



## **Mapping the Gothic Urban Imaginary in Juan Martínez Villergas's *Los misterios de Madrid***

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The nineteenth-century mystery novel was among the first narrative genres to capture the modern urban experience. The foundational text of this genre, Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1841-1843), portrayed Paris's criminal underworld to the titillation of middle class readers.<sup>1</sup> Sue wrote his novel at a moment of intense urban growth and change, and his novel served to "shape the popular imagination as to what the city was and might become" (Harvey 25). Sue's novel sparked a "manía misterial" (Milá de la Roca iii) throughout Europe and the Americas.<sup>2</sup> In Spain alone there were *misterios* about Madrid, Barcelona, Cádiz, Córdoba, and Seville. In Madrid, the city mystery trend coincided with a crucial moment in the development of the urban imaginary of the capital city. Madrid was suffering from an image problem. By the 1830s, Spain had lost the majority of its colonies in the Americas, and Madrid appeared to be politically and culturally stagnated (Juliá 322). The city's appearance and infrastructure did little to evoke the capital of an empire. As Richard Ford described in his 1844 *Handbook for Travellers to Spain*, Madrid was "disagreeable and unhealthy" (III: 1075). The fledgling liberal government tried to solve Madrid's physical deficiencies while also creating a capital that would be a symbol of the modern nation. Before the construction of a "new" Madrid in the 1860s, the first half of the century saw urban reform movements (most notably the *desamortización de Mendizábal* in 1836) that forced a negotiation of historical memory and the new social and political order.<sup>3</sup> These reforms not only changed the urban topography but also rewrote the narrative of the city.

Juan Martínez Villergas's *Los misterios de Madrid* (1844-1845) is a product of the "mystery mania" as well as the movements to classify and order urban space. The novel begins with a poetic prologue, in which Villergas claims that he will truthfully portray the mysteries of the capital. Villergas provides a geography of Madrid that he will include in his work: "Desde el Rastro a Maravillas / Desde Atocha al Noviciado" (I: ix). The neighborhoods he mentions are geographical opposites, indicating that he intends to give a global view of the city. Hana Wirth-Nesher describes how in urban novels, the author, the reader, and the characters are all engaged in "verbal cartography, plotting cities through language" (4). Throughout the novel, Villergas creates various "maps" of Madrid that serve as backdrops for the novel's mysteries. These maps mirror the urban guides that define and organize the city. While the literature of urban reform intended to posit

Madrid as the source of order, reason, and national identity, the maps Villergas creates are full of crime, conspiracies, and revolutions. The maps, therefore, not only chart the transition from the *antiguo régimen* to the modern age, but also reveal the irrationality and corruption that continue to frustrate the nation. Villergas ultimately creates a map of a Gothic city and thereby complicates the project to remake Madrid as the enlightened capital of the emerging liberal nation.

Villergas was a prolific journalist and fervent progressive liberal. He was the epitome of the *escritor comprometido*, even enlisting in the *Milicia Nacional* to fight the Carlists (Wright 20). Villergas and Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco (who translated and published Sue's novel in Spanish) founded *La Sociedad Literaria de Madrid* in 1842 to entertain and educate urban readers in progressive ideals. By 1844 he had left the *Sociedad Literaria*, an act that Amy E. Wright attributes to Villergas's insistence on publishing political critiques of the increasingly repressive *moderado* government (23-24). In 1844 Villergas began to publish *Los misterios de Madrid* with *Manini y Compañía*.<sup>4</sup> The *misterio* genre and the Gothic provided Villergas with an apt vehicle to transmit his progressive ideology.

