*papá*," Concha had frequent rendezvous with Galdós at their "*palomar*." And it was at this time that Galdós began to work on *Tristana*, the fictionalized record of this love affair, which he published in 1892 (Smith 91).

One might ask why Galdós would want, or need to write a novel about himself and Concha Morell—especially in view of the fact that he went to such great lengths, in this and other love affairs, to maintain strict secrecy. The answer probably lies in Freud's insight into creativity as an exceptionally effective vehicle for the sublimation and quieting of psychic conflicts (376).⁷ That Galdós would have had such conflicts seems inevitable, for he had already learned from his liaison with Pardo Bazán how demanding of his time and energy an affair could be.⁸ Moreover, Lorenza Cobián, another woman with whom he was intimate, had just given birth to a daughter (María Galdós de Rodríguez Verde) in 1891 and both mother and daughter now required time, attention, and financial aid. Thus as Galdós began yet another love affair—at age forty-nine with a vivacious younger woman⁹—he knew that in addition to exhilaration and physical pleasure, there would be

tensions, demands, and dangers. And these dangers did subsequently become reality—when Concha became pregnant and Galdós ended up contributing to her support at least until 1901.

It is thus understandable that, given the chaos in his private life, Galdós should have turned to his work in order to give shape and coherence to his own experience—and for this purpose the sonata form offered particular advantages. He knew from its use in *La desheredada* and Part I of *Fortunata y Jacinta* that the sonata form was a very efficient model for a busy author, with its variety of themes, dramatic conflicts, proportions and contrasts already worked out. It was also an excellent medium for the expression of emotions, (Chamberlin, *Galdós and Beethoven* 17-18 and passim) while at the same time one that would be relatively safe for the presentation of personal, highly emotional, and potentially explosive material. It was a well-ordered form with definite rules, and, most importantly, it provided a satisfactory, harmonious, final solution—which may have been more than Galdós could foresee at that time regarding his affair with Concha. It would, as well, enable him to distance himself somewhat from his real-life experience, and to depersonalize considerably the emotions of all concerned by concentrating on the presentation of the dynamic interplay of music-like contending themes. Finally, it would enable him to stylize and sweeten for himself, and his reader, an episode which in fact turned out to be, at least in some respects, sordid and unhappy.

Concha and Don Benito had “frequent quarrels and separations”; she also admitted to J. B. Sitges that “no le fue muy fiel [a Galdós]” (Lambert 40). On 30 July, 1892, Concha resigned as an actress from the Vico company, believing that she was pregnant with Galdós’s child: “*E por si muove. Te digo que sí hombre, se mueve una cosa en mi barriga que está cada vez más grande. ¿Qué será? ¿Un niño?*” Concha also expressed embarrassment, because “*todos me miren de cierta manera al vientre y los tetazos que voy echando*” (Smith 112). However, there is never any mention of a child being born. Subsequently, she was quite remorseful and depressed. However, in her letters she never gives any indication whether she experienced a false pregnancy, a miscarriage, an abortion, or if she abandoned a baby. In any case, one cannot rule out the possibility that she was subsequently able to blackmail Galdós. We do know that on 1 August, 1900, José Cubas delivered money to Concha and assured Galdós: “*Entregué el dinero de agosto [. . .]. Por lo pronto, hemos conseguido que usted disfrute de tranquilidad, que es lo importante*” (Smith 116). Galdós’s “tranquilidad,” as well as payments to Concha, however, ended the following year when Concha gave Luis Bonafoux personal letters enabling him to blast Galdós with an article entitled “*El anticlericalismo de Galdós o la Concha Ruth Morell*” (*El Heraldo de Paris*, 5 de abril, 1902).¹⁰ Subsequently Pío Baroja, based on information supplied by Bonafoux, held the opinion that Concha had been blackmailing Galdós (Lambert 38; Baroja 743).

As Gilbert Smith states, “It is clear in the letters [of Concha to Don Benito] that the relationship of Galdós, Concha, and her *papá* parallels the situation of Horacio, Tristana, and Don Lope in the novel” (92). In one of her letters Concha relates how she (like Tristana) was given over by her dying mother to the custody of an older man (Smith 96). With another letter, she includes a missive from her *papá*, in which the latter reminds her of his financial sacrifice and reproaches her for “*putear con D. Benito, ese Caballero que*

