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# **The Fantastic in Spain during the Late- Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries**

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**Thesis for the qualification of PhD**

**University of Durham**

**Department of Spanish**

**1998**



**1 2 AUG 1998**

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# The Fantastic in Spain during the Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries

Edward J. R. Moffatt

PhD, 1998

This thesis has as its primary objective the drawing together and subsequent theorisation of diverse texts which can be understood to be examples of Spanish fantastic literature. It demonstrates that from nineteenth-century Realism and Naturalism (exemplified in narratives by Pérez Galdós, Alarcón and Pardo Bazán), through turn-of-the-century *modernismo* (Valle-Inclán and Zamacois) to twentieth-century proto-existentialism (Unamuno), a significant number of texts were produced which, in spite of the obvious differences between them, refute the widely held idea that 'the fantastic' and Spanish literature share little common ground. The thesis is therefore one more step along the journey of establishing that Spanish fantastic literature is as important and integral to the whole swathe of Spanish cultural production as it is in many other European countries.

The critical analyses of the narratives push at the boundaries of previous interpretative strategies both in terms of the fantastic and of the texts themselves. The exception to this interrogation and reinvigoration of earlier interpretations is to be found in the approach to the narratives by Zamacois, which have hitherto received very little critical attention. These detailed readings draw out the complexities and intriguing perspectives which the fantastic in Spain presents to the attentive reader. By means of these textual analyses, the thesis also explores some of the various possibilities presented by the fantastic itself, putting flesh on the theoretical bones of several different critical discourses.

Ultimately, this thesis charts a dynamic and coherent corpus of material which represents the process of the psychologisation of the supernatural from Romanticism onwards. Each successive text more starkly expresses the unreal horrors of the fractured human mind, as well as the mutations of the body. As such, the evolutionary history of the fantastic in Spain is shown to be more gripping and relevant than has hitherto been understood to be the case.

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*For my Parents,  
whose taste in interior decoration  
proved far more influential  
than they could possibly have imagined.*

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With grateful thanks to the following friends and colleagues who, in their different ways, have provided the necessary support and advice for the completion of this thesis: Dr. Kathryn Cramer, Dr. Susan Frenk, Dr. Manuel Moreno, Dr. Alison Sinclair and Dr. Mike Thompson. In particular, thanks must go to Professor Chris Perriam, without whose unstinting patience and encouragement this thesis would never have seen the light of day.

No material in this thesis, other than that referred to in the text, has previously been submitted for a degree at the University of Durham or any other university.

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# Introduction

For a species so dedicated to the acquisition of knowledge of and control over its own condition, it is perhaps unsurprising that anything unexplained and unexplainable provokes both fear and fascination in the human race. As such it seems endemic in a whole range of cultural systems that events and experiences which lie outside or on the boundaries of what is habitually referred to as 'reality' constitute a central part of any analysis of a given culture. In the modern era, experiences which lie at the margins of social existence have been narrated through the widest possible range of media, from oral transmission to the stunning special effects of late-twentieth century cinema, and this long-term trend shows no sign of abating.

Any one person's endeavours, in all honesty, cannot hope to make an adequate assessment of this vast sweep of cultural information. However, by attempting to restrict the field of investigation, while simultaneously remaining aware of how much continues to lie outside its parameters, it becomes possible to construct and evaluate one small corner of the puzzle. In this thesis, the reduced area of inquiry is that of literary texts from mainland Spain in approximately the final quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century, a period which is usually defined in terms of Realism and Naturalism, *noventayochismo* and *modernismo*. It is the aspiration of this investigation that the analysis of one aspect of this area of study should contribute to an overall understanding of the literary culture of the period and of the paradoxically central cultural field of the representation of marginality.

To make a contribution to the overall intellectual project of mapping out a cultural system, or even one of a series of cultural systems overlapping in time and space, is to risk making contentious assertions and decisions about the area, or category, to which attention is being directed. This is particularly difficult and ironic when the area to be discussed is that of the fantastic as it is constructed within a given culture. As will

become all too obvious, the fantastic delights in tearing down categories, crossing boundaries and subverting definitions. The Loki of the literary world, it seems to shift and change wherever it appears, challenging presuppositions and authority, only to be banished to the canonical periphery of the cultural paradigm as punishment. Even so, it will prove necessary to have a relatively flexible idea of what the fantastic is before starting to read texts to which the term may prove relevant.

In spite of the undoubted value of earlier critical approaches, it is almost axiomatic to start a consideration of the fantastic by turning to the structuralist discourse of Todorov's *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973). The central contention of this seminal work is that it is fundamentally the inscription of hesitation which defines the fantastic:

The fantastic requires the fulfilment of three conditions. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is entrusted to a character [...] Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as poetic interpretations. (33)

There are three possible outcomes in texts which inscribe hesitation in this fashion and contain events which appear to break the rules governing reality as it is initially posited within that same text. The events may be revealed to have a rational explanation, in which case the resolution of the text is termed 'fantastic - uncanny' (44-46). Equally the events may be revealed to have an irrational explanation, in which case the term 'fantastic - marvellous' is appropriate (51-53). In both of these cases, the time between the occurrence of the events and them being resolved is one in which the reader (and possibly the protagonist) is experiencing hesitation. The third case is one in which no resolution is provided by the text and these much rarer narratives are described as examples of the 'pure fantastic' (43-44). However, this analysis does not restrict itself to the considerations outlined above. For Todorov, one of the fundamental causes of the perpetual occurrence of the supernatural throughout all forms of fictive discourse was that it was a pretext to express things that could not



be expressed in realistic terms due to the controlling function of deep-seated social taboos, or as he describes them, 'themes of the other'. Such an umbrella concept would include 'incest, homosexuality, love for several persons at once, necrophilia, excessive sensuality...' (158). Overt discussion of these themes would not have been permissible, but cloaked in supernatural guise, especially using the terminology of the dominant ideological code (Christianity) and couched in terms of moral repugnance, covert references were more than possible: 'Sexual excesses will be more readily accepted by any censor (self or other) if they are attributed to the devil' (159). This is not to say that the supernatural is fundamentally a revolutionary allegory in the world of socio-sexual mores (which would for one thing contradict Todorov's own generic boundaries of the fantastic), but a recognition that all forms of writing are born out of and into a cultural context, and that the supernatural is one of the ways in which desires are exteriorised that would otherwise be considered non grata.

Perhaps most contentiously of all, Todorov's structural approach assesses the fantastic as a historically defined genre. The generic boundaries that he lays down lead the production of the fantastic to be defined as restricted within the period stretching from the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century (166). He imposes the end point owing to what he sees as a fundamental alteration in the way authors deal with his 'themes of the other':

Why can Bataille permit himself to describe directly a desire Gautier dares invoke only indirectly? We may suggest the following answer: in the interval between the publication of the two books has occurred an event whose best known consequence is the appearance of psychoanalysis. We are beginning to forget today the resistance to psychoanalysis in its early days, not only on the part of the learned who did not believe in it, but also and especially on the part of society. A change has occurred in the human psyche, a change of which psychoanalysis is the sign; and this very change has revoked that social censorship which forbade dealing with certain themes. To proceed a step further: psychoanalysis has replaced (and thereby made useless) the literature of the fantastic. (159)

For Todorov, once an apparently universal key to explaining every unreality is available to both the producer and the receiver of the text, there is no longer any room for undecidability or hesitation, and the fantastic is thereby rendered meaningless.

Virtually all subsequent analyses have attempted to reinstate the fantastic as a relevant term in the psychoanalytical age. For example, Jackson (1981) refutes the need for generic parameters, preferring instead a modal definition (7) concentrating on the expression of the parallel irruption of unreal elements into the 'real' world (21-22), the intrusion of unconscious desire into the realm of the conscious mind (61-63) and the challenging of a dominant socio-cultural discourse by actions normally construed as dangerously anti-cultural and anti-social (25-26). In other words, she has moved on from Todorov's structural approach to one which promotes and expands on his observations concerning the 'themes of the other':

[Todorov's analysis] fails to consider the social and political implications of literary forms. Its attention is confined to the effects of the text and the means of its operation. It does not move outwards again to relate the forms of literary texts to their cultural formation. (6)

Debate has ebbed and flowed around hesitation, themes, genres and modes ever since. For the most part it is those critics who have not been too dogmatic who have made valuable progress. For its own part, this thesis will be eclectic in its approach, employing the work of Todorov, Jackson and others as appropriate. However, it will also step outside the boundaries of strict literary critical discourse in order to engage directly with Freud, Lacan and Klein, all of whom wield concepts relevant to the texts which will come under discussion, particularly while trying to chart the psychologisation of the fantastic attested to by both Todorov and Jackson in their different approaches.

One very recent critic who has endeavoured to strike out in a different direction in her theorisation of the fantastic is Armitt (1996). She postulates that the fantastic coheres around an obsession with representing the body (64-65). It may initially seem paradoxical that a process of increasing psychologisation would be expressed through the body. However, as this thesis develops, the relevance of this apparent dichotomy will be revealed as one possible method of valorising the fantastic. It is the case that Armitt deals more directly with contemporary fiction, science fiction and theories of the cyborg which have become part of the leading edge of feminist criticism in recent

years (78-81). Nevertheless, her general analysis remains relevant for earlier narratives as her approach to Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* among others clearly demonstrates, and it will undoubtedly inform the texts which are the objects of inquiry of this thesis.

One of the areas in which Armitt perceives the need for flexibility is the tendency for psychoanalytic discourse to be goal-directed and 'truth-searching' (64). This is effectively the objection laid at Freud's door by Todorov, but Armitt immediately goes on to outline how psychoanalysis does not necessarily have to lead to closure and binding explanation but can be held in check by the open-ended representation of the body. Armitt's understanding of the body is initially and principally based on that expounded by Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World* (1984) but also appeals to Irving Massey and Wolfgang Kayser, among others. The consequence of Armitt's approach is that the risk of static and reductionist production and interpretation of the fantastic is transformed into dynamic tension by the continuously changing nature of the body. The dominant trope is no longer the relatively stable metaphor but a combination of metamorphosis and metonymy whereby language can play and scintillate across the surface of the textual and physical body (65). The implication of this discussion is that a given, single, textual meaning can no longer be sustained over and above all others in the corporal fantastic but exists in unstable and even paradoxical complementarity. The relationship between language and the body will prove as important as that between language and the psyche, and the apparent historical process of the psychologisation of the fantastic is accompanied by an unending remodelling of its corporality.

Armitt finds that it is the dynamic and shifting characteristics of the body which lift discussion of the fantastic away from structural or thematological concerns:

For alongside those narratives which cite the metamorphic body as the central source of pleasure, empowerment, terror or horror, the fantastic in general takes us into a realm where the static and the finite shift, be it ever so slightly, to metamorphose the formerly familiar into a defamiliarized state. (65)

In part extending Armitt's analysis, it is clear that the defamiliarisation of the body through metamorphosis underpins two exemplary texts from the early years of this century. The first is Kafka's narrative *Die Verwandlung* (1916) which is translated mostly commonly as *Metamorphosis* and in which the protagonist, Gregor Samsa, wakes one perfectly normal morning to discover that his human body has changed into that of an insect. No explanation is forthcoming, no apparent change in the realistic context has occurred. Nevertheless, the body has shown itself to be inherently unstable and the fantastic gains fresh impact in this cultured, middle-class and thoroughly modern setting. The second text is Freud's much-discussed essay written in 1919 and entitled *The Uncanny* (OC XVII, 217-252). In it he explains how the uncanny can best be understood in the relationship between its German term, *unheimlich*, and its supposed antonym, *heimlich*. The latter refers both to something familiar, known, intimate and also to something hidden, concealed, kept from sight. That the one word expresses concepts which are both seemingly positive and potentially threatening, allows the uncanny to operate in a similarly paradoxical fashion. The body is quite clearly caught up in both sides of the paradox of the uncanny. There is nothing more familiar and open to the outside world, yet also more of an expression of a person's private sphere of existence and more readily concealed, than the body (66).

The body also represents the contradiction of being ever-changing and ever the same. The changes to which it is subject are variable, as a further range of narrative texts can attest. Yakov Golyadkin, the protagonist of Dostoyevsky's *The Double* (1846), as is the case in the majority of nineteenth-century narratives which deal with the theme of the doppelgänger, can far more easily identify physical similarities than differences in his other, younger self. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) sees the eponymous hero change radically in appearance, behaviour and character until at the end of the irreversible degenerative process Mr. Hyde comes to dominate completely. Oscar Wilde allows the protagonist of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) to develop an entirely new character without any discernible exterior

sign, that is, until the physical decay that had been displaced onto his portrait is released to ravage his body at a single stroke. Finally, Kafka's Gregor Samsa is unaware of his metamorphosis into a bug until somebody else tells him; after all, in himself he feels the same as he always has done. What is therefore important is that, whatever the extent of the changes, they are certainly uncontrollable and significant enough to be defamiliarising. In that sense they are similar to the linguistic function of metonymy which, unlike metaphor, enables meaning to slide away from the intellectual comprehension and possession of both the producer and the receiver.