The Gothic is a literary mode and discursive vocabulary that challenges the Enlightenment narrative of order and reason (Punter and Byron 8). The conventions of Gothic literature—dark spaces, evil nobles, and haunted castles—are the remnants of the old order that threaten the modern rationality. Robert Mighall locates the emergence of the urban Gothic following the appearance of discourses of urban reform (54). Many of these treatises included accounts of the underbelly of urban life, revealing the “otherness” of the city to the bourgeois public. The evil aristocrats or monks were now urban criminals searching for victims (Botting 123). Mighall also emphasizes the importance of historical memory in urban Gothic fiction—i.e., the city needs “a concentration of memories and historical associations [. . .] [I]deally these would be expressed in an extant architectural or topographical heritage, as these areas provide the natural home for ghostly presences of imagined/projected meanings” (57). By combining the discourse of nineteenth-century urbanization treatises and a haunted urban imaginary, the Gothic portrays a perverse vision of the city. A map is intended to make a city legible and navigable, but the maps of the urban Gothic only make the metropolis more mysterious.

As with most *misterios*, there are several plots that intersect throughout the three volumes of the novel. The central mystery is the story of the First Carlist War and the *moderado-progresista* conflict of the 1830s.<sup>5</sup> The hero, Miguel Ángel, is a progressive *diputado* who tries to save the beautiful noble, Laura de Castro-Nuño, from the clutches of the evil *Marqués de la Calabaza*. This standard Gothic plot is reversed when the *Marqués* is revealed to be a Carlist and imprisons Miguel Ángel. The trials of the characters follow the political upheavals of the early years of liberal rule after the death of Fernando VII. Villergas employs the Gothic plots of his novel to criticize both the anti-liberal Carlists and the moderate liberals. By locating his mysteries on precise points on Madrid's map, Villergas harnesses his readers' historical memory and lived experience to bolster his ideological messages. *Los misterios de Madrid* uses the ghosts of the past and the anxieties of the 1830s and 1840s to create a new symbolic cartography of Madrid.

## Urban Writing in 1840s Madrid

Urban guides, newspapers, and city literature of the nineteenth century were all actively engaged in the construction of Madrid's changing collective imaginary. Ramón de Mesonero Romanos's 1831 *Manual de Madrid* was among the first urban guides presented from the perspective of civil society. His writings on Madrid represent a shift in the image of the city from the seat of the monarchy to the capital of an emerging modern nation (Baker 56). Indeed, the Spaniard was perhaps the best-known proponent of urban reform in Madrid. He wished to recreate the city on the level of other European capitals and make it a true symbol of the Spanish nation (Frost 56). Mesonero was a friend and admirer of Mariano José de Larra, and together they represent the two currents of early nineteenth-century thought and culture. As Azorín describes: "Si Larra simboliza la sociedad de su tiempo, exaltada, impulsiva, generosa, romántica, Mesonero representa la sociedad burguesa, práctica, metódica, escrupulosa, bien hallada [. . .] los dos nos dan la síntesis del espíritu castellano" (cited in Prados de la Plaza 33). Benjamin Fraser sees the difference between Mesonero and Larra as residing in Lefebvre's concepts of the "planned city" versus the "practiced city" (56). For Fraser, Mesonero's Madrid is a "fanciful construction" which is ultimately "straightforward and simplistic" (60), while Larra focuses on the everyday life of Madrid and approaches the city with a deeper irony (42, 21). As a result, as Deborah L. Parsons notes, "[i]f Mesonero seeks to explain and map the city, for Larra it is ultimately unexplainable and unmappable" (26). I propose that Villergas is a fusion of the two tendencies embodied by Mesonero and Larra. In *Los misterios de Madrid* we see a Mesonero-like urge to map and catalogue the city's mysteries and make them knowable, while, like Larra, Villergas uses his work as social and political commentary that ultimately creates a subversive map of Madrid.<sup>6</sup>