tanto te ha cobrado de bienes y sobre todo te ha hecho artista” (Smith 14). Certainly, Concha knew that Galdós was writing a novel about her. Perhaps *Tristana* was also meant as a favor to her; Galdós would not only help advance her acting career, but he would additionally immortalize her as the heroine of his newest novel. In any case, she says in one of her letters, “Tengo muchísimo deseo de conocer el libro que ahora estás escribiendo, ése que dices que te he inspirado yo. Ven pronto para que lo leamos juntos. Ven pronto, mira que rabio para que me leas tu libro” (Smith 105). Unfortunately, we do not know when, where, or if Galdós and Concha read the manuscript together. We do know, however, that she subsequently was well aware of the plot, identified emotionally with the title protagonist, and realized that she might end up much as Tristana: “Te escribo lloriqueando [. . .] ¿Me quedaré en la estancada como Tristana? Tal vez, pero mi *pata* es el corazón. Si vieras como me duele, ¡qué peso, qué fatiga!” (Smith 108). Concha had also said in an earlier letter to Don Benito, “Nunca he de ver las cosas como son . . . Tú adivinas, tú sabes lo que sucede por acá . . . Sabes lo que me pasa, mejor que yo, sabes lo que deseo, lo sabes todo” (Smith 96). If Galdós wanted to take advantage of this opinion and show his lover, in an indirect, non-threatening way, how he perceived her, what was currently happening, and very important, where he fit into the picture, the sonata form offered him excellent opportunities. That is to say, he could, like Tristana’s fictional lover Horacio, fade in time from the scene, thus leaving her free to stay with her aged protector,¹¹ where—as at the end of the novel—she just might find contentment.¹²

In conclusion, our study has demonstrated that Galdós, despite so many opinions to the contrary, certainly experienced no problem of closure in either *Fortunata y Jacinta* or *Tristana*. Following musical patterns, Don Benito knew how he wanted to conclude both novels and did so successfully. Moreover, one sees that attention to musical structuring is a valuable key for understanding closure, as well as other aspects of Galdós’s artistry. And there is no reason not to believe that further considerations of musical structures may open the way for new, richer understandings of other Galdosian works also.

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Notes

- ¹ “Clarín” (Leopoldo Alas) said, “Galdós fue con Tristana no menos cruel que el mundo. La hizo a media” (26). “Pardo Bazán’s review lauded Galdós for his initial characterization of Tristana as a woman denouncing the gender-biased limitations placed on her by society. But Pardo Bazán also criticized Galdós for abandoning the feminine focus midway through the plot” (Willem 611).
- ² For *La desheredada*, *Fortunata y Jacinta*, and *Tristana*, see respectively Chamberlin, “‘Beethoven’ and ‘Sigue Beethoven,’” *Galdós and Beethoven*, and “Sonata Form.”
- ³ Ballester imitates the fanfares to attract Maxi’s attention while the latter is reading (IV, i, 1, 274). Additionally, another character (Doña Lupe) uses musical metaphors: she refers derogatively to Maxi’s professional ethics as “esa música,” adding that “el pobre samaniego no dejó capital a su familia porque también tocaba la misma tecla” (IV, i, 1, 273).
- ⁴ The sonata form is most frequently used in the opening movement of a sonata, but it may also be used in the last movement. Additionally, it may be incorporated into a symphony, as is the case with Beethoven’s *Third (“Eroica”) Symphony*.
- ⁵ Zamora (195) lists the following critics and their respective opinions: “el fracaso de la mujer” (Bordons 474-76; Ordóñez 149-52; Aldaraca 243-44); “su glorioso triunfo” (Tsuchiya 77-79; Andreu 308; Minter 18-20); “una clara incitación a una acción social y literaria destinada a acabar con las desigualdades sexuales” (Friedman 220-22; Hoffman 53; Condé 83-85). More recently, Lisa Condé has concurred with Linda Willem in that “the key to Galdós’s feminist orientation in this text is its ironic narration, which covertly exposes the intolerance, injustice, arbitrary nature of conventional social codes” (Condé 85-86; Willem 611).
- ⁶ It is a pleasure to thank Linda Willem for this important insight concerning resolution.
- ⁷ For Goethe’s sublimation of the trauma associated with a love affair in the creation of *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, see Freud, I, 286.
- ⁸ For the intensity of the Pardo Bazán-Galdós love affair, see her *Cartas* (passim).
- ⁹ The only known description of Concha occurs in a letter by J. B. Sitges to Narciso Oller: “hermosa mujer de facciones correctas y delicadas: rubia, fresca, blanca, bien formada, esbelta, elegante, agradable y simpática. En una palabra [. . .] una criatura encantadora” (Lambert 34).
- ¹⁰ Information in this article did not, to say the least, subsequently help Galdós in his repeated candidacy for the Nobel Prize in Literature, or in the national financial subscription on his behalf.
- ¹¹ This possibility has also occurred to Madariaga de la Campa: “¿Quiso el novelista con el desenlace dar un consejo a Concha-Ruth? ¿Pretendía vacunarle el final o era, sencillamente una ironía más de Galdós?” (86).
- ¹² Significantly, in *Tristana*, paralleling the letters of Concha, Galdós has his eponymous protagonist repeatedly express her ambivalence toward, and show her passive dependence on, her aged protector, so that the denouement may not seem completely unacceptable to the reader.

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