As can be seen from the above examples, the body can be altered in a range of different ways, some of which seem to affect the surface of the body alone, others of which almost exclusively seem to change the personality or character, and still others which have an impact on both. However, it is necessary to lay to rest the apparent correspondence between the noun 'surface' and its concomitant adjective 'superficial'. The latter term carries the pejorative connotation of being insubstantial, unimportant and to do with (possibly false) appearance. It forms a binary dichotomy with 'profound', which in turn suggests the opposing, positive values of substantiality, importance and essence. It is to be noted, at least in the context of the argument of this thesis, that to say that change happens on a surface, or 'is superficial', must not be taken as a value-judgement, or as an indication of a relative lack of significance. In the same way, the body is to be understood as no less 'essential' than the mind, the soul or the spirit. What should have become clear in the examples from Dostoyevsky to Kafka is that the bodily surface and margin is in an unpredictable state of flux with the centre or core, that there is dynamic tension between them and that they move through stages of similarity to and difference from each other. Indeed, the process of transgressive reinscription, as explained by Dollimore (1991), demonstrates that those things pushed to the margins (of language, of the body, of culture) because of their transgressive nature and their social unacceptability, automatically reappear at the centre of the body which attempted to expel them. It is surely no coincidence that Dollimore is primarily concerned with the lives and works of Oscar Wilde and André

Gide at the turn of the twentieth century. Overturning the binary oppositions inherent in established value-systems was one of the issues with which that intellectual climate was concerned and, in an attempt to redress the perceived imbalance, the margins and surfaces were accorded a form of conceptual primacy over the depths and centres. Of itself this will prove illuminating for several of the narratives to be discussed in this thesis. However, at this point it is more important to insist on the implication that a system of continual change and motion between surface and depth has thereby been established. That mutation is the one underlying principle to be uncovered here may shed light on the contention that it is an impossible and purposeless task to strive to provide a single, all-inclusive definition of the fantastic. Without an acknowledgement that the fantastic is neither what it was previously, nor what it will be when next it is enacted, any approach to it is fated to founder in frustration and incomplete, unbending polemic.

The purpose of Chapter 1 of the thesis is to contextualise the period directly preceding the parameters of the substantive discussion in terms of the literary and cultural values relevant to the latter's field of study. It draws on both the general European and the Spanish engagement with the fantastic in order to succinctly outline the factors influencing the production and reception of the later texts which will be the subject of detailed analysis in Chapters 2 - 6.

The contextual trail is picked up in the attitudes displayed in Enlightenment Europe towards popular credence in superstition and the operation of the supernatural in everyday life. The attempts of Enlightenment thinkers to eliminate this anti-rational menace are seen to have led, rather perversely, to a reinscription of superstition in comparatively educated sections of society by the aestheticization of the supernatural. While it is clear that throughout parts of Europe, particularly England, this transgressive tendency was expressed in the form of the Gothic novel, in Spain it is shown that there is comparatively little interest in the Gothic *per se*.

The fact that the Gothic seems to have suffered a terminal delay in generating its own head of steam in Spain can be understood to have been replicated in the more complex area of Romanticism. The chapter briefly summarises the relevant points of contention concerning the aspects of Romanticism relevant to the thesis. It addresses the question of why Romanticism engages with the supernatural (to the extent that the terms Romantic and fantastic became all but synonymous) and traces the domestic and wider European factors which influenced the construction of the equivalent in the Spanish context. It pays particular attention to how the received supposition that Europe somehow 'directed' Spanish Romanticism is partly undermined by the rejection of E. T. A. Hoffmann and his Germanic fantastic narratives by Spanish critics and reading public alike.

The process of contextualisation is then taken a step further, assessing the impact of Edgar Allan Poe's narratives firstly in France and then in other European countries including Spain. It is Poe who is accepted as having given motive force to the perceived development of the psychologised fantastic, located in humanity itself. Through the translations of Charles Baudelaire, he is demonstrated to have had a profound effect on Spanish authors such as Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer and Pedro Antonio de Alarcón. A second impetus to this progressive humanisation of the supernatural comes indirectly from Poe through Dostoyevsky who in turn did much to influence slightly later authors writing within the Realist and Naturalist movements. By indicating this final factor in the process for authors such as Benito Pérez Galdós and Emilia Pardo Bazán, Chapter 1 completes its preparation for the detailed analyses to come.

Chapter 2 starts the process of detailed textual analysis which is the primary focus of the thesis. Finding its genesis in the narratives resulting from the literary dynamics of the second half of the nineteenth century as described in Chapter 1, it seeks to illustrate the next stage in the psychologisation of the fantastic in Spain. In order to do so, the first half of the chapter looks in depth at two early narratives by Benito Pérez

Galdós, *La sombra* and *La novela en el tranvía*, published in 1870 and 1871 respectively, scant years after the heights of popularity of Bécquer's post-Romantic tales of horror. Pérez Galdós's willingness to include inverosimilitudinous elements in some of his texts is usually explained within the terms of his apparent allegiance to the dictates of Realism. However, this analysis seeks to avoid generic categorisation in favour of a consideration of the fractured relationship between the subject and its social context. The subject is soon revealed to be riven with dislocations and instabilities both in terms of the narrative structure (particularly the roles of author, narrator and protagonist) and of its emotional reactions to the social context. These instabilities are expressed through spatial and plastic grotesquerie, and repeated or parallel structures apparent in the narrative.

That the protagonists of both *La sombra* and *La novela en el tranvía* are eventually understood to have suffered some form of mental breakdown, thereby providing a rational resolution and a strong sense of closure to the narratives, is the starting point for the second half of the chapter. These characteristics are then charted through narratives by Emilia Pardo Bazán (*La máscara* (1897), *Hijo del alma* (1908) and *El espectro* (1909)) and by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón (*La mujer alta* (1881)). Those by the former author are shown to conform in many ways with those of Pérez Galdós. In addition, they also reveal much about the implicit developing relationship between those who suffer from mental illness and those who treat it, in particular about how different texts function according to the paradigms of the asylum and of early psycho-analysis. *La mujer alta*, on the other hand and in spite of its earlier date of composition, is seen to resist the tendency to strong narrative closure. Instead it is shown to prefer to contradict any decisively supernatural or rationalistic determination, maintaining instead the narrative strategy of irresolubility, and even mystery.

Chapter 3 starts by considering the impact on *fin de siglo* Spain of the aesthetic discourses of Decadentism and Symbolism which came together, along with other



significant factors, to generate the cultural movement known as *modernismo*. It then goes on to assess two important questions concerning specific areas of debate about *modernismo*: firstly its integral interest in the relationship between physical and spiritual reality; and secondly the construction of models of gender and sexuality which marginalise female characters for the ultimate benefit of masculine discourses of social and cultural control. Although the latter question in particular is already implicit in the narratives discussed in Chapter 2, it rises to the surface and is made much more explicit in those in Chapters 4 and 5. Finally, the dynamic relationship between the textual representations of the supernatural and desire are theorised in terms of the critical concept of transgressive reinscription which explores the processes of movement between centres and margins in respect of the subject (be it individual, cultural or social).

Almost inevitably there is a degree of overlap in terms of dates of composition between the later texts analysed in Chapter 2 and some of those in Chapter 4. However, both the texts and, to a certain extent, the author Ramón María del Valle-Inclán around whom the chapter is based, belong to a period of literary production which has evolved from that of Pérez Galdós, Pardo Bazán and Alarcón. The aspect of *modernismo* which is most directly relevant to the evolving psychologisation of the fantastic is to do with the position of the subject within the text. The functions of author, narrator and protagonist are drawn ever tighter together both within and outside the text, which is at least in part a consequence of the elitist and self-marginalising cult of the creative individual which harks back so clearly to the tenets of Romanticism. However, this is complicated in the case of Spain in general and Valle-Inclán in particular by the apparent desire to adhere to and renovate the Romantic culture of oral expression, generated and enacted by a pluralistic notion of the creator of unwritten texts. Both of these apparently contradictory constructions of subjectivity are seen to inhabit a succession of ostensibly different narratives from the opening years of the new century.

Having considered why this might be the case in terms of *modernista* discourse, the chapter then concludes with a detailed analysis of one of Valle-Inclán's short narratives from *Jardín Umbrío* (1914), entitled *Mi hermana Antonia*. In this exhaustive interpretation of both primary and secondary levels of significance, the status and construction of the subject and the role of sexuality are shown to be of substantial and surprising consequence. The analysis highlights both the growing and polyvalent psychologisation of fantastic narratives, and the outstanding, if apparently marginal, importance of the representation of the body as an expression of the operation of the fantastic.

Chapter 5 is fundamentally concerned with two novels by the canonically peripheral figure of Eduardo Zamacois. The texts, *El otro* (1910) and *El misterio del hombre pequeñito* (1914), are the products of a transitional period in the author's work. As might be expected of an author who had previously been successfully employed in writing erotic literature, Zamacois's narratives take up and extend the interest in the overt expression of sexuality which came to light in the previous chapter. Since both novels are written in the third person, questions concerning the construction of the subject are understood less through the conflated roles of author, narrator and protagonist than through an investigation of each individual's dual and dichotomous nature, expressed specifically through the representation of both the physical world and the world of the spirit. This is repeatedly done through the motif of the double, which has such a rich provenance in the traditions of fantastic literature. It becomes apparent that the narratives, although similar to each other in many ways, display some notable differences, particularly with reference to whether the existence of the spirit world is presented ambiguously or unequivocally. These differences, and indeed some of the similarities too, are shown to place the texts in an ambivalent position in terms of the normally accepted premises of *modernismo*, suggesting a further evolution in the writing of the fantastic.

In the analysis of the texts themselves, two issues prove to be highly significant for the development of the thesis as a whole. The first is the relationship between marginality and centrality in a range of important contexts: language, symbol, social existence, gender and desire. The second is to do with the expression of transgressive desire in a social context by means of the fantastic. These two issues are brought together under the concept of transgressive reinscription which is then enacted in various different ways through bodies which react uncannily both in public and in private. This in turn reveals how sites of textual resistance occur, often unintentionally, in order to combat the dominant contemporary socio-cultural notions of acceptability, and even of reality. The psychologisation of the fantastic can be seen to have 'gone underground' in a way that threatens the destabilisation not only of the subject, but also the texts within which it is expressed.

The final chapter concerns a range of texts by Miguel de Unamuno and this in spite of the fact that neither Unamuno nor his works would normally be included within the boundaries of the fantastic, as it is understood popularly. The purpose of this analysis, therefore, is to push against those parameters and both to illustrate and to explain the extent to which the psychologization of the fantastic has progressed.

First of all the chapter sets out to prepare the terms of the analysis to come. These are more extensive than for the previous chapters since they have to encompass the relevant parts of Unamuno's own theoretical writings. Subsequently, elements of existentialism and psychoanalysis (both Freudian and Lacanian) become useful in the process of reading the texts. Particular areas of discussion include the instability of linear chronology and the concept of *desnacimiento*, the construction of the ontology of the subject (especially during its formative years), the importance and function of the Other, language and the mutability of social reality. Relatively brief reference is then made to a number of texts dating from 1908 onwards in as much as they set out Unamuno's long-term and enduring fascination with these issues in both his fictional and non-fictional writings.

The second half of the chapter is a close analysis of the drama *El otro* (1932). It looks at key strategies which often exist at the textual margins and seeks a path through the linguistic complexities, apparent imprecisions and metonymic patterns which characterise what is essentially an unrepresentable play. This approach to the text revises previous critical interpretations and draws on various theoretical discourses in order to produce an understanding of the text in terms of the now heavily psychologised fantastic for which the body remains essential. However, it is for the most part a corporal absence, as opposed to presence, which can be seen to have the greater significance.

As the chapters themselves make clear, the purpose of this study falls into two basic areas. The thesis demonstrates that from nineteenth century Realism and Naturalism (exemplified in texts by Pérez Galdós, Alarcón and Pardo Bazán), through turn-of-the-century *modernismo* (Valle-Inclán and Zamacois) to twentieth century proto-existentialism (Miguel de Unamuno), a significant number of texts were produced in Spain which, in spite of the obvious differences between them, can be described as fantastic. The establishing of this fact is of itself a worthwhile task since, in spite of some earlier worthy attempts, it is proving very difficult to overturn the received notion that 'the fantastic' and Spanish literature share little, if any, common ground. The thesis is therefore one more step along the journey of establishing both in Spain and abroad that fantastic literature is as important and integral to the whole swathe of Spanish cultural production as it is in other European countries such as England, Germany and France.

The other objective set for the thesis is to explore the potential dimensions of a series of texts by means of close critical readings which push at the boundaries of previous interpretative strategies both in terms of the fantastic but more obviously with regard to the texts themselves. Both in texts which are already known (possibly for reasons other than those which concern the thesis here) and in texts which have received only passing attention until now, these detailed readings draw out the

complexities and intriguing perspectives which the fantastic in Spain presents to the attentive reader. By means of these textual analyses, the thesis also puts into practice some of the various possibilities presented by the fantastic itself, putting flesh on the theoretical bones provided by a wide range of critical discourses.

Ultimately, the thesis aims to chart a dynamic and coherent corpus of material which, as in other contemporaneous European traditions, undergoes a progressive process of psychologisation of the supernatural from Romanticism onwards. Each successive text more starkly represents and expresses the unreal horrors of the fractured human mind. As such, the evolutionary story of the fantastic in Spain can be seen to be more gripping and relevant than has hitherto been understood to be the case.

In the thesis as it has already been outlined there are some clear methodological considerations which need explicit explanations. The first is that it is fundamentally not the intention to produce an exhaustive survey of Spanish fantastic literature over a period of sixty years. There are many texts, both well-known and obscure, which could equally well have been the object of critical analysis. Several of Pérez Galdós' novels (for instance, *Miau*) as well as others of his shorter narratives (*Celín*) could have been included, as could many others by Pardo Bazán. *Superchería* and *Mi entierro* by Leopoldo Alas have a strong claim to a place, as do Valle-Inclán's *Comedias bárbaras* and an unending number of short narratives from the pages of journals such as *Blanco y Negro* from the early years of the century. The entire question of Surrealism, its antecedents and its relevance to the fantastic has been avoided: it is worthy of a thesis-length study on its own. It would be possible to continue in this vein but, to a great extent, the work of identifying and cataloguing has already been done. The methodology which governed the composition of the thesis was to select, somewhat arbitrarily and certainly not on the basis of searching out the 'best' or the canonical, a number of texts which would withstand and respond to detailed textual analysis, thereby engaging illustratively with the literary macrocosm

through a microcosm. Within the dimensions of this thesis, and given the chronological parameters set for it, it would not have been possible to both fully survey and fully analyse. That, perhaps, is a task that still lies ahead.