The physical and literary landscape of Madrid saw significant changes in the nineteenth-century. Before the construction of the *ensanche*, the reforms of José Bonaparte and Mendizábal modified the appearance of the city, and urban texts molded its narrative. Recently Catherine Sundt has examined the role of Villergas's colleagues, Ayguales de Izco and Antonio Flores, in the creation of a collective urban imaginary through the popular press. Their abundant descriptions of "real" people, places, and events both reflected and guided how their readers understood the city (Sundt 46). Like Villergas, Ayguales and Flores were also serial novelists, and their works rewrote Madrid through a dialogue between writers and readers (48). Leigh Mercer's 2013 *Urbanism and Urbanity: The Spanish Bourgeois Novel and Contemporary Customs (1845-1925)* uses the metaphor of mapping to plot the urban locations that created and consolidated bourgeois social codes: the promenade, the boutique, and the stock market, among others. Mercer includes Ayguales de Izco's *folletines* as examples of emerging bourgeois urbanity. As she aptly points out, in the 1840s, the Spanish middle class was still "shapeless and tentative" (26) and these novels represented a discursive construction of bourgeois behavior that was, at times, in anticipation of its appearance in reality (1). In *Los misterios de Madrid*, most of the action occurs in private homes or in streets and plazas. The implication is that many of paradigmatic spaces of the bourgeoisie identified by Mercer were not yet in place or only recently established during the time frame of the novel. For example, Mercer analyzes the theater as a space of social ritual, evidenced by the *Teatro Real* in Madrid and the *Liceo* in Barcelona. In Villergas's novel, the *Teatro* is still under construction, a metaphor for the

still-forming middle class. The spaces analyzed by Mercer defined the bourgeoisie but also separated them from the lower classes. The lack of limiting spaces in the novel suggests that the city's mysteries and intrigues result from undifferentiated space that was not yet "legible." Collin McKinney's 2010 book *Mapping the Social Body: Urbanisation, the Gaze, and the Novels of Galdós* also explores the ideology of mapping in the second half of the nineteenth century. McKinney situates his study in Foucauldian terms by designating maps as instruments of "power-knowledge" (16). A map is as much a narrative as it is a representation of reality, and it reveals the dominant values and fears of the society that produces it. During this period, Madrid experienced a population boom that, due to the city's lack of infrastructure and industry, resulted in overcrowding, disease, and crime that terrified the middle class (10). The solution was to map a new city where social divisions were clearly articulated. In the old neighborhoods of Madrid, the serpentine, narrow streets lent themselves to illicit activities, but in the new *ensanche*, the wide streets would serve as a "panoptican structure" and facilitate social control (38).<sup>7</sup> The Madrid of Villergas's novel was still decades away from the creation of the *ensanche*. The middle class was not yet able to isolate itself from the unsavory aspects of urban life. The map that Villergas creates reveals the city to be the site of collisions between the old and the new, virtue and vice, liberalism and absolutism. As McKinney notes, the city has often been used as a metaphor for society (18) and, by extension, the nation. While Elisa Martí-López has argued that Madrid should not serve as a representation for Spain as a whole ("Autochthonous Conflicts" 147), I argue that for Villergas and his contemporaries, Madrid was the space on which the idea of the nation was projected. In the case of Villergas, his use of Madrid as symbol is inherently contradictory. This essay examines four of the maps charted in the novel: the liberal map, which plots the transition from the old order to the new; the crime map, which reveals illicit activities throughout the city; the irrational map, which subverts the logical cartography of Madrid; and the conspiracy and revolution map, which traces the political uprisings of 1836. Each of these maps problematizes Madrid's image as symbol of the nation and instead creates a map of a Gothic city.

### Villergas's Maps

The first map of Madrid Villergas charts plots the transition from *the antiguo régimen* to the new liberal order. The map reveals that this transition was fraught with instability and corruption. The novel begins with the protagonists, Miguel Ángel, Laura, and her servant Lorenzo, traveling in a coach to Madrid. Early Gothic literature portrayed what was rejected from the city, and their horror-plots were set in the countryside or in remote foreign locations (Mighall 54). The dichotomy of city-country was also a narrative strategy; the plot is put into motion by the journey from the city to the countryside (Sage 8). Urban Gothic novels like *Los misterios de Madrid* reverse the paradigmatic voyage from city to provinces. It is upon arrival in the city, the supposed symbol of enlightened governance, that the mysteries and danger begin. The map that introduces Madrid establishes the capital as the site of confusion and instability of meaning in the wake of the downfall of the old order. As their coach enters the *Calle Mayor*, Miguel Ángel, Laura, and Lorenzo encounter an enormous funeral procession: "Una música lúgubre llamó la atención de los viajeros. Dos filas de hombres que caminaban lentamente por las aceras con hachas encendidas; en medio de las dos filas la marcha pausada en un carro fúnebre

