

BENITO PÉREZ GALDÓS

# Fortunata and Jacinta

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## Introduction

### Benito Pérez Galdós (1843–1920)

A few photographs, or the portraits by Joaquín Sorolla (1894, 1911), show Benito Pérez Galdós as a plain man, rumpled in dress, his face distinguished only by a curling moustache and sly look. His hands hold a cigar or cane; a scarf trails down his overcoat or a cat lies curled on his lap. Even formal portraits have an informal air – Galdós looks ordinary, much like his friend Máximo Manso, protagonist of *El amigo Manso*, 1882, who sits stroking a cat to conceal his unease. Plainness, reticence, an ironic smile – these traits seem at odds with Galdós’s prodigious literary achievement: seventy-seven novels, fifteen original plays and numerous occasional pieces, written between 1867 and his death in 1920. At least a dozen of his contemporary social novels rank with the best in any language.

Galdós was born in 1843 in Las Palmas, Canary Islands, the last of ten children. He started out modestly enough, leaving home and a domineering mother at the age of nineteen to study law at the University in Madrid. But he hardly attended classes. Café life, the theater and events of a city in political turmoil claimed his attention. In 1867, though still registered as a student, he made a first trip to Paris, discovered Balzac and, as he says, “breakfasted” on the novels of *La Comédie Humaine*. From Balzac he conceived the idea of writing a series of interrelated historical and social novels, seeing himself as a writer, not a lawyer, and started *La Fontana de Oro* (*The Golden Fountain Café*), his first full-length novel. He completed it in France the following year, and translated Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* from a French version (1868) before returning to Madrid in 1869 to work as a reporter. The next year was decisive for Galdós’s career: he joined the

editorial staff of *La Revista de España* and wrote a book review, titled "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea en España," which contains one of his most comprehensive statements about the art of the novel. He also published a perplexing psychological novel called *La sombra* (*The Shadow*), followed by fiction in an opposite vein, the historical novel *El Audaz* (*A Reckless Man*, 1871).

The decade of the 1870s established the pattern for Galdós's later productive life as a novelist, playwright and newspaperman, as he sought to blend journalism, drama and prose fiction. Articles written on the stage, travel, literature, art, opera, music, biography, education, politics, crime, current events, social types and customs became grist for plots. Accounts of the crimes of the day read like detective stories, and commentaries on the maneuvers of politicians reappear in the "mental gymnastics" of characters like Manuel Peña (*El amigo Manso*) or Jacinto Villalonga. All these writings transformed their respective genres, provoking debate and public interest in the historical and contemporary social novel.

While current fiction offered no suitable Spanish models upon which to build, Galdós's early novels and newspaper articles bear the impress of *costumbrismo*, a literary genre that flourished in the 1830s in Madrid, as shown in the sketches and articles of Ramón de Mesonero Romanos (1803–82) and Mariano José de Larra (1809–37). In Andalucía an interest in native mores gave rise to the regional novel of Cecilia Böhl de Faber (*La Gaviota*, 1849), Alarcón (*El sombrero de tres picos*, 1874) and Valera (*Pepita Jiménez*, 1874). On the Cantabrian coast, in Santander, José María de Pereda, a Catholic conservative opposed to Galdós's liberal views, wrote of life in mountain and fishing villages (*Sotileza*, 1886), while further west in Galicia, the countess Emilia Pardo Bazán (*Los Pazos de Ulloa*, 1886) trained her eyes on the French and Russian novel. In Oviedo, ancient capital of Asturias, Leopoldo Alas ("Clarín") forsook *costumbrismo* for more symbolic and satiric modes, writing his two-volume masterpiece *La Regenta* (1884–85) in the manner of Flaubert and Zola.

*Costumbrismo* as practiced by the observant, genial Mesonero Romanos consisted of *cuadros* – picturesque sketches of social types and customs of Old Madrid. Galdós saw the novelistic possibilities of such *cuadros*, and in *Fortunata and Jacinta* he pays homage to his old master by inventing the colorful figure of Plácido Estupiñá, born, the narrator tells us, in the same year as Mesonero (1803). Galdós also relies upon the interaction of narrator and character, illustrated to perfection by another *costumbrista*, the Romantic ironist Larra. In his celebrated sketch of “El castellano viejo” (1832), defined as a stolid, chauvinistic type, Larra becomes the object of his own critique. A reluctant guest at Braulio’s dinner party, Larra, impeccably dressed in a pearl-gray suit, dons the enormous, ill-fitting jacket of his host, sips from a wine glass sullied by greasy lips, accepts a bite from the fork of his black-toothed neighbor and receives in his lap a shower of spilled gravy. Nor can he avoid performing at table, declaiming verses, “vomiting” silliness, acting out the role of *castellano viejo* more vehemently than his host.