The second question of methodology is in fact a well-worn debate but in this case it is perhaps of particular relevance. The critical discourses which have been employed to analyse the texts for the most part proceed from a period of intellectual thought which postdates the texts themselves. As has been said so many times in previous rehearsals of this argument, it is not the intention of this thesis to impose later theory on earlier practice, thereby making it something it was never intended to be. Rather, it is the case that these critical tools allow readings of the text to emerge into the public domain. These analyses are not intended to be exclusive but, like the fantastic, to lie paraxially alongside other more straightforward approaches to the text, informing them and being informed by them as is appropriate in each particular case. With reference to psychoanalytic discursive practices, in this case aspects of those developed by Freud, Klein and Lacan, I make no claim for them to exclusivity or universal applicability. However, these ideas are undoubtedly directly relevant to a study which observes the psychologisation of an area of literary production and reception. Freud's work, so roundly criticised by Todorov in terms of its impact on the fantastic, is directly contemporaneous with the majority of the texts which are under discussion here and therefore may well have had a considerable impact on their generation. Lacanian psychoanalysis, based as it is on issues of language and control, is of specific relevance to the work of Miguel de Unamuno. They share the same philosophical predecessor in Nietzsche and the current of French critical thought of which Lacan was a part was motivated by its interest in some of the same sorts of questions which had exercised Unamuno forty or fifty years previously.

## **Romantics and Realists:**

# **Influences on and Examples of the Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century Spain**

Even such an extensive period of literary production and reception as that with which this thesis is concerned should not, and indeed cannot, be removed from the broader context in which it was moulded and shaped. The process of the previous development of the fantastic is of direct relevance to all aspects of subsequent textual and critical dynamics. A whole range of literary and socio-cultural factors inform the central textual corpus of the thesis, and these need to be briefly laid open to fully validate the more complex and detailed textual analysis to come.

It is a broadly accepted critical position that the fantastic in the Western tradition was an indirect consequence of the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Clearly, this is not to state that people previous to that era had not thought about, heard about, or read about events or creatures that the post-Enlightenment would term supernatural. Traditions that implied a very broad implicit definition of reality were fundamental to a living popular culture, and these were on occasions codified and re-aestheticised in literary, written texts in the Medieval and Baroque periods. It was a mixture of Christian and pagan superstition that ordered the metaphysical outlook of generation upon generation throughout the levels of social hierarchy, and although the belief in the active, tangible power of magic started its decline in the sixteenth century, its influence remained for considerably longer than that, as the witch trials of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries attest<sup>1</sup>. For Enlightenment thinkers, dismantling the pernicious and insidious operation of superstition was of the utmost importance. Siebers states that 'Voltaire upheld a hardy

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<sup>1</sup> See Siebers (1984, 25).

skepticism and reason that sought to affirm the distinctly human' (21), and Voltaire himself said: 'Superstition is, immediately after the plague, the most horrible scourge that afflicts the human race' (quoted in Siebers, 1984, 19). Such was the Enlightenment distaste for superstition, and so clear the link between superstition and popular culture, that a campaign was waged to eliminate the latter root and branch, as specified by Romero Tobar (1994), and to replace it with the narrowly defined forms of Neo-Classicism:

La actitud intelectual de los ilustrados dieciochescos estableció una abrupta ruptura con la mentalidad imperante en la inmediata cultura barroca y, como consecuencia de ello, con la más fluida comunicación que interrelacionaba manifestaciones de la cultura popular con las actividades artísticas de los grupos dominantes. La campaña contra la superstición fue una de las líneas de ataque de los *philosophes* contra los principios rectores en la anterior etapa histórica; el 'desengaño de los errores comunes' pretendido por Feijoo o la eficaz ironía aplicada por Voltaire en su programa de *écraser l'infame* [sic] son grados diversos de un mismo proyecto, bien que en los ensayos del benedictino se registren abundantes usos de la cultura tradicional que hoy resultan de enorme interés para los cultivadores de la antropología. (138)

However, as Romero Tobar suggestively implies in the above passage, it is possible that when one form of cultural expression is repressed by another, it will mutate sufficiently for it to be re-expressed at the margins or through the interstices of the new dominant system. Thus it was with the extending of Enlightenment philosophy that superstition started to change from that felt by the largely rural populace into an aesthetic experience for better educated sectors of society. Ironically, it was by their methodical destruction of popular superstition that theoreticians revealed the mechanisms, and the literary value to readers, of the aesthetics of its production. This process is exemplified in Spain by some of the rationalist writings of Feijoo, as detailed by Sebold (1994, ix-x). Within the very body of the Enlightenment, superstition, once stripped of its authenticity, was reintegrated into literary representation of metaphysical concerns:

De este instintivo pavor inherente a la raza se nutrían las supersticiones en el mundo occidental preilustrado; pero lejos de sentirse aliviados por la refutación científica de las seculares brujerías, los antiguos crédulos eran conscientes de un vacío en su viejo esquema existencial y, curiosamente, sentían en el alma un



fuerte apetito de terrores. Quiere decirse que a partir del siglo XVIII se daba la posibilidad de ese sensual y moroso gusto en asustarse que es tan característico del actual frecuentador de los géneros de terror; y gracias a la ciencia de la Ilustración, ya el lector setecentista podía darse un pellizco y recordar que en realidad no corría ningún peligro. (x-xi)

This basic process was replicated throughout Western Europe, with the most outstanding and radical example of the aesthetic supernatural being that of the Gothic novel in Britain. Authors such as Walpole, Reeve, Lewis and Radcliffe could posit the possibility of a perplexing event or apparently supernatural manifestation, shrouded in an atmosphere of secrecy, mystery and eerie darkness, with the emphasis on horror and spilt blood, as long as it was understood that outside the text the only possible agency was human, and the only motive and mode of action fully rational. This last condition also formed a criticism levelled by Carnero (1973, 15) at later native Spanish versions of the 1830s, which presumably could not boast the same positive attributes of narrative strength as their British predecessors since he saw them as demonstrating 'poca audacia [...] al dar siempre una explicación racional a lo extraordinario y la tosquedad con que plantean las explicaciones de carácter psicológico.' The original Gothic novels were highly successful both in Britain and abroad, with translations into French before the turn of the century, and thence to Spain according to Gallaher (1949):

Though the *Castle of Otranto*, published in a French edition three years after its appearance in England, created no great stir abroad, in 1797 the translations of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Italian* and *The Monk* had a *succès fou*. "In vain," said one Paris bookseller, "do ministers of the gospel ban novels; you see more of them appear every day. The national production is insufficient. They cross the seas, they go seeking literary provisions in foreign lands to feed our insatiable readers." And his catalogue leaves no doubt as to what type of novel was sought. So avid, in fact, was the public for the works of these lugubrious authors that several literary frauds were perpetrated, even Balzac writing a continuation of *Melmoth the Wanderer*. As French was the second language of cultured Spaniards, these editions were of incalculable effect and are usually the source of Spanish translations. (3-4)

This is not the place for an exhaustive analysis of the Gothic novel in Spain. Romero Tobar (1994, 366-68) gathers together this information, both for texts in translation and in the few native works where its direct influence can be traced, and he

draws parallels between the topography of the Gothic and the Romantic novels. Ultimately it is postulated that the reason why the genre of the Gothic did not take hold in Spain was because the national social structure was not appropriate for its generation.

While superstition was being re-expressed within the Enlightenment system in a limited fashion, it soon also became a constituent element of the revolt against that same system because of its status as an icon of the traditional and of the anti-rationalist. That revolt was a major factor in the formation and development of the Romantic movement. It is fundamental when discussing the nature of Romanticism to realise that it is simultaneously a local and an international movement, both a reaction against its direct cultural and intellectual context and a reaffirmation of earlier, traditional identities. Across Western Europe intellectuals rebelled against the strictures imposed by Neo-Classical slavish obedience to the Classical unities. They threw off the shackles that paralysed their creativity, and attacked the homogenisation of literary production by championing the notion of historicism.<sup>2</sup> That Romanticism was first formulated and theorised by A.W. Schlegel and Madame de Staël in Germany does not make it a German movement that was subsequently exported around Europe, but the codification of a condition existing in many post-Enlightenment cultures. Romantic historicism, with its emphasis that authentic literature is that generated within an appropriate time and place for a given cultural identity, enabled authors to call upon elements of local or national narratives and traditions, and to appeal to discrete and separate identities. It would therefore be perfectly valid to maintain the perspective that instead of a single Romanticism, there were in fact a series of related and contiguous Romanticisms. As Flitter (1992) states, the principles of historicism opposed 'belief in universal laws and ideals which had formed an essential part of philosophy in the Classical tradition, and instead sought to promote an individualising attitude that places a greater value upon the local and temporal conditions of human existence' (5). The fundamental tenets of historicism as

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<sup>2</sup> See Peers (1964, vol.1, 205).

laid out by Herder led in the broader scheme of things to the concept of the nation state, to the idea of specific creative forces being held in common by the people, to the notion of an intimate relationship between individual and national community, and to an organic unity between the past and the present. The Schlegel brothers adapted these ideas to the field of literature, and using the concept of the *kunstgeist* (the spirit of art in any given age and location) they differentiated between pagan, sensual and collective Classicism and Christian, spiritual and individualistic Romanticism. In Spain, as elsewhere, historicism guided writers back into the past in the search for popular culture and superstitions with which to celebrate the new spirit of the age, and in that way the supernatural was instated more fully than ever before into the literary process, thereby creating the fantastic in literature.

Of course, there were other reasons inherent in the theorisation of Romanticism for it being particularly appropriate that the Romantic movement should adopt others of the themes, forms and structures of the earlier manifestations of popular culture. Neo-Classicism with its humanist, rationalist, philosophical basis and its aesthetic reliance on the (pagan) Classics had placed itself in opposition to the deep roots of Christian popular culture which was deeply embedded in the concept of superstition. The Christian aspect of Romanticism was particularly important in Spain, and much of the Romantic supernatural came from within the Christian mythos. Indeed Flitter (1992, 113-129) deals in some detail with the extent to which Christianity both helped engender Spanish Romanticism and finally brought it to its knees. In addition, from the Romantic perspective, neo-Classicism had reduced the author from a genuine creator to an arranger of fundamental, pre-determined units. Herder's historicism held that creativity was held in common by the people, and that individuals had access to that organic and dynamic corpus of knowledge. In other words, particular writers with an incisive appreciation of the *kunstgeist* were to act as agents for creative literary re-aestheticisation. This enhanced the role of the author in the creative process as defined by the terms Imagination and Fancy, as set out in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1975), first published in 1817:

The imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by, that empirical phaenomenon of the will which we express by the word *choice*. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association. (167)

Writers inevitably strove towards the maximum operation of the secondary imagination, to the point that an influential contemporary critical writer such as Blanco White (1824), one of the very few Spanish writers who undertook a theoretical perspective on the fantastic during the nineteenth century, could say that superstition was actually rooted in the Romantic imagination:

Es verdad que la superstición tiene su origen en esta facultad mental, y que cuantos horrores y males ha causado en la tierra procedieron de la imaginación exaltada con los sueños terroríficos a que naturalmente está expuesta. Pero ningún peligro hay, a mi entender, en divertir a la imaginación con sus propios sueños; por el contrario, al punto que sus más terribles aprehensiones caen por fortuna en manos del poeta o del trovador (reúno estos hombres por falta de uno que abrace a todo escritor que inventa para divertir) pierden su odioso aspecto y poco a poco hacen que las gentes se familiaricen con lo que antes les hacía temblar. (414)

Imagination is granted full autonomy, and those that have access to it can effectively write their own rules:

La superstición en que se fundan ambos cuentos, de que la mente humana es capaz de impresiones independientes del universo físico, y de una existencia en que ni el *Tiempo* ni el *Espacio* tienen parte ni influjo, es una de las ideas, aunque vagas, grandiosas, que flotan en la imaginación, como si fuesen barruntos del mundo invisible que nos espera. (418)

Concomitantly this led to a textual concentration on the nature of the subject, to a re-evaluation of the importance and a re-positioning of the perspective of the narrator. Increasingly the narrator became more explicit, intradiegetic, and texts came to rely

on subjective perception, which is by definition unreliable, and therefore leaving open to question whether something is 'real' or misrecognised. This process is further complicated by the projection by the subject of intangible emotions and states of mind onto the tangible narrative action and structure.<sup>3</sup> These are the first instances of the direct psychologisation of literature, which became so important by the last quarter of the century.