que conducía un ataúd cerrado” (I: 15). Both Miguel Ángel and Laura ask the identity of the deceased. Laura is told that it is the *Duque de Castro-Nuño*, her father, while Miguel Ángel is told that it is the *Marqués de la Calabaza*, whom he recently discovered to be his benefactor. Lorenzo spots a mysterious man, “embozado hasta las cejas, como temiendo ser conocido” (I: 16) and asks him the identity of the deceased. The cloaked man points to the coffin and says “Aquel” (I: 16). On one of the city’s most central and open streets, a gloomy procession and disguised men present the capital as a Gothic space full of frightening spectacles and secrets.

This scene is also significant in that it presents the funeral of a noble on the *Calle Mayor*. As described by David Ringrose, the *Calle Mayor* was one of the streets used for royal processions. Ringrose proposes that these royal processions created a magical urban space—a setting which is part of everyday life but which takes on an almost otherworldly character in the presence of royalty (214). Here Villergas also creates a magical space out of the everyday, but instead of communicating power and authority, this procession portrays death and confusion. It is also telling that the funeral march is for a noble, something which suggests the symbolic death of the *antiguo régimen*.

Throughout the novel Villergas uses the landscape of Madrid to comment on the outward signs of social change. Before entering the *Calle Mayor*, the carriage passes by the *Plaza de Oriente*, where the *Teatro de Oriente* (now the *Teatro Real*) is under construction. The *Plaza de Oriente* was created by José Bonaparte to relieve some of the congestion in the city center. It also creates a “stage” to view the adjacent royal palace. The plaza is a spatial representation of foreign influence, urban renewal, and nation creation. The *Teatro de Oriente* is an example of a physical representation of “national” culture, but Villergas is critical of the project “que tantas pesetas ha costado a la nación” (I: 15). He is skeptical of the façades of progress, claiming that “mientras el pueblo no tenga derecho a pedir cuentas claras, las contribuciones sólo servirán a enriquecer los que manejan los fondos” (I: 15). Villergas advocates for an egalitarian society and is against conspicuous displays of wealth. Later, the *Teatro* is marked as a symbol of liberal Spain. When Lorenzo seeks work at the construction site, he discovers that “se admitirá a todo el que sea nacional. No se admitirá a ninguno que haya sido realista” (23). “Realistas” refers to the *Cuerpo de Voluntarios Realistas*, a militia organized by Fernando VII in 1823 to stamp out liberalism following the *Trienio Liberal*. After the militia was dissolved, many of their members joined the Carlist movement. The exclusion of the *realistas* marks the *Teatro* as a political symbol as much as a cultural one. However, Villergas questions the integrity of this association. While he is at the construction site, Lorenzo remembers when he received twenty-five lashes for stealing. The narrator thinks this is uncivilized: “[E]n la época a la que me refiero, las leyes del despotismo, si es que en el despotismo hay leyes, eran muy crueles y muy bárbaras” (I: 21). At first it seems he is contrasting the barbarous despotism with enlightened liberalism, but later Lorenzo notices that the overseer of the *Teatro*’s construction site is the same man who gave him the lashes, suggesting that the old corruption has not disappeared, and the *Teatro* is a simulacrum of progress.

At other points in the novel Villergas takes a break from the action to make social commentaries linked to the topography of the city that indicate that the reforms promised by liberalism have not occurred. In one instance he mentions *La Moncloa*, a *campo de recreo*



that inspires “asombro y repugnancia” (I: 49) in Villergas because it is reserved for royalty and closed to the people. Later he plots the *Puerta de San Vicente* and describes the “centenares de mendigos” (I: 50) that sleep in front of its triumphal arch in the winter. The progressive liberalism espoused by Villergas advocated for a more egalitarian society, yet the landscape of Madrid shows many of the old hierarchies to be still intact. Ultimately, the map that emerges is one of a frustrated liberal revolution, where the new and old orders constantly collide.