The sketch depicts an important tension in Spanish cultural and intellectual life, registered as the conflict between the influence of things French and the reaffirmation of a popular, conservative culture. This tension, present in Spanish life since the ascent to the throne of Philip of Anjou, Louis XIV’s grandson, in 1713, was exacerbated at the start of the nineteenth century by the Napoleonic invasion (1808) and the War of Independence. In “El castellano viejo” Larra gives that tension a particular ironic twist. As narrator he casts himself in the role of an educated man, French in manner and literary taste, who succumbs to the backward, native ways of his host and emerges somewhat chastened, even enlightened, by those ways, though he voices an acerbic critique and seeks refuge in the hypocrisies of an elite group that looks to Paris for inspiration. In effect, the cultural dissonance felt between France and Spain appears to have shaped something new in Larra’s sketch, something distinctively novelistic that is bound up with the reciprocity between narrator and character. Here the roles of narrator and character momentarily stand reversed

as Larra, a Frenchified man of letters, acts like his host, while the bawling Braulio displays a native vitality, quintessentially Spanish (*castellano*), which Larra recognizes as the more authentic.

Galdós, who understood the irony of sketches like "El castellano viejo," recalls the dinner party scene in *El amigo Manso*, and recasts Larra as the aloof, aristocratic expatriate Moreno-Isla in *Fortunata and Jacinta*. He recalls also those mixed feelings of fascination and resentment which, as Rodgers notes (ER, 1987), marked the influence of French culture in Spain. In Part 1, his narrator, a social historian attached to the folkways of Old Madrid, takes particular care to document the invasion of French styles of dress, architecture and administrative practices, and characterizes the Frenchified tastes of Juanito Santa Cruz and Aurora Fenelón as unhealthy, even treacherous. Also like Larra, Galdós appears to slip in and out of the text, slyly observing and telling from within his own novelistic world. Dozing in an armchair on a stifling afternoon, he lets a character rap him to wakefulness with a fan. Sitting in a café, he listens to stall sellers, civil servants, defrocked priests, gun runners, students, soldiers, moneylenders and ladies of shady reputation. In a bedroom, he observes a married couple, cutting cinematographically from one face to another as the rhythms of thought and interest command. But unlike Larra, always a moralizer, Galdós maintains an illusion of transparency, not encumbering the social novel with critiques and opinions. Everything appears to pass through his mind effortlessly, even distractedly, and in this we discern a kind of porousness about his sensibility. Galdós appears like a man who absorbed essences and expelled them as *novelas* while he observed or participated in the politics of the day. For him, writing was as easy as "drinking a glass of water," said Clarín, who marveled that Galdós on occasion wrote as many as four novels a year.

The impression of naturalness in writing, however, owes as much to Galdós's preoccupation with narrative technique as to temperament. When he studied works by other European writers, notably Dickens, in order, as he says, "to catch them

at their craft," or when he spoke of the difficulty of attaining a natural tone, complained about the disadvantages of third person narration or, like Henry James, became convinced that scenic art achieved more realistic affects than narration in his own voice, Galdós displays an almost modern post-Flaubertian self-consciousness about his art. In his prologue to the 1901 edition of *La Regenta*, he acknowledges Clarín's innovations, and the influence of *La Regenta* marks aspects of characterization in *Fortunata and Jacinta*.

However, in the 1870s and 1880s, as Rodgers observes, Galdós established the modern realist novel in Spain virtually single-handed. He provided an example to younger writers like Clarín, fostered a climate of critical opinion hospitable to the serious social novel, and reconceived the genre as a network of stories told by the characters themselves, either as first-person narrators or in dialogues or monologues that a more or less omniscient narrator retells within finely worked patterns of interrelatedness. While the descriptions of social scenes and character types abound in *Fortunata and Jacinta*, every important stylistic device acquires a larger function; facts, cited in a casual manner, work as thematic motifs, causing the most ordinary of things to incite extraordinary events, feelings, perceptions or states of mind. Within a system of realistic representation, psychological and moral complexities appear to be breathtakingly simple, and this, in a nutshell, is why *Fortunata and Jacinta* is a Landmark among the great works of nineteenth-century European realism.