In addition, Romantics were attracted by the distant past because long-held traditions were synonymous with authenticity and cultural identity. The tendency therefore was to contextualise a narrative either back in the past itself, in particular the Middle Ages, or to make a strong link between a contemporary setting and the traditions and aestheticised atmosphere of those distant times. In the latter case their experience of the Medieval period was inevitably one of ruins, decay, whispered legends, and great age bordering on infirmity. It is important to note that such an ambience could at the time have equally been termed 'romantic' or 'fantastic', as Siebers demonstrates in incontrovertible fashion (1984, 9-11). Pseudo-medievalisation, confused and inaccurate as it often was, became characteristic of Romantic aesthetic sensibilities. Along with the fundamental shift in the position of the subject, the Romantic contextualisation of a narrative facilitated, but did not necessitate, the action of superstition, and consequentially the supernatural, in the text. With reference to Spain in particular, the popularity of texts compromised by the supernatural was ousted by those that were not, and evidence for this can be found in the astonishing success of translations of Walter Scott's historical novels, as Peers (1964) lays out:

References to Scott, all more or less eulogistic, can be traced in Spanish periodical literature from as early as 1818; thence onward his vogue increased rapidly and by 1823 it was completely established. The *Europeo*, which in 1824 declared that he was "finally recognised as the first Romantic of this century", treated him with the greatest respect and was no doubt partly responsible for his

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<sup>3</sup> See Romero Tobar (1994, 84).

popularity in Barcelona: in that city alone appeared twenty-five separate translations in as many years. (vol.1, 105-06)<sup>4</sup>

The adoption of the themes and motifs of the folktale had further benefits for the Romantics. The aesthetic desire for vagueness was noted by Peers as particularly strong in Spain relative to the Romanticisms of other countries: 'No national manifestation of romanticism had more affection than that of Spain for the vague and undefined, the formless and the incoherent, the reverie, the meditation and the dream' (vol. 2, 312). In this way vagueness and the fantastic spread seamlessly into literary texts:

With this same indeterminateness appears to be allied the love of the Romantics for the fantastic - the principal trait in their presentation of the supernatural. The conjunction of the formless spirits filling the heavens and the 'fantastic squadron' of phantasms mounted on goats, serpents and broomsticks which introduces *El Diablo Mundo* is highly characteristic. The vague and the fantastic are continually found in combination, and both are so frequently allied with the grotesque and the horrible that it is difficult to separate the one from the other. (vol. 2, 314-5)

As all of the circumstances of the folktale were adjacent to everyday life, indeed formed part of the fabric of empirical experientiality, that meant that there was a very effective suspension of disbelief by the 'readers' implied in the narrative. The lack of a clear distinction between fact and fiction in the folktales resulted in any operation of the supernatural being paraxial to reality, giving to the supernatural the familiarity which Freud sees as characteristic of the *unheimlich*. Again, this helps to develop a strong implicit relationship between text and reader, which the Romantics were keen to exploit.

One of the unusual aspects of Romanticism turning to popular culture for its source material was that the latter was traditionally presented in a fashion to which literary representation was unaccustomed: the short narrative, delivered and disseminated orally. The fact that so many people were used to receiving this material in such a fashion meant that there was already a passive acceptance, a 'predisposición

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<sup>4</sup>See Gallaher (1949, 4), and for further information on Scott and *El Europeo* see Flitter (1992, 23). For the article written by Scott in the *Revue de Paris* in 1829 in which he argues for the primacy of the historical novel over the literary fantastic, see Carnero (1973, 14).

lectora', of what was effectively a new genre. Baquero Goyanes (published posthumously in 1992 but the product of much earlier research) sees this as an important consideration:

Parece como si el empujón definitivo que el género necesitaba [...] fuera algo que estaba reservado a los románticos; tan aficionados a todo lo que se caracteriza por la brevedad, por el fragmentarismo, por el lírico chispazo, descarga emocional o violenta y súbita iluminación. (3)

Citing the Brothers Grimm as the primary example with their volume of collected folktales published in 1812, Baquero Goyanes (1992, 2-3) portrays a pan-Romantic scenario of writers going out into rural communities to gather and then adapt the tales into literary short narratives. Romero Tobar (1994), however, fires a warning shot about the authenticity of such an apparently naive and uncritical anthropological process:

En cualquiera de los textos del XIX que registran ecos o manifestaciones de la cultura popular cabe preguntarse si el escritor recoge directamente de la tradición folclórica o si lo hace de la previa tradición literaria y de las elaboraciones de su taller particular. Y si en cualquier etapa literaria no se deben confundir lo popular y lo popularizable, en el XIX este postulado metodológico debe ser aplicado con cuidadosísima exactitud, teniendo en cuenta el despliegue de fenómenos para-literarios que llegaron a grandes capas de la población alfabetizada. El material 'popular' que no haya sido tomado por el escritor de la comunicación en que la colectividad funciona, simultáneamente, como emisor y como receptor, no debe ser incluido en el terreno de las interrelaciones folclore y literatura, por muchos signos aparentes que pueda suscitar. (141)

Research other than that of Baquero Goyanes has cast a great deal of doubt on the authenticity of the sources utilised by the Grimms; in particular it transpires that some of the people from whom they gathered material were of a relatively high level of cultural education and therefore probably contaminated with the earlier literary work of Charles Perrault.<sup>5</sup> However, Romero Tobar does go on to say that the structure of the short narrative did prove to be highly versatile and appropriate for Romanticism's requirements:

Carla Perugini [...], que ha considerado con alguna atención relatos publicados en revistas, sostiene que la *novela* española tiene muchos límites en su

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<sup>5</sup> See Zipes (1988, 96-110).

inspiración y en los módulos formales, cosa que no ocurre con los *cuentos* ya que éstos recogen ‘muchas posibilidades del romanticismo europeo al insertarse en la tendencia *negra* o fantástica o visionaria y al adentrarse en los meandros de lo imaginario y de lo onírico, según la que era lección fascinante de la literatura alemana o inglesa’. Las inequívocas manifestaciones primeras de la moderna literatura fantástica escrita en español se documentan en los relatos breves aparecidos en las publicaciones periódicas del romanticismo. (390)

There is a problem here in as much as once the Romantics had adopted the general narrative structure of the popular folktale, they did not know what to call it. In the confusion of the period, when critical-descriptive language was being used very inexactly, this new and varied literary genre had many different terms applied to it, many of which, according to Baquero Goyanes, were anachronistic and virtually interchangeable:

El gusto arcaizante, propio de los románticos, podía explicar la utilización de términos asociados a los tonos e imágenes que se sentían como más o menos medievales, aunque no siempre lo fueran: v.gr. *consejas* y *leyendas*. Cualquiera puede darse cuenta de que estas palabras no tuvieron empleo en la literatura medieval, y si los románticos las aceptan como antiguas fue porque para ellos importaba más la vaguedad anacrónica que cualquier empeño, precisión o propiedad histórica. (1992, 6)

Other terms that were employed with equivalent abandon were *tradición*, *balada*, *episodio*, *cuento*, and *novela*.

The new literary genre proved itself by far the most adaptable to the tidal-wave of socio-cultural changes in the nineteenth century. All countries in which Romanticism came to popularity were undergoing discrete but related processes of agrarian reform and industrial revolution, to say nothing of political upheaval.<sup>6</sup> In general terms this entailed a massive series of internal migrations from rural surroundings to new urban cultures, and clearly the movement of people away from a familiar cultural context to an unfamiliar one is a destabilising experience. Communities increased exponentially both in size and in density, and the impression of the contraction of time would have been intense as, for example, the speed of the dissemination of information increased rapidly. The rise of the bourgeoisie on the back of commerce and industry, which happened relatively late in Spain, led to an increase in general levels of education and

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<sup>6</sup> See Romero Tobar (1994, 88).



specifically of literacy. As a surrogate for the rural, oral traditions with which the urban population was inevitably losing contact, and fulfilling the demand of the market for more and faster information, the written press came to dominance, both in the form of newspapers and of more specialised journals. Yet the Romantic movement was clear evidence to the fact that the urban populations were not fully assimilated to their newly technologised lifestyle, and yearned for a return to the rural past, even if only in terms of a sanitised, aestheticised version. So within the heart of one of the most potent symbols and tools of the modern era reappeared echoes of the past, and the short narrative was the most efficient vehicle for their transmission. Clearly it could adapt with comparative ease to the reduced textual dimensions that were a fundamental requirement of the periodical press. It could be serialised to run across a number of editions, which in itself benefited the periodical concerned since it bred reader loyalty and therefore a sound commercial base. Most of all it appealed to a growing and voracious market. However, the movement towards the literarisation of the press did not happen overnight. Although founded in the Romantic period, in Spain at least the phenomenon carried on expanding well after the Romantic bubble burst, so that the consequences were still being felt beyond the end of the century. Whereas purveyors of High Romanticism may still have had a reduced and select readership, their inheritors thirty years later reaped the benefits of what was essentially part of the Romantic dynamic, as Sebold (1994) indicates when dealing with the differences and similarities between Zorrilla and Bécquer:

Sí hay importantes diferencias en el terreno formal. Pero una gran parte de ellas no son innovaciones de origen exclusivamente literario, sino derivadas del cambio de medio de difusión y del cambio del receptor. Las leyendas del Duque de Rivas y de Zorrilla se difundieron principalmente a través de libros o de recitales públicos y privados. Se dirigían, pues, a un público selecto y preparado. El cuento legendario en prosa, estrechamente vinculado con la leyenda en verso, se difundió, en cambio, en publicaciones periódicas de carácter literario, como el *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, o en las secciones de variedades de los periódicos políticos. En la época en que Bécquer comenzó a publicar sus leyendas, en todos los periódicos importantes existía una sección dedicada a las leyendas tradicionales. Rica Brown [1963, 169] señala que 'para 1858 ya una "leyenda popular" se consideraba un *sine qua non* en la redacción

de un periódico madrileño'. Estos relatos se dirigían, pues, a un público mucho más amplio y no especialmente motivado por la literatura. Es así que surge la necesidad de adaptar el género a los gustos y hábitos de los lectores, es decir, de hacerlo entretenido. La adopción de la prosa, la reducción de la extensión y la simplificación de la trama son medidas destinadas a ese propósito. (10-11)

There were advantages for the authors in the new system beyond that of a wider reading public. They could float abbreviated forms of more extensive projects in the press in order to make their reputations and whet the appetite of a wide range of people with comparatively little effort. Initially the tendency was to publish in the literary press; the *Semanario Pintoresco Español* ran from 1836 to 1857 and it provided an outlet for both native Spanish material and for translations of foreign works, for example Gautier's *Le Chevalier Double* (1840), translated in the same year as *El caballero doble*. Individual writers made collections of their short works dispersed throughout a variety of publications and sold them as anthologies, opening up a further angle on commercial gain.

As will have become apparent by this stage, the Romantic dynamic was subject to a series of internal tensions which mitigated against a long-term period of literary ascendancy. It was both radical and conservative, it celebrated the rural while operating in and through urban structures, and it was simultaneously local, national and European. Historicist principles suggest that Spain should have relied on the rich traditions of Galicia and Andalucía, and yet surprisingly her writers did not do so, according to Chevalier (1982): 'Parece lícito afirmar que el cuento folklórico de procedencia oral apenas si asoma en las obras de los primeros poetas románticos' (327). While Spain's Romantic sensibility was surfacing at about the same time as in European countries, with the first pre-Romantic text being Cadalso's *Noches lúgubres* (1774), it did not develop as rapidly or extensively as in Germany or France due to the relevant structural social changes being slower to come into existence. Consequently Spain missed out on the stage of exploring a large proportion of her own popular cultural patrimony before elements of other Romanticisms from abroad became readily available. Clearly it is easier to adapt a literary source in translation than it is to go out and search for local, original material, and so a high percentage of the

Romantic texts produced were in fact cultural borrowings. Ironically, precisely because of being slightly behind the rest, Spain was viewed from outside as a highly profitable hunting ground for unadulterated popular sources, which accounts for volumes such as Washington Irving's *Tales from the Alhambra* (1832) and Chateaubriand's *Le Génie du Christianisme* (1802). Eventually Romanticisms throughout Europe collapsed under the weight of their own success: the idiosyncratic elements that had made each nation's Romanticism unique had cross-fertilised to such an extent that what was being produced were homogeneous narratives with clichéd supernatural elements. However, this is far from saying that the impact of Romanticism ended with the death of the literary movement. It is perfectly clear that in Spain some of its underlying tenets were carried forward to re-emerge in later texts. One example of this is Antonio Machado's *La tierra de Alvaronzález*, a *romance* published in its definitive form in 1917. Machado is seen by Southworth as one of many authors of his time who were effectively perpetuating Romanticism in Spain: 'In the conduct of his predominantly moral, psychological inquiry into Spain's malaise, Machado writes as a Romantic' (1994, 136). One of the most obvious ways in which this Romanticism is demonstrated by Southworth is by his analysis of the operation of the supernatural in the poem. The occurrence of the supernatural has been something of a critical curiosity since the received view was that 'a significant way in which the Spanish epic and ballad traditions departed from the French was in their robust rejection of the *merveilleux*' (145). In spite of this, the weight of either ambiguous or overtly supernatural events leads to the observation that ' [they] indicate a penchant for the more "Gothic" side of Romanticism' (147). This appropriation of Romantic elements is repeated in other texts after the turn of the century, including those usually regarded as emblematic of modern Spanish literature, for example García Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre* (1933).