As the novel progresses, Villergas reveals Madrid’s secret map of crime. Laura learns that the *Marqués de la Calabaza*, thought to be her father’s trusted friend, murdered him in order to steal his fortune. Miguel Ángel vows to help Laura recover her rightful inheritance. This begins Miguel Ángel’s descent into Madrid’s hidden network of crime and sinister characters. This Madrid is full of thieves: “La sociedad de ladrones está efectivamente tan bien organizada, que tiene apostados sus vigilantes en todos los barrios de Madrid” (I: 196). He goes on to mention the “posts” of *Cebada*, the *Prado*, and the *Puerta del Sol*. Villergas charts a map of criminal activity that extends to all points of the city. The vision of Madrid in Villergas’s novel is that of a city where crime, vice, and terrifying figures lie at every turn. Miguel Ángel learns that a group of thieves plan to rob the *Marqués* of his newly acquired fortune. Miguel Ángel decides to infiltrate the group while also warning the *Marqués* of the impending robbery. By gaining the trust of both groups, he hopes to recover Laura’s inheritance. However, what he does not know is that the *Marqués* is obsessed with Laura and plans to kidnap her.

In preparing to recover Laura’s fortune, Miguel Ángel encounters *Tía Sin Huesos*, one of Madrid’s urban monsters. As her name suggests, *Sin Huesos* is a grotesque character. Her body is emaciated, and she inspires fear and revulsion. She is described as “el fruto de una maldición ó conjuro [. . .] el esqueleto más reducido que han presentado las sombras chinescas y aun para convencerse que tenía forma humana se necesitaba mirar su cara de perfil” (I: 59). *Sin Huesos* is a spectral presence in the neighborhood: “Cuando salía a la calle [. . .] no había gato que no la bufase, perro que no la mojara la basquiña, niño que no temblase, mujer que no la mordiera los zancajos, ni hombre que no hiciera la señal de la cruz” (I: 60). She is notorious for kidnapping the children of the rich and holding them for ransom. She also runs a brothel in the center of Madrid, and her house inspires as much dread as its owner. The house features “un portal oscuro como boca de lobo [. . .] una escalera de caracol, estrecha como la de un púlpito y alta como la de una torre” (I: 58). The residence is a veritable *casa embrujada* that appears to have more in common with a medieval castle than with a dwelling in nineteenth-century Madrid. While Miguel Ángel awaits his audience with *Sin Huesos*, he overhears two conversations. In the first, a priest who claims that he is a “diablo que dice misa” (I: 61) plans to meet with a criminal named *Malacara*. (Later in the novel, the priest turns out to be involved in the Carlist conspiracy). In the second, someone promises to connect an ambassador with the *Marquesa de la Calabaza*. These half-heard exchanges are bewildering: “Miguel Ángel quedó cada vez más asombrado y pensativo, ¿qué demonio de casa era aquella en donde cabían todas las clases de la sociedad, desde el bandido al escelencia?” (I: 61). He later learns that the man is actually a barber, but the *Marquesa* is revealed to be a guest in the home. *Sin Huesos*’s house is another ambiguous social space, and the incomplete dialogues highlight the

house's lack of legibility. As Miguel Ángel attempts to leave the house, he is overcome with feelings of dread and almost loses himself in the maze-like passages:

Miguel Ángel no oía nada: el horror, el asco y la indignación de lo que veía le embargaban los sentidos: abrió la puerta y empezó a oscurecer a rodar por aquella escalera tortuosa. La escalera parecía de una casa encantada; estaba interceptada por algunos pasillos en forma de espiral que conducían á otras escaleras, y al fin de estas salían puertas que venían a dar á la principal [. . .] anduvo un cuarto de hora sin saber dónde estaba [. . .] hasta que por fin sin saber cómo ni cuándo se encontró en una calle que desconoció por el pronto; porque él había entrado en la casa por la calle Estrecha de Majaderitos, y al salir de aquel enmarañado laberinto, se encontró en la calle Ancha. (I: 64)