Galdós's novels divide into two main categories: the historical and the contemporary social. The forty-six historical novels, called *Episodios nacionales* ("Episodes in a Nation's Life"), make up five series, each consisting of ten interconnected novels, except the fifth series, which was left unfinished. Beginning with *Trafalgar* (1873), which depicts the rout at sea in 1805 of the combined fleets of France and Spain by the British navy under Nelson, the *Episodios* chronicle military, political and social events of the century up to the Bourbon Restoration and the 1880s. The first two series of the *Episodios* (twenty novels) appeared in a mere six years, between 1873

and 1879. These treat events preceding the War of Independence against Napoleon and the war itself. A rapid pace, an eye-witness protagonist who recurs throughout each series, and the drama of explosive events – these kept the public enthralled.

The remaining series of twenty-six novels, published between 1898 and 1912, carry the reader through a maze of political and social events from 1834 to 1879 – Carlist Wars, palace intrigues, the revolution of 1868 and overthrow of Queen Isabella, the brief reign of Amadeo of Savoy, the aborted First Republic and the Bourbon restoration (Alfonso XII). In the main, these events correspond to the historical background of *Fortunata and Jacinta*. All told, the *Episodios* were written in two periods, near the beginning and the end of Galdós's career, bracketing, as it were, the contemporary social novels. Simply the chronology of Galdós's works shows how history and fiction appear to contain each other. In *Fortunata and Jacinta*, the historical novel and the notion of history-turned-story within a novel do become as one, sketching out a meta-fictive dimension within the mimetic mirror. This interior duplication shows Galdós's basic affinity with Cervantes and the painter Diego de Velázquez, whom he cites as precursors of the modern Spanish realist novel.

The thirty-one contemporary social novels, published between 1870 and 1915, also divide into two groups: *Las novelas de la primera época* (1870–79) and *Las novelas de la serie contemporánea* (1881–1915). The novels of the early period comprise Galdós's first attempts at novel-writing, as well as four so-called "thesis" novels: *Doña Perfecta* (1876), much admired by the American writer and editor William Dean Howells, the sequel *Gloria* (1876–77), *Marianela* (1878) and *La familia de León Roch* (1878–79). As Rodgers (1987) observes, Galdós's initial approach was shaped by the belief, coming from the Enlightenment, that ingrained social and religious prejudices had blocked progress in Spain. Literature has a crucial role to play in educating the reading public, altering individual consciousness to lay the groundwork for national regeneration. Thus Galdós, an avowed

realist, saw the novel as having primarily a social and moral purpose, a view in which he persisted to the end of his career.

While it appeared to early critics that Galdós affirmed substance over form, his concern with the instructional potential of narrative led to another, opposite consideration – how to reconcile ideology and realism in the contemporary social novel. To Galdós’s eye, the tension between substance and form, between morality and mimesis, was only apparent. He knew that didactic effects depended for their success upon technique, upon the ways ideas were presented narratively. He knew he must strive to create in fiction the illusion of reality so that the reader would confuse the two, applying to life outside the novel the values imaged within. In his famous early essay of 1870 (“Observaciones . . .”) he spoke of fiction’s power to absorb the reader, drenching his senses in lifelike impressions, thereby to convince us that if life presents novelistic experiences, a novel by Cervantes or Dickens appears as more real, that is, as more authentic, more truthful in every particular than life itself.

The power of a novel to shape the way people seek to interpret their own experience blurs boundaries between author and narrator, character and reader. A recognition of this power determined Galdós’s own narrative technique. At the same time, in the manner of Cervantes, the power of literature over the human mind became a chief, didactic concern, the unifying theme of almost his entire literary production. Why, he had asked in 1870, was there no modern Spanish realist novel? Spain had always shown a liking for the real – witness Cervantes and Velázquez – whereas nowadays the contemporary “truthful novel” has been supplanted by French imitations. As he says, evasion marks our restless times; the reading public cries out either for the nostalgia of archaic folkways (*costumbrismo*) or for serialized romance and salon fiction, modeled on Dumas and Soulié – “pale traitors with a sinister look, angelic seamstresses, whores with hearts of gold, wayward duchesses, romantic hunchbacks, adultery, extremes of love and hate” (BPG, 107). These images represent clichéd ways of thinking, seductively set

against the grist of ordinary life. As a populist, conservative writer, at odds with the influence of things French in Spain, Galdós inveighs against such fictions, which at best distract, at worst corrupt, by pandering to the wish for identifiable conflicts and easy solutions.