While it may be the case that Romanticism as a dominant literary movement in Spain was relatively short-lived, this should not detract from the positive, shared characteristics of the Romantic short narrative which include the operation of the

supernatural. That supernatural element, born out of local or national popular culture and superstition, was designed to function in direct opposition to the suffocating effect of Rationalism. When used with reference to these short narratives, called *phantasiestücke* in Germany, *contes fantastiques* in France and with a plethora of names in Spain, the term 'fantastic' means the representation of the supernatural in the realistic natural context. In European terms, the most highly regarded practitioner of the literary fantastic was E. T. A. Hoffmann, some of whose work was translated into French as early as 1828-29. He met with immense popular success, and the attributes of his narratives became the touchstone for those that followed, as Cummiskey (1992) describes:

For those readers, acquaintance with Hoffmann's fantastic short stories induced the pre-understanding that the genre was typified by the depiction of a dualistic world composed of a natural and a supernatural order, both of which were realistically evoked. The fantastic element was a supernatural being or force, drawn from popular legend or superstition, which interacted directly with the characters and accessories of the natural order. The fantastic effect was produced by the interpenetration of the two orders, i.e., by the direct introduction of the supernatural into the natural realm. The fantastic element was invested with credibility by virtue of its graphic evocation in the midst of a faithful reproduction of positive reality. Finally, the tone was apt to vary. (32-33)

Even so, Hoffmann did not meet with overwhelming acclaim in Spain. Schneider (1927) reports that isolated narratives appeared in translation from 1837 on, but the first collection did not arrive until 1847. Gallaher (1949) relates Zorrilla's roundly negative response to the idea of venturing a composition in the same vein as Hoffmann, before going on to say:

Such opinions were commonly expressed in Spain. The Spanish saw in Hoffmann's life and works a synthesis of every pre-conceived idea they had concerning German romanticism, but the paucity of translations rather indicates that his popularity here was never so great as in France. There the Hoffmann vogue had coincided with the climax of the romantic movement, but in Spain it arrived too late. The reaction had already set in. (5)

Yet Romero Tobar finds the same conditions laid on the composition of the literary fantastic in Spain during the 1830s:

El imperativo de la *verosimilitud* en los *caracteres*, la persecución del *color local* en las *descripciones* y los intentos por escribir los conflictos de la 'sociedad presente como materia novelable' fueron constantes reiteraciones en la crítica novelística de más visos teóricos. (1994, 363-64)

Carnero goes into still greater analysis of the fantastic in Romantic terms:

Lo 'maravilloso sobrenatural' consiste en la postulación *como parte de la realidad*, aunque esa realidad no sea la cotidiana, de una serie de seres habitualmente considerados como extra o sobrenaturales, y de una serie de leyes físicas, biológicas, cósmicas, etc., no codificadas por la ciencia al levantar el repertorio de las que gobiernan el mundo. La percepción de esos seres extraordinarios y de esas leyes anómalas tiene lugar, en el ámbito de la narración fantástica, al mismo nivel al que se toma contacto con la realidad cotidiana, y, por tanto, esas aparentes anomalías del orden natural no son consideradas tales, sino únicamente una porción de dicho orden natural de la que la ciencia y la opinión pública prescinden. El escritor que adopta el supernaturalismo fantástico puede postularlo relatando lo sobrenatural como debido a una percepción normal (por ejemplo, el narrador cuenta que al ver un fantasma se pellizó repetidas veces hasta convencerse de que no estaba soñando o sufriendo una alucinación) o bien simplemente relatando los acontecimientos sobrenaturales tal cual, sin adoptar ante su posible realidad actitud crítica alguna, lo que equivale a una postulación implícita de su pertenencia al orden natural. (1973, 1 and 14)

It would seem that several critics have over-interpreted the Spanish rejection of Hoffmann's overtly German Romanticism, taking it to mean that there was no such thing as the fantastic in Spain during the Romantic period, and that in fact the literary fantastic did not really surface at all until later in the century. Going on to support his argument with data provided by Perugini, Romero Tobar takes such a perspective to task:

El relato fantástico es uno de los caballos de batalla en la historia de la ficción española del siglo XIX. Si los excesos decorativos de la novela gótica inglesa no encontraron mayores ecos hispanos en la 'literatura de tumba y hachero' del primer tercio del siglo, hoy no puede sostenerse que el relato fantástico es sólo resultado del esfuerzo de prosistas cercanos a la estética del *realismo*, como Bécquer y Alarcón. En las revistas literarias de los años treinta aparecieron relatos cortos contruidos sobre las intervenciones de brujas, demonios y aparecidos que dan un mentís a las afirmaciones que hasta ahora han sido lugar común. (1994, 375)

Both Sebold (1994, xvi-xvii) and Gallaher (1949, 10-14) agree with Romero Tobar, and both refer to the same periodical publication as evidence: *El Artista*, which only had a very short publication run from 1835-36. Both highlight *Beltrán (Cuento*

*fantástico*), by José Augusto de Ochoa, but Gallaher goes on to give greater emphasis to *Yago Yascck* by Pedro Madrazo, which he considers a prime example of the genre.

With Spanish Romanticism lagging slightly behind the French and German versions, it only enjoyed about four years of clear aesthetic ascendancy, between 1833 and 1837, before the reaction against formulaic writing set in. Peers charts after this time the movement towards a balance between Romanticism and Neo-Classicism which he terms Eclecticism (vol. 2, 58-159). Flitter, on the other hand, interprets the situation as being a return to genuine Schlegelian historicism as a consequence of action by conservative Romantics who set out to attack materialism, rationalism and religious scepticism (92-112). In a revision and extension of historicist principles, literature was to be understood as a reflection of contemporary social structures and national characteristics, so that by gaining a thorough knowledge of literature, an accurate depiction of a people could be gained indirectly. Nevertheless, however it is to be understood critically, the upsurge of *costumbrista* writing is undeniable, and it was received to great popular acclaim. Fernán Caballero was the defining author of the generation, and to a large extent both she and her followers stayed within the genre of the short narrative, but in this case the terminology employed was not as imprecise as it had been previously. The *relaciones* of the *costumbristas* can be differentiated from other short narratives by considering the implicit attitude towards truth and fiction, and the importance of the 'reality' of the events described, as in this assessment by Baquero Goyanes:

Pero fuera de estos *cuentos*, los otros, los que cultivaran los escritores románticos, caracterizados por lo desmesurado y fantástico, no parecían merecer nunca su favor o atención, por lo que tenían de opuestos a los *cuadros de costumbres*, sentidos por ella como algo sustancial y no accesorio en sus relaciones. (1992, 26)

Yet, as Baquero Goyanes eventually goes on to say, there were also significant similarities: 'compartida devoción por el cuento popular, bien por su ideología tradicional, su gusto por la incorporación de moralejas, por la presencia en sus relatos de algún tópico como el de la contraposición de campo-corte' (67).

The literary fantastic was being edged once again into the position of being a marginal literary discourse. Other than in the works of Ros de Olano, whose writing was not really fantastic in the Romantic sense but more visionary and oneiric, when the literary fantastic did surface it was in a very self-conscious way, to the point of being apologetic. The introductions to two such works have several elements in common. Gómez de Avellaneda's *El donativo del diablo*,<sup>7</sup> in spite of being subtitled as a *novela*, deliberately relies on the reading experience of the fantastic in the context of Romanticism. It emphasises the necessary atmosphere for the reading experience, it does all it can to recreate the ready ability to suspend disbelief inherent in Romanticism, it has recourse to the alien nature of half-remembered rural culture (implicitly related to primitivity), and it provides authority for what it is about to say by laying claim to the authentic experience of a first-person narrator:

Al tomar la pluma para escribir esta sencilla leyenda de los pasados tiempos, no se me oculta la imposibilidad en que me hallo de conservarle toda la magia de su simplicidad, y de prestarle aquel vivo interés con que sería indudablemente acogida por los benévolos lectores (a quienes la dedico) si en vez de presentársela hoy con las comunes formas de la novela, pudiera hacerles su relación verbal, junto al fuego de la chimenea, en una fría y prolongada noche de diciembre; pero más que todo, si me fuera dado transportarlos de un golpe al país en que se verificaron los hechos que voy a referirles, y apropiarme por mi parte el tono, el gesto y las inflexiones de voz con que deben ser relatados en boca de los rústicos habitantes de aquellas montañas. (Baquero Goyanes, 7-8)

The fact that the ground has to be laid so carefully before the fantastic can be employed is indicative of the disrepute into which the genre had fallen. A later and lesser known narrative, Soler de la Fuente's 1860 text *Los maitines de Navidad. Tradición monástica*,<sup>8</sup> highlights the situation with a truly half-hearted attempt to recreate an appropriate atmosphere before subsiding into an excuse for presenting this sort of text at all:

Uno de los poetas, asaltado por un luminoso pensamiento, ofreció divertir a la reunión con un cuento de vieja. Aplaudida la idea, fue aceptada por unanimidad

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<sup>7</sup>Published in the *Semanario Pintoresco Español*, no.23, 10 de junio, 1849. Ironically, 1849 is also the year normally regarded as the starting point of realismo with the publication of *La gaviota* by Fernán Caballero.

<sup>8</sup>Published in *El Museo Universal*, no.15, 1860.

y llovieron cuentos durante muchas noches. De los pastoriles pasábase a los maravillosos, de éstos a los de miedo, y entre tanto cuento negro, amarillo, verde y colorado como se refería, hubo uno que llamó la atención de este prójimo, que también le llegó el turno de narrar los que había aprendido de una tía suya, cuando despabilaba por las tardes al salir de la escuela la merienda de ordenanza, sazónada con los cuentecicos de la buena señora, que santa gloria haya.

Desde el momento en que lo escuché, y me refiero al cuento indicado, parecióme muy a propósito para entretener por algunos minutos la imaginación del que busca en los periódicos un rato de solaz, y tomándolo por mi cuenta, he procurado revestirlo del traje que a mi juicio le conviene resucitando la decaída y mal parada forma romántica. (Baquero Goyanes, 56-57)

French literature was undergoing an equivalent process of change. Hoffmann's influence had started to diminish as early as 1833, although clearly the rest of the decade was still very much flavoured by his presence. According to the scheme provided by Cummiskey (1992), of the two periods of production and reception of fantastic literature in France, the second was heralded by the translation and publication of Poe's short narratives by Baudelaire between 1856 and 1865. Although Poe was initially validated in terms of the Hoffmannesque tradition, his advent in fact completed the rejection of the German Romantic by the French reading public. Contemporary commentators were quick to differentiate between the two, as the following quotation provided by Cummiskey from 1856 demonstrates:

Permettez-moi de noter la différence des inspirations et des temps [...] Le fond des récits d'Hoffmann, c'est l'art, l'amour, la symphonie, le merveilleux, l'étonnement, l'effroi, entrevus à travers une sorte d'ivresse ou d'extase, qui en agrandit les aspects fantastiques, et promène l'imagination dans une nuit lumineuse, peuplée d'ombres et de revenants, d'étoiles et de lanternes sourdes. Le fond des histoires d'Edgar Poe, c'est le calcul, l'analyse, l'algèbre, désertant leur terrain solide et positif, et se combinant, dans un cerveau exalté ou malade, avec l'imagination la plus subtile. (1992, 34)

Cummiskey himself summarises the fundamental traits of the fantastic to be found in Poe's tales, and therefore characteristic of the second half of the century in France:

Assuming the appreciation by the general public of the properties observed by these critics, we may conclude that familiarity with Poe's stories predisposed the public of the second period to expect the following of a fantastic short story: brevity; density (i.e. economy of incidents and absence of extraneous material); inexorability and inescapable logic of composition; insidious intromission of the fantastic element; the idiosyncratic, psychological nature of the latter and its



induction from positive reality; and an emphasis on materialism, the sensations and science. (47)

The reaction to these translations of Poe's works was obviously highly positive:

The number of editions of Poe's stories provides another good indication of his popularity. In 1868, the *Histoires extraordinaires* reached their sixth edition, while the *Nouvelles Histoires extraordinaires* were in their fourth and the *Aventures d'Arthur Gordon Pym* in their third. Although one cannot know how many copies were sold, it is nonetheless clear that Poe's stories were a popular success. (38)

Having seen the disrepute into which the Romantic fantastic had fallen in Spain, it is perhaps surprising that Baquero Goyanes should claim that it is the motivating force behind much of the subsequent narrative literature of the nineteenth century:

Una imagen algo borrosa, no demasiado definida, tocada del gusto por lo no acabado, por lo impreciso y aun por lo confuso, que tan característico fue de la sensibilidad romántica. Y sin embargo, y pese a tal imprecisión o, quizá, en función de ella misma, el cuento romántico históricamente considerado, casi podría considerarse como la pieza clave, el núcleo engendrador de toda la brillante literatura narrativa que luego vendrá. (1992, 12)

For this to be the case, there would have to be transitional writers who display elements of the Romantic fantastic, and at the same time share the characteristics of the Realists and of outside influences such as Poe.

The outstanding example of such an author must be Bécquer. Written and published in the full flow of the Realist movement, Bécquer in both his poetry and his narratives is Spanish Romanticism's ultimate voice, as once again Baquero Goyanes states:

En realidad, para muchos lectores sensibles y si se quiere ingenuos, de todo el mundo, incluso hoy, el cuento es fundamentalmente algo caracterizado por lo predominantemente fantástico y fabuloso. En tal sentido, puede que los de Bécquer merezcan ser considerados como los tal vez más puros cuentos que se escribieron en el siglo XIX. (65)

A *leyenda* such as *La cruz del diablo*<sup>9</sup> clearly fulfils all the requirements of the fantastic within a Romantic context. In it a diabolical power motivates the suit of armour of a deceased lord famed for his cruelty and brutality. At the behest of a local holy hermit, the prayers of the faithful supernaturally ensnare the helmeted villain only

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<sup>9</sup>Published in *La Crónica de Ambos Mundos*, Madrid, 21 and 28 October and 11 November 1860.

for them to find that although the armour is animated, it is also completely empty. The diabolical force is eventually laid to rest only when the armour is melted down and refashioned into a crucifix. The combination of the unequivocal supernatural, the basis of the tale in local popular legends and the battle between the Devil and Christianity demonstrate the Romantic genesis of the narrative.