Miguel Ángel does manage to escape *Sin Huesos's* multi-storied maze, but its presence in the center of Madrid reveals the clandestine underworld world of crime and danger lurking behind the façade of the capital city. Villergas gives an actual address for the house, *Calle Estrecha de Majaderitos*, number 4, which provides authenticity to the narrative. *Calle Estrecha de Majaderitos* is a narrow street off the *Calle Carretas* near the *Puerta del Sol*, street running east to west; the *Calle Ancha de Majaderitos* runs north to south and is perpendicular to the *Calle Estrecha*. Miguel Ángel enters the house from one street and exits the house on another, which adds to his confusion and makes the house seem even more mysterious.<sup>8</sup> The house defies the logical map of Madrid and creates an irrational map where Madrid's secrets reside.

The novel soon leads to the true mystery map of Madrid: the conspiracy and revolution map. Miguel Ángel discovers proof of a Carlist plot to invade Madrid, but unbeknownst to him, the *Marqués* is involved in the conspiracy. The *Marqués* lives on the *Calle del Carmen*, a short distance from the *Puerta del Sol*. Carlism has traditionally been characterized as a regional phenomenon, but, as Alfonso Bullón de Mendoza has shown, Carlist supporters did reside in the capital (447), and Villergas maps a Carlist conspirator in the heart of Madrid. When the *Marqués* learns that Miguel Ángel possesses evidence of the conspiracy, he kidnaps and imprisons him on his estate in the outskirts of the city.<sup>9</sup> Throughout nineteenth-century fiction, Madrid's periphery is portrayed as uncivilized and often dangerous (Frost 132). The state of Madrid's boundary provided many critics with proof of the capital's failed urban projects. Both Mesonero Romanos and Ángel Fernández de los Ríos saw the disorder of the outskirts as a sign of Madrid's failure to spread enlightened progress (Frost 159). The *Marqués's* estate is the headquarters of the conspiracy. Its location in the liminal space of the outskirts connects the Carlist threat to Madrid instead of banishing it to distant regions.

Despite the *Marqués's* machinations, Miguel Ángel escapes his prison and the Carlists fail in their attempt to seize Madrid. Once the Carlist threat is subdued, though, a new conflict arises: the *moderados's* political battle against the *progresistas*. After the fall of Mendizábal's progressive administration, the new government adopted the *Estatuto Real*, which tempered the more progressive platforms of the liberal movement by limiting franchise and conceding sovereignty of the monarch. For progressives like Villergas, this

was a betrayal of the principles established in Cádiz. The *progresistas* responded with uprisings throughout Spain, and the *moderado* government acted aggressively to quell any resistance. *Los misterios de Madrid* describes the *moderado* General Quesada, who roams the city “queriendo imponer miedo con el aspecto militar” (II: 6). The people respond with “silbidos y otras manifestaciones no menos ostensibles de odio y de desprecio” (II: 6). Villergas then maps the resistance to the *moderado* regime:

En la plazuela de Santa Ana hay un grupo de paisanos que gritan desafortunadamente: ¡A las armas ciudadanos! ¡A las armas! ¡viva la libertad!!! Y como por encanto la plaza se va llenando de jóvenes valientes, de liberales bravos, que abandonando los unos a padres, los otros a sus hermanos, a sus queridas, corren a empuñar denodados las armas de la patria, ansiosos de medirlas con los enemigos de la libertad, proclamando con ardor los santos derechos del pueblo. Otro tanto sucede en la plazuela de Santo Domingo, en la plaza Mayor, en la calle del Desengaño, frente al convento de los Basílios, donde se dice que hay artillero y un gran depósito de fusiles que entregar a los defensores del pueblo. (III: 6)