And yet Galdós's own overriding aim in the series of contemporary social novels was to make fiction seem as unlike fiction as possible, with characters so familiar and yet so problematic that in them we recognize ourselves, with settings and scenes so skillfully narrated and dramatized that we feel compelled to exclaim, as Matthew Arnold did of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, that this is the way life is: "The author has not invented and combined it, he has seen it; it has all happened before his inward eye, and it was in this wise that it happened . . . The author saw it all happen so – saw it, and therefore relates it; and what his novel in this way loses in art it gains in reality." Like Tolstoy, Galdós invents a narrator who relates as he sees or listens, acting in the story as a reliable witness, reliability giving rise to realism in novelistic form. At the same time, contriving an appearance of the real approximates his narrator's approach to the novel-making imagination of unreliable characters like Isidora in *La desheredada*, doña Cándida in *El amigo Manso*, or Juanito Santa Cruz. These characters persist in mistaking *novelas* for the way life is, half-consciously ministering to their own appetites and desires – Isidora becomes self-orphaned as she imagines her origins as a serialized romance; doña Cándida, aping the social text, serves up rancid wine as champagne, stringy beef as *filet à la Maréchale*; Juanito, on the prowl for Fortunata, invents a new role for himself as a "father" or "brother" who combs the city for a lost, beloved "child." He does not realize how his thinking mimics the way characters behave in those Spanish imitations of French salon fiction.

The potential for irony in such analogies determined Galdós's preoccupation with the popular novel. Now, as in the *Quijote*, literature itself becomes central to plot as novels, librettos, letters, newspapers, magazines and administrative jargon shape speech and behavior. Why and how the shaping takes

place, as well as the use people make of images, matter as much as their ostensible meaning. The power of the mind to think, feel and imagine, as well as the question of why people do so and to what effect, become the acts that make up the news, *noticias*, which Galdós intends to tease out of society's solid stuff as *materia novelable*, as declared in his speech to the Spanish Royal Academy. The crux, then, of what is real in the "truthful" modern Spanish novel is bound up not with naming the thing, in the manner of the *costumbristas*, or evading it in favor of the ready-made image, as in the *feuilleton*, but with naming the feeling aroused by the thing, particularly living things, as these appear to pass through individual minds.

Américo Castro, recalling a term of don Sem Tob, a Jew in fourteenth-century Spain, calls this kind of naming "*la fazienda*" – the "inner doing" of consciousness, that is, "what we are to do with ourselves and with the world of things and people who at once enter into us and among which we all evolve." Castro applies the concept to the *Quijote*, showing how outer action (*vivienda*) becomes inner action that is something the mind keeps making (*fazienda*). This "inner doing" of a particular spirit creates those criss-crossing story-lines of Cervantes's great novel, which after two centuries comes to influence sketches like Larra's as well as the nineteenth-century European realist novel. As Castro points out, the *Quijote* is manifestly the origin for Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* (1830) as it is for *Fortunata and Jacinta*. Cervantes, then, is the direct precursor of Galdós's contemporary social novel.

The process of "inner doing" starts in *La sombra* (187, ), Galdós's first novel, gathers speed in his little story about a novel overheard in a trolley car (*La novela en el tranvía*, 1871), and refuels, as it were, through the double narrative energy of *Doña Perfecta* (1876), a study in religious fanaticism. As an allegory, that is, as a thing described *under* the image of another, *Doña Perfecta* presents a self-reflecting world of made-up words: on occasion, the narrator slips into his own story and adopts unawares the narrative strategies of doña

Perfecta herself, spying, eavesdropping, mimicking speech. Unexpectedly, the "inner doing" of the narrator stands in approximate analogy to this particular character, as each makes novelistic efforts to impress avid "readers" both within and without the text. Even in the early novels, then, what is real appears to rest more upon the "inner doing" of perception than an easy faith in mirrored facts, while the clichéd intensity of serialized romance and salon fiction appears also to turn inward, passing through commonplaces of daily life (*vivienda*) so that these appear invented (*fazienda*).