*El monte de las ánimas*,<sup>10</sup> while being fully Romantic in aesthetic terms, does not represent the supernatural element in the same fashion as *La cruz del diablo*. Alonso is sent out on All Souls' after dusk by Beatriz, a beautiful, disbelieving and haughty guest, who has dropped a ribbon out on the hillside. Although he is fearful of local legends about terrible spirits being abroad on this one night of the year, her sarcasm forces him to head out into the darkness. Beatriz then retires to bed but her sleep is disturbed by unidentifiable noises that increase in proximity and intensity until her sceptical mind gives way to terror. She hides under the covers of her bed, incapable of any other response in the face of such apparent aggression. When she wakes after dawn all seems well until she opens the curtains around her bed and finds on the nearby table her mangled and blood-soaked blue ribbon. At this she dies from the fright even before the household servants have had time to bring her the news of Alonso's death out on the hillside. In an epilogue, a vision is represented in which Beatriz, panic-stricken, is being chased around Alonso's tomb for all eternity by the souls of the dead. The differences here are considerable since instead of the protagonist dying at the hands of a ghost, she is terrified to death by a compound series of suggestive circumstances. During the course of the narrative these can just as easily be understood to be the product of her unbalanced psychological state as they can the overt action of the supernatural. The Romantic epilogue, and the eventual textual bias towards the supernatural having physically intervened in the action (ultimately the presence of the ribbon cannot really be interpreted any other way), obfuscates but does not eliminate the largely psychological construction of the fantastic.

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<sup>10</sup>Published in *El Contemporáneo*, Madrid, 7 November 1861.

To complete this brief analysis of the transitional process, the last of Bécquer's *leyendas* to come into consideration is *El rayo de luna*<sup>11</sup>. Manrique is a young nobleman of a self-absorbed disposition who spends his time in solitude with his poetry and his vivid, dreamlike imagination. One night, while out walking on his own in a ruined monastery, he glimpses the white hem of a lady's dress which embodies at a stroke everything for which he had been searching. A chase begins but she is considerably quicker than he and he fails to catch her. On a subsequent night he catches sight of that same white dress and the pursuit begins again until Manrique comes to realise that the object of his fascination has all along been no more than a moonbeam. In terms of the fantastic *El rayo de luna* is overtly unRomantic, despite the protagonist initially seeming to be the archetypal Romantic dreamer. Manrique's *desengaño* is the *desengaño* of Romanticism, and the ambiguity over the action of the supernatural is demonstrated to be unequivocally psychological and soluble in rational terms. *El rayo de luna* thereby completes the process of transition in the narratives of this one particular author over a period of less than two years.<sup>12</sup>

Poe's influence came into Spain mostly via Baudelaire's translations into French. Alarcón (1968) provides an illuminating first hand account of the arrival of the *Histoires extraordinaires* in Madrid in his 1858 article entitled *Edgar Poe*:

Hace cosa de un año que circulan por Madrid diez o doce ejemplares de una obra titulada *Histoires extraordinaires*, traducción francesa de la que escribió con el mismo título el angloamericano *Edgar Allan Poe*. Esos diez o doce ejemplares habrán pasado a estas horas por más de doscientas manos: tal es el espíritu de asociación y de economía que reina entre los lectores españoles, y tal, al mismo tiempo, el entusiasmo que han producido en los doce primitivos propietarios las *Historias extraordinarias* en cuestión [...] Los que no leen el francés se desesperaban de no poder tomar cartas en el asunto, y, como éstos son muchos todavía, ocurriósele a un editor de Barcelona publicar en castellano las *Historias extraordinarias de Eduardo Poe*, idea que al poco tiempo halló eco en otro editor de Madrid. Dentro de pocos días, por consiguiente, va a

<sup>11</sup>Published in *El Contemporáneo*, Madrid, 12 and 13 February 1862.

<sup>12</sup>For a much more extensive treatment of the fantastic in *El monte de las ánimas* and *El rayo de luna* see Moffatt, 1993. "Bécquer's Dialogue with the Fantastic", unpublished Masters' dissertation, University of Durham. A further example of a transitional writer would be José de Salgas y Carrasco; see Baquero Goyanes (1992, 102-04).

apoderarse nuestro público de una obra que hasta aquí fué patrimonio exclusivo de unos cuantos *iniciados*. (1774-75)

Gallaher completes the picture with the following comment: 'Three Spanish translations of his collected stories appeared before 1860 and until about 1868 he was widely read in Spain' (1949, 6). Although recognised as different to the Hoffmannesque tradition that so irritated the Realists, he was still regarded with a certain amount of hesitation in some quarters. However, even José de Castro y Serrano (1872), a contemporary author of *cuadros* and *historias vulgares* which fit very much into the development of the *relaciones*, evinced a certain admiration:

No hace mucho tiempo que un ingenio insigne del otro mundo (el angloamericano Poe) asombró a la generación presente con sus *Historias extraordinarias*. Basadas éstas en un principio filosófico, a que no se sustrae ni se sustraerá nunca el corazón humano, cual es la sublimación de lo maravilloso, el hábil narrador pudo conmover y amedrentar al orbe literario, aun habiendo existido Hoffmann largos años antes que él. Y es que Hoffmann partía de lo fantástico para llegar naturalmente a lo maravilloso, mientras que Poe partía de lo real y afectivo en busca de lo maravilloso; cuyo procedimiento perturba el alma con mayor violencia que otro resorte alguno por lo mismo que se halla en condiciones completas de verosimilitud. (275-76)

It is unlikely to be purely coincidental that the period of Poe's popularity is contemporaneous with the production of Bécquer's *Leyendas*, and with their popular acclamation in the middle of the dominance of the Realist movement. It seems reasonable to assume that both Poe and Alarcón's critical remarks on his construction of the fantastic had a certain influence on Bécquer; an opinion with which Sebold would undoubtedly agree: 'Es, en efecto, notable el paralelo que se acusa entre las técnicas principales de Poe, según las analiza Alarcón, y los procedimientos discernibles en las mejores narraciones fantásticas posteriores de Bécquer' (1994, xxix). Indeed, Alarcón's article is invaluable. Having provided a succinct and accurate summary of the literary fantastic in Romantic Spain, which has undeniable parallels with the discourse promoted by Blanco White, Alarcón goes on to emphasise the differences to be found in Poe's narrative texts:

*Edgar Poe* no es nada de esto; ni el corazón ni la imaginación son su teatro; no es fantaseador ni místico; es naturalista, es sabio, es matemático. Quiero decir que su campo de batalla es la inteligencia; que lo que en todo tiempo fué

amparo, defensa, arma de la verdad, lo que siempre sirvió para combatir todo linaje de fantasmas; la piedra de toque de la idolatría y del miedo; la luz que redujo a sus formas lógicas y naturales todo afecto loco y devastador, como toda creencia febril y extravagante; *la razón*, para decirlo de una vez, llamada *lugar teológico* por los mismos que la proscribían como sacrílega e impotente, fué el apoyo que buscó el poeta anglo-americano para probar lo imposible, lo extraordinario, lo extranatural, lo inverosímil. (1968, 1776-77)

By subsequently referring to an equivalence between Poe's fantastic and the Shakespearian 'to be or not to be', Alarcón is actually inferring that Poe has moved the question of the fantastic on to a different level of ontological threat: the threat of fundamental psychological instability and existential doubt. Sebold (1994) raises the same consideration in relation to Bécquer: 'Para él, la leyenda se convierte en vehículo de su atormentada subjetividad, con lo que el relato cobra una fuerza existencial similar a la de las *Rimas*' (11). Clearly it is already the case even as early as the 1850s and 1860s that the progressive psychologisation of the literary representations of the supernatural in Spain was underway. The immediate effects of this on Alarcón, himself obviously aware of the changes taking place, are explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

A similar case to that of Spain was Russia. Once Poe had been translated by Baudelaire, his rapid dissemination into other cultures whose second language was French was assured. If it took two years for translations to appear in Spanish, the process into Russian took slightly longer. Although pre-dated by a limited number of isolated translations, the first attempt at a critical presentation to the reading public was made by Dostoyevsky in the journal *Vremya* in January 1861.<sup>13</sup> Along with the translations of three tales, Dostoyevsky provides a critical foreword in which he comments on the nature of the fantastic in the texts:

Edgar Poe may rather be called a writer not fantastic, but capricious. And what strange caprices, what daring in these caprices! He almost always takes the most exceptional reality, puts his hero into the most exceptional external or psychological position, and with what power of penetration, with what striking fidelity does he tell the condition of that man's soul! Besides this, in Edgar Poe there is that one characteristic, which distinguishes him decisively from all other writers and constitutes his keen individuality: it is the power of imagination. It is

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<sup>13</sup>See Burnett (1981, 58).

not that he surpassed other writers in imagination, but that in his faculty of imagination there is such an individuality as we have not encountered in any other: it is the power of details. (quoted in Burnett, 1981, 59)

Dostoyevsky was obviously impressed by Poe's narrative texts to the extent that, according to Burnett: 'Poe's presentation of abnormal, psychological states with the power of specific detail was to Dostoyevsky a model for the "fantastic realism" that came to characterize the Russian novelist's later fiction' (60). According to Kent (1969), the two authors share certain traits in their aesthetic tastes and metaphysical concerns:

Poe and Dostoyevsky shared a strong proclivity for the Gothic, for the hyperbolic, for madmen, for the psychological. There is about many of the works of both a denseness, a heaviness, an aura of foreboding, an unavoidable suggestion of doom, of the utter hopelessness of survival on the level of reality... The agony of reality is no less acute in Dostoyevsky, but there is an implicit optimism not found in Poe. (41-42)

There is another, intermediary, influence at work in the relationship: Baudelaire's critical comments in the introduction to *Nouvelles Histoires extraordinaires par Edgar Poe*: 'Notes Nouvelles sur Edgar Poe' are mirrored closely in Dostoyevsky's foreword.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the influence exercised by Poe, it is also important to take into account Dostoyevsky's basic cultural formation which, according to Jones (1990), was very much in the German Romantic tradition:

There is no doubt that his views derive from the traditions of 'expressivism', with their Russian origins in the influence of German Idealist philosophy and Romantic poetry to which Dostoyevsky was exposed from his adolescence onwards. According to this tradition truth was not to be discovered by the superficial procedures of experimental science or rational argument, but by peering by means of artistic intuition into the depths of the human soul, through which not only the secrets of the human soul itself but also those of the universe were to be discovered. (2-3)

Taken together these sources of inspiration led Dostoyevsky on the path to what has become known as fantastic realism, although he himself never termed it so. The fundamental concept in this is that the fantastic is in fact an inherent and integral element of socially constituted and artistic reality, as he explained in 1869:

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<sup>14</sup>See Burnett (1981, 69).

I have my own view of reality in art and what in the view of most people verges on the fantastic and the exceptional is sometimes the very essence of the real for me. Everyday trivia and the conventional view of them do not, in my opinion, amount to realism, but the very opposite. In every newspaper you find reports of facts which are at the same time totally real and yet quite extraordinary. To our writers they seem fantastic and they do not take them into account; and yet they are reality, because they are *facts*... But is my fantastic *Idiot* not reality, reality, moreover, of the most everyday kind? Such characters must exist at this very moment in those strata of society which have become divorced from the soil - social strata which are in reality becoming fantastic. (quoted in Jones, 1990, 2)

The fusion of reality and the fantastic leads him to claim to be a 'realist in a higher sense', which Jones explains in the following fashion:

'Realism in a higher sense', or what he calls his 'idealism', gives a unique access to the truth, i.e. the depths of the human soul, and permits an intelligible account of the spiritual development of a society or nation. This realism is not to be found in everyday trivia or the conventional view of them and is not reducible to the positivist conceptions of contemporary Russian 'realists' and critics. Where then is it located? Sometimes the essence of the real is to be found in the fantastic and the exceptional (in the sense of abnormal). In Russia, as a matter of fact, the fantastic is sometimes not exceptional at all (in the sense of rare) but an everyday occurrence. As people become divorced from their native traditions (the soil) they become more fantastic and the depths of the human soul are more easily discerned in them (as, one might say, the psychopathology of everyday life is more easily discerned in the abnormal patient). Indeed in Russia the truth almost always seems to assume a fantastic character. (3)

The narrative context is fantasticised by the projection of subjective emotion, just as it was in the Romantic literary fantastic. However, in this case the subject is not a stable, single, identifiable entity; a point argued by Jackson (1981):

Dostoevsky's protagonists are in opposition to monological definitions of the real, or of fixed personal identity. They subvert an official, public sense of reality. His Ivan Karamazov suggests (like Sade) that everything is possible if the soul is not immortal. Dostoevsky's numerous doubles, like Dickens's, draw attention to the various possible selves which are sacrificed for the sake of one's cultural identity [...] Dostoevsky does not present 'characters', but disintegrated figures who no longer coincide with their 'ideal' selves. (135)

This multi-voiced nature of the subject is suggestive of Bakhtinian heteroglossia, and in turn problematises a reader's attempt to resolve the narrative. Again, Jones elucidates this point:

In this world of intersubjectivity and what Bakhtin calls heteroglossia, all attempts at 'monological' definition are subject to subversion. Since individual readers are part of the dialogue, this goes for them too: that is, their attempts to 'grasp' the novels, to impose closure upon them, will, unless the concrete reader is obtuse, inevitably be frustrated. Truth is 'a mere vanishing point of the text'. (30)

The riven and disintegrating subjectivities presented by Dostoyevsky are held in a situation of tension and dynamic balance, which is the only way they can avoid being exploded apart. The ontological threat identified in Poe, Bécquer and Alarcón has become more acute until the characters are poised on 'the knife edge of viability and non-viability' (30).<sup>15</sup> Neither is instability limited to character construction, since Dostoyevsky continues to write in the Romantic tradition of the Classical unities of space and time so that, according to Burnett, they too are refracted representations of subjectivity: 'Poe and Dostoyevsky dichotomize space (and, indeed, time) into the "psychological", which is concerned with the secrets of the heart, and the "external" which is concerned with the revelation of those secrets' (1981, 73).