The locations mentioned here are all in the center of Madrid, mapping the resistance to the *moderados* in the same space as the crime and Carlist conspiracies. The overlapping maps of *Los misterios de Madrid* reflect the city’s lack of segregating spaces before the construction of the *ensanche*. Villergas places the protestors in areas of historical significance to the *antiguo régimen*. The *Plaza de Santa Ana*, named for a monastery that once stood there, was created by José Bonaparte, and like the *Plaza de Oriente*, it was part of the project to open up the city center that was overcrowded with ecclesiastical residences. The *Plazuela de Santo Domingo* was the home of large Dominican monastery. The *Calle del Desengaño*, once the site of convent, was also alleged to be the location of a conspirator’s hideout in the time of Felipe II (Gea Ortigas 89), which is echoed in the novel’s description of a rumored artillery on the same street.<sup>10</sup> By mapping the *progresista* revolutionaries in spaces associated with the *antiguo régimen*, Villergas is reshaping the collective imaginary of the city. Threatening the *progresistas* is the *moderado*’s network of secret police that watch the city. Among them is the *Marqués*, who has switched sites to the *moderados* after his failed Carlist plot. While the *Marqués* is watching the city, a group of rioters led by Miguel Ángel fills the *Calle del Desengaño* from the *Calle de Fuencarral* shouting “¡Viva Mendizábal! ¡Viva la Constitución!” (III: 13). Soon Miguel Ángel is imprisoned in the *Cuartel de los Basílios* and sentenced to death by firing squad. But, when the execution date arrives, Miguel Ángel is saved by the news of the *Motín de la Granja*, a revolt at the monarch’s country palace that forced the Queen Regent, María Cristina, to reinstate the progressive *Constitución de Cádiz*. Like the later realist novel, Villergas intertwines the destinies of his characters with important historical events.

By placing the collisions of history and fiction on precise points on Madrid’s map, Villergas infuses the urban landscape with new symbolic meaning. After the *Motín de la Granja* the progressives are back in power, and the city’s freedom is represented by Miguel Ángel walking the streets of Madrid singing “El Himno de Riego,” the anthem of the *Trienio Liberal*. The *progresista* victory is not long-lived, however. In the novel’s epilogue Villergas returns to the 1840s and explains that he intended to write a fourth volume of



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*Los misterios de Madrid*, but he has been censored by the return of the *moderados*.<sup>11</sup> Thus the mysteries of city are hidden once again.