How Galdós combines fact and fiction to subtler effect in his next group of novels represents what he called his "segunda manera." *Fortunata and Jacinta* occurs midway among the novels of this second group, initiated in 1881 by *La desheredada* and rounded off by *Misericordia*, published the same year (1897) as Galdós's speech to the Spanish Royal Academy. Three lesser novels followed, representing a return to a more abstract allegorical mode, although Galdós always adhered to the concept of balance as part of his theoretical equation for realism. He maintained that fiction, an image of life, is *in fact* life the way it is, and that novels are neither faithful mirrors nor pure invention but something in between, something simultaneously real ("*vivienda*") and invented ("*fazienda*"). Always, he says, in creating a realist novel, a "perfect point of balance should exist between exactitude and beauty."

### *Fortunata and Jacinta (1886–1887)*

Galdós's masterpiece in four parts was written in eighteen months, from January 1886 to June 1887. The main action of the plot begins with the opposition of the two women and ends with their reconciliation. Part 1 (eleven chapters, representing events between December 1869 and February 1874) starts with the story of Jacinta. The narrator presents Juanito Santa Cruz, only son and heir. He gives the genealogy of the Santa Cruz-Arnáiz alliance, recounts the marriage of Juan's parents, don Baldomero and Barbarita, and depicts

the young man's encounter on the stone staircase with Fortunata, a plebeian girl of Old Madrid. Barbarita arranges the marriage of her son to his first cousin, Jacinta Arnáiz. On the honeymoon, Jacinta wrests details of the story of the affair from her husband, learns of Fortunata's pregnancy and abandonment, recognizes a wrong done, and starts thinking obsessively about her rival. Two years pass, and since no children are forthcoming in the marriage, Jacinta attempts to adopt *el Pituso*, a child she believes is Fortunata's, not knowing the child had in fact died. Juan puts a stop to the plan, hears of Fortunata's return to Madrid, and sets out in pursuit.

Part 2 (seven chapters, from February 1874 to autumn) tells Fortunata's story. The narrator introduces the Rubín household, headed by the entrepreneurial doña Lupe who lives with her nephew, Maximiliano Rubín, an intermittently disturbed young pharmacist who meets Fortunata after her affair with Juanito, falls in love and proposes marriage to redeem her. Doña Lupe, scandalized but with an eye for the girl's great beauty and docile ways, sends her to Las Micaelas, a convent for wayward women. There the girl renews her acquaintance with Mauricia *la Dura*, a demented "bad" woman of the streets, who nudges her toward the trap Juanito has prepared by renting rooms next to the apartment Fortunata and Maxi will occupy after the wedding. In Las Micaelas, Fortunata also sees Jacinta for the first time and becomes obsessed by her. Once discharged from the convent, Fortunata marries Maxi but immediately falls into the trap, living in adultery with Santa Cruz. Maxi discovers the affair and Fortunata leaves him.

Part 3 (seven chapters, from the end of 1874 to June 1875) presents the confrontation of Fortunata and Jacinta. Juanito Santa Cruz has discarded his mistress for the second time. A retired military man, Evaristo Feijoo, takes Fortunata under his protection and arranges a reconciliation with Maxi. The restoration of both marriages coincides with the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty as King Alfonso XII enters Madrid. Mauricia *la Dura*'s death in a tenement house sets Fortunata and Jacinta face to face. Guillermina, a religious social worker,

intervenes, both women feel betrayed, and Fortunata resolves to conceive another child in order to substantiate her claim as Juan's rightful wife in contrast to the childless Jacinta.

Part 4 (six chapters, from June 1875 to the following spring, 1876) Galdós orchestrates the reconciliation of Fortunata and Jacinta. Maxi, suspecting anew his wife's infidelity, goes mad, and Ballester, head pharmacist, tries to calm him. He too falls in love with Fortunata, who in turn has confided her affair to Aurora, daughter of the owner of the pharmacy. Aurora, employed in a new boutique across from the Santa Cruz house, insinuates to Fortunata that Jacinta is having an affair with Moreno-Isla, a rich bachelor and family friend. The supposition is false, although Moreno is desperately in love with Jacinta. She recognizes but repudiates his suit and Moreno dies. Now Fortunata, again pregnant, returns to la Cava, her place of origin, and gives birth to the child as Juan takes up with Aurora. Maxi discovers the treachery and attempts to "assassinate" Fortunata with the news; she, in turn, grips an iron key, marches into the boutique and slaps Aurora senseless. The ensuing struggle brings on a hemorrhage, but as she dies Fortunata bequeaths the child to Jacinta. Now Jacinta imagines a reconciliation with her rival and sees Moreno as the father of the child. Santa Cruz becomes a stranger to his house and Maxi, aware of his own madness, enters an insane asylum.