Having received so much from the French translation of a North American author, it is appropriate that Dostoyevsky's own dissemination came through translations into French in the early 1880s. Following the well-trod intellectual trade route, Dostoyevsky made his way via France into Spain where his arrival contributed to the process of the psychologisation of literature. An example of the effect on the Spanish creative community is traced by Hemingway (1983):

In this move towards psychology Pardo Bazán was, of course, not alone. During the 1880s there was a general renewal of interest amongst French novelists in the mental and emotional lives of their characters. This was due partly to their misgivings over Zola's, as it was thought, reductive view of human personality, partly to their discovery of the works of the Russian novelists as these became available in French translation, and partly to the growing prestige of the relatively new science of experimental psychology. (4)

In other words Dostoyevsky formed part of a general process of regeneration whereby the more restrictive aspects of Realism, and Naturalism, were being loosened to allow the representation of a complex and psychologically intricate reality.

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<sup>15</sup>Burnett (1981) offers an alternative perspective of Dostoyevsky's fantastic realism based on the interplay between deliberation (as opposed to imagination) and caprice; see especially 63-69.



Hemingway draws together the essential elements of this tendency towards 'Spiritual Naturalism':

I have suggested that in this move towards psychology the Russian novelists were a general inspiration rather than a precise influence. It should be noted, however, that the popularity of the Russians from the 1880s onwards was part of a wider reaction against Naturalism and the Positivism on which Naturalism was based. This reaction, sometimes known as Spiritual Naturalism was a move away from a materialistic view of human nature and a return to the idea of man's possessing a soul (susceptible to supernatural sources) and a complex psychological make-up. An early sign of the rebellion against Zola's Naturalism was a novel published in 1884 by one of his disciples, J.-K. Huysmans, called *A rebours*, where the hero, Des Esseintes, escapes from the reality of the contemporary world into an artificial world of art, history and the occult [...]. This Spiritual Naturalism [in the words of Durtal] would retain "la véracité du document, la précision de détail, la langue étoffée et nerveuse du réalisme", while at the same time not attempting to explain away mystery by "les maladies des sens". In other words, the novel would be Realist in its method of observation and its language, but would not be constrained by the materialistic restrictions of Zola's formula. (1983, 20-1)

Dostoyevsky, alongside French authors such as Maupassant, fully psychologised the literary fantastic, leading to what can only be termed 'madness literature' which was so in vogue around the turn of the century. So much of this had sprung from the fractured relationship between internal and external definitions of reality that Burnett (1981) identifies as being held in common by both Poe and Dostoyevsky:

As Dostoyevsky correctly observed, Poe has the power to put his hero into the most exceptional external or psychological position, and it is the latter, the condition of man's soul, that we would expect to interest Dostoyevsky more. Caprice, therefore, may extend from the unfolding of an external plot to the revelation of character, of *psychological image*. It may extend to the split between external and internal (or psychological) that, in both writers, becomes ultimately the split between reason (or what makes sense to the outside world) and madness (or what makes sense to the damaged soul cut off from social life). (64)

The proliferation of the madman as a literary archetype was attractive to many authors looking to write first-person narratives. Undoubtedly it had something to do with the Romantic notion that madness and genius were inextricably linked, so that authors whose public personae and literary creations behaved in a lunatic way could more easily bask in the reflected glory of literary genius. However, more fundamentally it

would appear to be a symptom of the psychologisation not only of literature in general but specifically of fantastic literature. The form that this psychologisation takes and the reciprocal mutation of the body will be the subject of the chapters of textual analysis which follow.

## Shadows of the Mind?:

### Pérez Galdós, Pardo Bazán and Alarcón.

The critical analysis of nineteenth-century Spanish literature would appear to have been labouring under the effects of a paradox that came to light in the previous chapter. On the one hand there is the seamless undercurrent of Romanticism which far outlasts the habitually accepted generic boundaries, and on the other there is the desire to categorise texts, and authors, as belonging to periods and movements subordinate to dates and labels. While it is recognised that there is chronological overlap between the last authors and texts of one period and the first of the next, there is undeniably a strong tendency to introduce a hiatus to separate the formal and structural considerations that go towards making up those texts, and therefore their authors. Just such a hiatus exists between Bécquer and Benito Pérez Galdós: Bécquer is accepted as the last ‘Romantic’ and Pérez Galdós is considered a firm ‘Realist’, and their respective texts are evaluated accordingly. Yet there are certain clear similarities between Bécquer’s narrative *Leyendas* and Pérez Galdós’s early fictional texts. Indeed, any apparent evolution that occurs between the two is underlined by their common ancestry, as will become obvious in the course of this chapter.

There is some degree of chronological overlap between Bécquer and Pérez Galdós given that the latter was composing his earliest works by about 1866-1867, just after the heights of popularity and dissemination of Bécquer’s short narratives (1858-1864), and having them published by 1870-1871. Later, Pérez Galdós looked back on his own first works as somehow belonging to a time now separated from the present:

*La sombra* data de una época que *se pierde en la noche de los tiempos* - tan aprisa van en esta edad las transformaciones y mudanzas del gusto -, y tan antigua se me hace y tan infantil, que no acierto a precisar su fecha de origen, aunque, relacionándola con otros hechos de la vida del autor, puedo referirla vagamente a los años 66 ó 67. (1951, IV, 189)

They were writing for the same audience and through the same medium: the popular press, the subject of an unrivalled, in-depth study by Baquero Goyanes (1992).<sup>1</sup> They faced the same difficulties implicit in writing for the serialised format, and indeed *La sombra*, published in *Revista de España* in 1870, has often been held in lower regard than it might due to narrative repetitions and periodic minor climaxes that were the result of its serialisation.<sup>2</sup>

However, before pursuing the Galdosian texts any further, it is illuminating to concentrate once more on the three *Leyendas* discussed earlier. It is the case that in all of these narratives, *La cruz del diablo*, *El monte de las ánimas* and *El rayo de luna*, the possibility of the operation of the supernatural is opened up; it is also the case that ultimately they are unambiguous as to whether it did or did not take place; in the first two it did, but in the third it did not. In other words, they are *closed* narratives, with no further conjecture available to the reader at the conclusion of the text. In *La cruz del diablo*, the closure comes early on; it is constructed so that the reader is clear that this is part of the narrative tradition of Good against Evil, of the Church (and its flock) against the Devil (and his outlaws). *El monte de las ánimas* is different in that it delays proof of the supernatural to the very last moment. Until that point, the possibility of Beatriz, or her guilty conscience, being the generating force behind her own fear is open to the reader, until proved otherwise by the servants' discovery of the ribbon at daybreak. The emphasis of the narrative has therefore switched from the supernatural to the psychology of the protagonist, and this approach is extended still further in *El rayo de luna*. Here, the closure of the narrative, which again comes late in the text, thrusts the psychology of the individual firmly into the foreground and raises questions of ontology and subjectivity to the primary level.

Galdós explored and exploited the same areas at the margins of experience as Bécquer, but whereas the latter concentrated on the effects of the irruption of the unreal or the abnormal into a given context, the former seems to demonstrate the

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<sup>1</sup> See Smith (1996, 15, 32-34).

<sup>2</sup> See Gullón, G. (1977, 351-52).

collective psychological need for rational and watertight explanations in the face of epistemological confusion. It would seem in general terms that these explanations ultimately attribute any aberration to a weakness in the psyche or an inadequacy of the spirit. Moreover the reader is rarely allowed the opportunity to work out his own understanding of the situation due to the fact that the text is either rendered highly symbolic, or the accompanying comments of the representatives of society at large indicate early on that some form of mental flaw is the ultimate cause.

This is not to claim that Galdós in no way employed the function and aesthetics of the supernatural in the course of his writing; that would quite clearly be untrue. In two of his earliest narratives, *La sombra* and *La novela en el tranvía*, from 1870 and 1871 respectively, Galdós is clearly stretching his conception of reality and of the nature of a text. Yet from the very first critical approaches to elements of the unreal in Galdós, literary critic after literary critic has been at pains to emphasise how supernatural instances are not at odds with a consistent and coherent understanding of an inclusive concept of reality.<sup>3</sup> Walter Oliver is typical of this line of critical discourse:

According to Galdós, fantasy is common in the world of dreams and hallucinations, and, in the sense that all humans dream and, therefore, have semirational, often fantastic visions, it is an aspect of real life. Galdós' problem as a realist was to use the fantastic phenomena of the mind without lapsing into nonrealistic techniques. He usually accomplished this task by trying to justify the occasional fantasy of his characters with logical, even scientific explanations. Realistic fantasy, though the terms seem antithetical, is, therefore, one of Galdós' most important methods of achieving 'psychological' characterization. (1973, 249-250)

A construction such as 'realistic fantasy' cannot remain uninterrogated, especially in the context of the flux of literary ideas in Europe at the time that Galdós was writing. The theorising of fantastic realism in response to Dostoyevsky's narratives and own critical discourse would provide a much more rigorous model against which to evaluate the Galdosian dynamic. It may well prove to be the case that Galdós can also be liberated from the clutches of positivist Realism by a more careful analysis of his interest in abnormal psychological states and attention to specific everyday detail.

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<sup>3</sup> See Clavería (1953), Gillespie (1966), Gullón R. (1955), Gullón G. (1979), de la Nuez (1979).

Certainly it would help to put to rest the imprecise discourse that, in its urge to categorise, attempts to limit the fantastic to a purely oppositional function to the primary mimetic level from which it is 'decisively' distinguishable, as in this approach by Rogers:

Although toying with the limits of reader credibility, Galdós does not truly cross that decisive border into the realm of 'the fantastic', 'magic realism', or some other form of antirealism [...] Galdós's text is tempered by a measure of playfulness and structural 'cheating' but contains no definitive metamorphosis of the primary mimetic level of his work. (1986, 121)

For Galdós, it is stated, dreams and ghosts do not contradict the critical classification of him as a Realist writer. It would appear that when reality has such a broad definition, there is no room outside it for anything else to exist, nowhere from which the fantastic can break down the boundaries and rend the fabric of a culturally dominant order. In Todorovian terms, much of Galdós' writing fits either into the category of the marvellous or is simply allegorical, the reader seemingly remaining unchallenged and very much sure of his ground. That said, the reading experience that these texts provide can be destabilising, which suggests that the inclusive critical approach to date may be incomplete.

*La novela en el tranvía* and *La sombra*, despite the fact that they are relatively unknown, are highly revealing texts in the context of this area of analysis. The former is a retrospective, first person narrative which opens with the protagonist / narrator boarding a tram to travel across Madrid to deliver a parcel of books. As he mounts the steps, he bumps into an old friend, a doctor, with something of a gift for gossip. Initially uninterested by the 'true' events proffered by his companion, Dionisio Cascajares de la Vallina, the unnamed narrator's attention is finally arrested the moment before Dionisio arrives at his stop. The tale is one of a beautiful and honourable Countess with an inattentive but jealous husband, an indiscreet admirer and a manipulative majordomo. The final of these is said to have some sort of hold over the Countess, but having at last piqued the curiosity of the narrator, Dionisio leaves the narrative hanging in mid-air. The journey continues with a non-stop coming

and going of new faces at every opportunity, and meanwhile, to his delight, the narrator realises that the wrapping in which he has tied his books is part of a *folletin* that appears to take up the story at the same point Dionisio left off. The majordomo, called Mudarra, attempts to blackmail the Countess into conceding to him certain favours, which she indignantly refuses and, black-hearted, he storms off to put into action his plan to bring her to perdition. To that end he starts to forge a letter in her hand to the admirer, and at this point the narrator finds that the wrapping has been ripped off, leaving him unable to continue his reading. Looking up from the sheet, the narrator is astonished to find somebody with the exact likeness of Mudarra sitting directly opposite him, holding a folder adorned with an M on the cover. Eventually 'Mudarra' gets off and the narrator decides to let his imagination run riot, especially since he is an avid reader of clichéd, romantic novels. Lulled by the motion of the tram, his mind pictures the carriage diving down to the depths of the sea-bed and then up into the heavens, attended by marvellous creatures of every type, before he finally falls into a deep sleep. Unconsciously, he then proceeds to invent the rest of the tale, whereby the Countess is betrayed, discovered by her husband, and about to suffer some unspecified disaster when the narrator is awakened by one of his fellow passengers. Immediately he starts to recognise the characters from his dreamed narrative in the car around him: one of the Countess's maids and the admirer Rafael. From each conversation he thinks he is going to find out what finally happened to the Countess, and although their stories are misleadingly similar, it eventually transpires that they are not talking about the same matter at all. On the return journey, having delivered the books, an equivalent situation occurs twice more, with the narrator now certain that these people do know what happened to the Countess but are conspiring to keep it from him. Ultimately clearly obsessed by the unfinished tale, the narrator spies 'Mudarra' in the street from the window of the tram and leaps out to attack him, whereupon he is arrested for assaulting a perfectly respectable merchant going about his business. Finally the narrator confesses to having subsequently spent months in an asylum before being cured of his mental delusions.