Villergas claims that “Madrid es por razón natural el pueblo más ilustrado de España” (II: 36) yet later admits that in Madrid “lo sublime y lo ridículo marchan a la par” (II: 39) and that its people possess “las costumbres más ridículas y grotescas imaginables” (II: 40). This ambivalence towards Madrid’s character is reflected in the novel’s representation of the urban space. While on the one hand advocating for Madrid’s enlightened modernity, the novel portrays the capital as the site of conspiracies, crime, and monstrous characters, thus making problematic the narratives of progress and modernity by revealing the irrationality that lurks in the shadows. By promising to “reveal” the mysteries of Madrid, Villergas brings this irrationality to the forefront by mapping a Gothic city that contests the image of the enlightened capital. The elements that destabilize the nation-building project reside in the city itself. Although Villergas positions his work within the project of liberal European modernity, his use of the Gothic questions the possibility of the project’s success.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The urban mystery novel is both a precursor and a contemporary of modern detective fiction. Edgar Allan Poe is often credited for the first modern detective story, the 1841 “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (Hart 17). Poe first appeared in the French press in 1845, four years after the publication of Sue’s *Les Mystères de Paris* (Englekirk 15). John Englekirk’s study of Poe in Hispanic literature identifies the first (anonymous) publication of Poe in Spain in 1857 (15), but it was through Baudelaire’s French translations that Poe reached the height of his popularity on the Peninsula, which lasted from 1858-1868 (19). The first Spanish detective story is widely acknowledged to be Pedro de Alarcón’s 1853 “El clavo” (Hart 17). In the mystery novel, crimes and mysteries are revealed to the protagonists, while the detective novel focuses on the investigation carried out by a representative of the police.
- <sup>2</sup> For further analysis of the adaptation of the *misterio* genre in Spain and a discussion of Milá de la Roca’s novel, see Martí-López’s *Borrowed Words: Translation, Imitation, and the Making of the Nineteenth-Century Novel in Spain*.
- <sup>3</sup> Mendizábal’s *desamortización* was one of the most significant developments in urban planning of the first half of the nineteenth century. The disentanglement created unprecedented opportunities for urban reform in the city center. With the sale and destruction of convents and monasteries, streets were extended and widened, more housing was created, and the overcrowding of the city center was alleviated (Prados de la Plaza 160).
- <sup>4</sup> *Los misterios de Madrid* was published in 3 volumes between 1844 and 1845. The July 2, 1844 edition of *El Clamor del Público* contains an advertisement to subscribe to *entregas* of a novel entitled *Los misterios de Madrid*. It does not mention an author (*Los misterios de Madrid* 4). On July 12, 1844 *El Clamor del Público* published an advertisement for *tomos* of *Madrid y sus misterios*, by an anonymous author. This is a much larger announcement, and in bold letters proclaims “Nota. Se advierte al público que la novela MADRID Y SUS MISTERIOS nada tiene en común con los Misterios de Madrid, especie de folletos, sin ningún mérito literario y cuyo objeto es la política” (*Madrid y sus misterios* 4). Again, it does not mention the author of *Los misterios de Madrid* by name, and there is more than one *Los misterios de Madrid* from the 1840s, but the mention of the novel’s political agenda does recall Villergas’s novel. Villergas, for his part, titled his work a “miscelánea de costumbres buenas y malas” (I: no pagination), not a novel.
- <sup>5</sup> The *moderados* espoused a more conservative approach to liberalism, limiting suffrage and preserving the sovereignty of the monarchy. The *progresistas* favored more radical changes, broader suffrage, and the sovereignty of the people.
- <sup>6</sup> Larra appears as a character in *Los misterios de Madrid*. His failed romantic relationship and suicide are one of the novel’s several storylines.
- <sup>7</sup> For more historical background on the creation of the *ensanche* and 1860s Madrid, see *El ensanche de Madrid. Historia de una capital*, by Borja Carballo Barral, et. al.
- <sup>8</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, *Calle Estrecha de Majaderitos* and *Calle Ancha de Majaderitos* were renamed *Calle de Cádiz* and *Calle de Barcelona*, respectively. “Majaderitos” refers to the tool used by the gold and silversmiths who had their workshops on these streets (Gea Ortigas 39). Their renaming was part of an urban improvement project that followed the destruction of the *Convento de la Victoria* and the *Teatro de la Cruz*, which

also created the *Calle Espoz y Mina*, named after a military general of the Peninsular and Carlist Wars. It was Mesonero Romanos himself who suggested the new names, which remain to this day (Mesonero 291). The name changes are reflective of Mesonero's project to remake Madrid as a symbol of the nation.

- <sup>9</sup> During his interlude in the *Marqués's* prison, Miguel Ángel finds his long-lost mother and realizes that the *Marqués* is his father. The creation of Miguel Ángel's family tree is another kind of mapping, which has metaphorical implications for the "national" family. For the use of genealogy as social mapping in *Fortunata y Jacinta* see McKinney.
- <sup>10</sup> The *Calle del Desengaño* received its name from a legend with a Gothic tenor. As the story goes, two men saw a mysterious woman pass by on this street. They followed her, but when they finally reached her, they discovered she was a well-preserved mummy. Their response: "¡Qué desengaño!" One theory posits that this story was invented to keep people from discovering the conspirator's hideaway (Gea Ortigas 89).
- <sup>11</sup> Villergas's fears of reprisal were not unfounded. He was incarcerated for criticizing the government, and by the 1850s, was mostly living abroad. There he continued his journalism career, founding periodicals in Cuba, Mexico, and Argentina (Wright 25). For a time he served as a republican *diputado* in the Spanish *Cortes* (Wright 30), and as consul to New Castle and Haiti (Alonso Cortés 83-84).

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