While the plot is relatively straightforward, Galdós uses a complex range of narrative perspectives that cause the stereotypes of *costumbrismo* and serialized romance to "enter" particular individuals and incite their "inner doing"; now the received *fact* of a stereotype becomes the first term of his theoretical equation (*exactitud*), counterpoised to new, fictional images (*belleza*). If, in 1870, Galdós had inveighed against the clichés of Frenchified serial romances, we find these clichéd character types re-imaged in new ways in *Fortunata and Jacinta*: those "pale traitors with sinister looks" resurface in Aurora's treachery; "whores with hearts of gold" determine in part the characterization of Mauricia *la Dura*; "angelic seamstresses" reappear in the angel-faced Jacinta, but also

in Fortunata, who strives for respectability as she learns to use a Singer sewing machine and dies a self-declared “angel”; finally, emotionally charged thoughts, typical of “romantic hunchbacks,” bubble as “fermented jealousy” in the deformed Maximiliano Rubín. In this way, the “rub” (*fazienda*) between prefabricated images and new aesthetic forms lets us discover how the obvious (*vivienda*) is in fact extraordinary.

The same dialectic determines the novel’s genesis, recalled thirty years after publication in Galdós’s memoirs and titled “Remembrances of an Unremembering Writer” (1916). He tells how, upon returning to Madrid, his friend and fellow novelist, don José Ido del Sagrario, appears at the door. Ido tells of the characters abandoned by their author over the summer. This account moves Galdós to action: rambling through Old Madrid, waving, talking, listening, copying, he points to a stall-keeper who is the spitting image of old, parrot-faced Estupiñá, a character type so familiar that no description is warranted. What is real, then, seems simple, straightforward and natural.

The scene, however, depicts two novelists and two stories, each reflecting the other to confound our notion of the real. Galdós writes a novel that contains Ido’s own novel, the imagined episode of the child Jacinta tries to adopt in Part 1. And in that episode, which unexpectedly finds a real counterpart in the child Fortunata gives Jacinta, Estupiñá, apparently interchangeable with a real person, ends up running counter to type – we really do not know him at all. What is this? Both author and character appear to be out of their heads, “gone from the Sanctuary,” as Ido’s name implies. Thus the easy opposition of fact and fiction is stood on *its* head, since Ido’s news becomes a fact that restarts a story, while the author becomes a character, slipping into his own novelistic world. In the alternating action of one and the other we discern the expansion and contraction of a living lung, for as summer “expires,” a stopped story starts, and Madrid’s social *pulmón* appears to take a breath in the remembered moment of the genesis of *Fortunata and Jacinta*.

In sum, Galdós saw the contemporary social novel not as

a “thing” or even a book but, in the first instance, as something alive, as “*natural*” as breathing, and as an agent of perception. Naming and narrating are mimetic gestures that represent facts, known types, accuracy in detail, and represent the first term of his theoretical equation. The second term, represented by a figure of speech or structural image, refers to aesthetic form. What is real emerges as a consequence of the dialectic between these two terms, as a word, event, person or thing passes through perception to become an image. Thus whatever affects a person’s consciousness and moves it to action is represented by certain imagistic progressions. Within these progressions, an “inner doing” particular to the individual starts to take place, manifested in the way something inert becomes animated – like the chalice in Mauricia *la Dura*’s dream, Maxi’s piggy bank, or the hairs that bustle about the “balconies” of Nicolás’s nose and ears. What is crucial, as in the case of a chalice that starts glowing, staring and speaking, is not the representation of fact or form but the transformations that happen in between, as facts pass through an individual’s consciousness and become images. As Galdós’s narrator tells the two entwined stories of married women, attention shifts from the description of objects or the way characters perceive them to that notion of a balance maintained between the one and the other. The achievement of this balance, then, accounts for the novel’s intense impression of life-likeness, for its “*ilusión de vida*,” to recall the words of Menéndez y Pelayo, Spain’s polymath of the nineteenth century, who endorsed Galdós’s entrance into the Academy.

At the time of publication, however, few readers understood the range and depth of the dialectical realism of *Fortunata and Jacinta*. Nor did critics perceive how Galdós had adapted Cervantine irony and the mechanism of “interior duplication” to pose anew the problem of character autonomy and the capacities and limitations of the imagining mind. Galdós himself, wary of an adverse reception, went abroad when his four-part novel appeared in June 1887. In his absence Clarín sent an open letter to the newspaper *El Globo*, noting the

author's evasion in a sketchy review that, quite ironically, appears to parody its own censure. The novel is too long, too dense, too digressive, he says, and Galdós's ear for commonplace speech undoes the dramatic tension that builds within certain scenes. A more focused approach, in the style of the Goncourt brothers, as well as substantial deletions, are necessary – get out your red pencil, Clarín tells Galdós, while he himself rambles around central points and appears to rely more on hearsay than on a close reading of the text.

Yet Clarín's letter persists as the most insightful contemporary review of *Fortunata and Jacinta*. He emphasized the extraordinary mimetic aspects of the novel, noting how the two stories of married women emerge from commonly known, believable facts of the social life of the times – money, social class, cultural institutions, contemporary politics and private life. Nor did Clarín flinch at what other readers considered of questionable taste, even immoral – the novel's intimations of sexual feeling and behavior. He also understood the relationship Galdós established in *Fortunata and Jacinta* between scrupulously observed details and deeper aspects of character portrayal, and Clarín confirms how, in certain descriptions, observation itself gave way to something else, to a kind of inkling (“*adivinación*”) or stroke of genius. He found this genius best displayed in the extreme behavior of Mauricia *la Dura* and in the appearance of minor characters like *Papitos* or the little hunchbacked nun, Sor Marcela.

Other, more Modernist critics like Valle-Inclán, Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset paid attention only to what they saw as the excesses of a copyist, and censured Galdós for his obsession with the boring buttoning and dressing of daily life and his lack of “style.” Valle-Inclán's sneering epithet “Don Benito el Garbancero” summed up their case: Galdós was a writer fit only to write about a plate of beans (*garbanzos*). This attitude cost Galdós a nomination for the Nobel Prize in 1912 and came about, in part, because as a novelist he himself had made the cultivation of simplicity, of a “non-style” in speaking, dressing and writing, a cherished, major theme. For example, in *Tormento* (1884), the narrator states that style is a way

of lying, whereas truth stands staring and silent ("El estilo es la mentira. La verdad mira y calla").

Clarín's review, however, offered the insight that in *Fortunata and Jacinta* style and substance are one and the same. In effect, the very notion of character, once established as "fact," appears as *passed through* formal elements of style and structure. Thus what Galdós called "character" emerged as a constellation of bits and pieces, as something "evented," while events became "personed," imbued with personality, to recall Américo Castro's words for what happens to character in the *Quijote*. "Style," therefore, becomes fundamental to the impression of life-likeness in the novel, and Clarín spoke admiringly of Galdós as a "naturalist," a term he took to mean "realist" rather than to refer to the French school of naturalism.

In his review, Clarín warned also of the envy of fellow novelists. Unamuno, who felt that envy with particular sharpness, persisted to the end in his negative view of Galdós's "style," even when his own novels, like *Niebla* (1914) and *La tía Tula* (1921), owed much to experimental interior monologues, as well as a pronounced interest in feminine psychology, which *Fortunata and Jacinta* displays. The poet Federico García Lorca, however, was a fervent admirer of Galdós, and declared in 1935, one year before his death, that Galdós "sounded the truest, most profound voice of modern Spain" (SG, 287). For Lorca, the word "modern" meant a daring, imaginative capacity, manifested precisely in Galdós's style. For as the narrator relies increasingly on figurative speech in *Fortunata and Jacinta* metaphors appear not only to capture the essence of what is real but also to encapsulate Galdós's theoretical equation, conjoining what is represented with a notion of how representation is achieved. In effect, far from eschewing "style," Galdós saw metaphor itself as an organizing principle of thought and action, and created images not so much to depict a particular mind but to show, as did Cervantes, how people *use* their minds, and to distinguish and evaluate those uses, which in the main correlate with a hierarchy of parts in both the individual and social body. Galdós's metaphors