*La sombra*, on the other hand, is of difficult generic classification. Too long to be a short story and too brief to be a novel, it is the framed retrospective narrative of a few months in the life of don Anselmo, an old, ill-regarded recluse. The frame narrator, one of don Anselmo's rare contacts with society, provides an extensive and highly-detailed description of the protagonist and his physical surroundings, a house that is both home and chemical laboratory. The narrator mediates the current opinions of society at large concerning don Anselmo, and when it is offered to him, takes up the opportunity to hear the tale of how the protagonist ended up in his parlous state of affairs. Don Anselmo, paralleling the structure employed in the frame, starts the central narrative with a long description of his circumstances at the time of his marriage, such a long description in fact that the narrator despairs of ever hearing anything of interest. The events that form the core of the narrative are occasionally interrupted by dialogue between the narrator and don Anselmo or by intrusions from the outside world. Don Anselmo relates how very soon after his marriage he becomes suspicious of his wife and starts bursting into her room without warning, thinking he has heard a man's voice. He becomes more and more convinced that his honour is being compromised, despite her protestations, and on one occasion thinks he has dealt permanently with someone he glimpses in the grounds of the house. However, the next day that person, with the physiognomy of a representation of Paris to be found in a painting of Paris and Helen of Troy in the house, presents himself to Anselmo. He declares himself to be immortal and to have the avowed intention of publicly humiliating Anselmo, through the means of his wife's perceived infidelity. Whatever Anselmo does, he cannot be rid of Paris (including killing him in a duel), leaving the former in a state of abject surrender to his tormentor. Meanwhile, people have noticed Anselmo's unreasonable behaviour towards his wife, and are gossiping about the frequent visits made to her by Alejandro, a known philanderer. Anselmo has a mental breakdown, his wife Elena dies from the emotional trauma, and Paris finally disappears. The narrator and Anselmo have a discussion as to which interpretation of events might be the closest to the truth, and opt for Anselmo having suffered a



pathological reaction to his incapability of dealing with the presence of Alejandro around his new wife.

Central to the critical consideration of both of these texts must be the relationship between the subject and the social context. In many ways *La sombra* and *La novela en el tranvía*, are very similar in this respect. Both are narrated in the first person, the latter by the protagonist and the former by an observer, whose initial role is similar to that of the ‘ethnologist’ employed by Bécquer and who transmits to the reader the ‘objective’ and externalised social perspective, as the opening lines make abundantly clear:

Conviene principiar por el principio, es decir, por informar al lector de quién es este don Anselmo; por contarle su vida, sus costumbres, y hablar de su carácter y figura, sin omitir la opinión de loco rematado de que gozaba entre todos los que le conocían. Esta era general, unánime, profundamente arraigada [...] Contaban de él que hacía grandes simplezas, que era su vida una serie de extravagancias sin cuento, y que se atareaba en raras e incomprensibles ocupaciones no intentadas de otro alguno; en fin, que era un ente a quien jamás se vió hacer cosa alguna a derechas ni conforme a lo que todos hacemos en nuestra ordinaria vida. (190)

Even so, in *La sombra* the substantive part of the narrative is related directly by the protagonist ‘in conversation’, its transfer to the reader in the main part unimpeded by the narrator, always assuming, of course, that the narrator neither mis-remembered or deliberately falsified the text. Both subjects occlude the *raison d’être* of the narratives while they are in progress, not revealing the cause of the events until as late as possible.

The narrative processes of *La novela en el tranvía* operate in the same fashion, with the narrator / protagonist giving the explanation at the end once events have concluded. For this reason this work has been compared in its structure to that of the genre of detective stories, which is perhaps unsurprising given the need to provide an explanation as part of a satisfying denouement.<sup>4</sup> In both of the above works, as is ever the case when a text is narrated in the first person, the reader is aware of the fact that the narrator may prove to be unreliable, but that unreliability is accentuated by the

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<sup>4</sup> See Gullón, G. (1977).

presence of the frame narrator in *La sombra* and the voices of society all around in *La novela en el tranvía*. This prevents the necessary identification and empathy between the subject and the reader and makes the direct transmission of ambiguity and hesitation all but unworkable. Even so, *La sombra* opens up another conduit through which uncertainty is brought into the reading experience. The immediate object of identification for the reader is the unnamed narrator, the representative of sceptical society. Monleón (1989) extends this interpretation to suggest that in this narrative there is effectively a case of dual subjectivity, and that it is fundamental to the text that the narrator's initial coherent perspective is undermined. By so doing, uncertainty is relocated in the narrator, with whom the reader has established identification: 'Como el texto claramente deja en evidencia, el narrador es un personaje fundamentalmente contradictorio cuya única consistencia radica, en todo caso, en ser inconsistente' (37). According to O'Byrne Curtis (1996), this inconsistency is fundamentally linguistic, the result of the rational and objective narrator being infected by what he himself overtly considers the distinct and separate discursive practices which characterise lunacy: 'Ese mismo narrador que afirma tan insistentemente la necesidad de la lógica, tan supuestamente anclado en la realidad tangible, sucumbe ante esa misma imaginación que, en otras ocasiones, desacredita de una manera explícita' (43).

The progressive psychologisation of the fantastic leads it to become involved in the expression of the ontological instability of the subject.<sup>5</sup> In this, the relationship between the subject and its social context is one of the areas of primary importance. Within the primary narrative of *La sombra* it is the clash between the subject (don Anselmo) and his social context (those who gossip about his relationship with his wife and about the visits that Alejandro pays to Elena, and those who relay this prurient interest to him; i.e. his father-in-law and the friend who gives him counsel) that brings about a subsequent increase in the violence of the situation. The overpowering effect of *cotilleo* is explicitly spelled out:

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<sup>5</sup> See above, 39.

En estos tiempos es más temible el dicho que el hecho. Ya comprendes la fuerza que tiene un *dicen*. Si quieres seguir mis consejos, márchate de aquí por algún tiempo. Cuando vuelvas, todo está olvidado. Es la mejor manera de que te libres de ese hombre, cuya presencia continua en tu casa tanto te daña. Es lo mejor; así se acaba sin escándalo, porque el escándalo, amigo, graba los hechos en la mente del público, y hechos estereotipados de este modo no se borran fácilmente. (221-222)

However, this is as yet far from being a causal analysis of why the situation came about in the first place. On the first occasion that don Anselmo speaks he identifies his interest in experimental chemistry as a defence mechanism against an over-active imagination, from which he has suffered throughout his life:

Mi imaginación no es la potencia que crea, que da vida a seres intelectuales organizados y completos; es una potencia frenética en continuo ejercicio, que está produciendo sin cesar visiones y más visiones. Su trabajo semeja al del tornillo sin fin. Lo que de ella sale es como el hilo que sale del vellón y se tuerce, en girar infinito, sin concluir nunca. Este hilo no se acaba, y mientras yo tenga vida, llevaré esa devanadera en la cabeza, máquina de dolor que da vueltas sin cesar [...] Desde niño vengo padeciendo los estragos de mi imaginación. (196)

From his imagination come the suspicions of his wife's infidelity, suspicions which have lived in him for longer than he himself has been alive: 'Entraron en mí como entran las ideas innatas; mejor dicho, estaban en mí, según creo, desde el nacer, ¡qué sé yo!, desde el principio, desde más allá' (203). The strength of imagery and darkness of vision in the above passages is deepened as don Anselmo attempts to describe what his mind feels like:

Otros hombres son mortificados dentro de su naturaleza, mientras yo me salgo en esto de la común ley de los dolores humanos; porque soy un ser doble: yo tengo otro dentro de mí, otro que me acompaña a todas partes y me está siempre contando mil cosas que me tienen estremecido y en estado de perenne fiebre moral [...] Únicamente puedo llamar prójimos a los místicos españoles que han vivido una vida ideal completa, paralela a su vida efectiva. Estos tenían una obsesión, un otro *yo* metido en la cabeza. A veces he pensado en la existencia de un entozoario que ocupa la región de nuestro cerebro, que vive aquí dentro, alimentándose con nuestra savia y pensando con nuestro pensamiento. (196)

Indeed, Paris defines himself in equivalent terms both as soon as they meet and towards the end of the narrative, while talking for the final time with don Anselmo:

Usted me pregunta que quién soy: voy a ver si puedo hacérselo comprender. Yo soy lo que usted teme, lo que usted piensa. Esta idea fija que tiene usted en el entendimiento soy yo. Esa pena íntima, esa desazón inexplicable soy yo. Pero existo desde el principio del mundo. Mi edad es la del género humano, y he recorrido todos los países del mundo donde los hombres han instituido una sociedad, una familia, una tribu. (207)

Tú me has llamado, tú me has dado vida: yo soy tu obra. Te haré recordar, aunque la comparación sea desigual, la fábula antigua del nacimiento de Minerva. Pues bien: yo he salido de tu cerebro como salió aquella buena señora del cerebro de Júpiter; yo soy tu idea hecha hombre. Mas no creas por eso que no tengo existencia real. (226)

Paris claims that he is Anselmo's idea made flesh, a mental projection of an emotion or desire which the latter is unable to control within himself. This corresponds to one of the fundamental causes of the constitution of the figure of the double and is an expression of the subject's ontological instability. Keppler (1972) is just one of a long line of theorists which started with Rank (1971, first published in stages from 1914), who identifies the double as either the result of ego-fragmentation or, as in this case, an externalised part of the unconscious:

Often the conscious mind tries to deny its unconscious through the mechanism of 'projection', attributing its own unconscious content (a murderous impulse, for example) to a real person in the world outside; at times it even creates an external hallucination in the image of this content. (5)

Paris is as much Anselmo's double as he is Alejandro's. If Paris and Alejandro are linked by their common Classical heritage of their names, Paris and Anselmo correspond in their relation to external objects:

'Le miraba pasearse por el cuarto con las manos en los bolsillos de la bata, sacar un cigarro, encender un fósforo, raspándolo en la caja, y después fumar tan tranquilo.'

'¿Y no hablaron ustedes?'

'Sí, hablamos. Lo particular es que aquella bata era la mía, y le caía tan bien, que ni pintada; como si se la hubieran hecho a su medida.' (216)

Having indicated the increasing importance of the ontological instability of the subject, it is worth considering the clinical form such instability might take. Anselmo behaves in the cyclical fashion described by Laing (1990) as characteristic of schizoid, or even schizophrenic personality disorders (108-09). In trying to create for himself a

cohesive subjectivity, he seeks total security in setting out for himself the role of the ultimate subject: he feels he has lived enough for six men, and his subjectivity is expressed in his desire to be a creator figure, an author, the specific importance of which will be dealt with later on:

‘¡Oh! Si usted escribiera sus memorias, don Anselmo,’ dije, afectando mucha seriedad, para que no desconfiase, ‘no habría en antiguos ni modernos quien le igualara.’

‘Es verdad’ contestó don Anselmo, cuyos ojos se animaron con repentino fulgor. ‘Nadie me igualaría. Mi vida ha sido universal compendio de toda la vida humana, ¿no es verdad?’ (196)

Anselmo’s subjectivity is threatened by the coherent social context of which he does not feel a part, so he withdraws himself from the damaging gaze of the outside world, demonstrating reclusive traits. At the opposite extreme of the cycle from being the ultimate subject is the apparent solution of non-subjectivity, of death. This at least would prevent him from being threatened further by external forces. As he travels to duel with Paris, Anselmo looks upon his imminent demise as certain:

Yo no pensaba más que en la muerte, que creía cercana, inspirándome más regocijo que pena. Mi serenidad no era la serenidad del valor, sino la de la resignación; en aquel momento el mundo, mis riquezas, mi esposa, me daban hastío y repugnancia. Veía cerca el término de tantos dolores, y aquel hombre, aquel monstruo diabólico en forma de ser humano, más que enemigo me parecía una salvación. (211)

Not having found release on this occasion and prompted by Paris’s own words, Anselmo seeks to surrender his higher, cognitive forms of subjectivity: ‘Me resignaré. Yo quiero morir y no pensar; yo quiero ser una bestia y no sentir en mi cabeza esto que llevo desde el nacer para tormento mío’ (214). However, having offered the carrot, Paris then refuses to release Anselmo by simply ignoring the conviction with which he says it:

‘No lo tomes así, tan a pecho,’ repuso; ‘estas cosas deben considerarse con calma; sé filósofo; ten esa grandiosa serenidad que ha hecho célebres a muchos maridos, y no quieras sobreponer un falso pundonor a ciertas leyes sociales que nadie puede contrariar.’ (214)

Even later in life he remains radically disassociated from his social context:

Parecía tener una tenaz idea clavada en la mente, idea que no le daba respiro, impidiéndole dirigir la atención a cualquier otro punto, y en su marcha se le veía agitarse, mudar de color, gesticular, alterando todos los músculos de su cara como el que sostiene una conversación acalorada con interlocutores invisibles. El hablar consigo mismo era en él, más que hábito, una función en perenne ejercicio; su vida un monólogo sin fin. (193)

Reclusion, inevitably, proves to be an ineffective solution, and Anselmo feels the need to reconstitute his subjectivity in his status as an object; his marriage had, after all, gone from short-lived interest to steady-state apathy on the part of Elena. The double, Paris, makes Anselmo significant once more by focussing exclusively on him, but now Anselmo is caught in the gaze and can no longer be free. Incidentally, Anselmo also becomes significant once again in society at large, but is trapped by the tongues that prattle about him non-stop, the fear of which drives him to distraction.

It is also worth considering this text in terms of the irruption of desire, in the guise of the unreal, into the dominant cultural order. Paris is the embodiment of the unreal, as demonstrated by his invisibility to all those around him but Anselmo and by his recovery from being killed on two separate occasions. These manifestations of unreality are entirely concomitant with the nature of Anselmo's desire, both on the superficial level of jealousy of Alejandro's attractiveness to Elena, and on the level of his conception of his own subjectivity. Both of these aspects of desire cannot be merely put to the sword, and when dealt with in this fashion are repressed for a period before returning in even greater strength. For Anselmo, perhaps the moment of ultimate social humiliation is the same as the moment when he perceives Paris to have become part of the public sphere. When other people seem to acknowledge the presence of his previously invisible enemy, and specifically in the most crowded area of the city, Anselmo's desire is shown to have become irrepressible:

Los grupos se apartaban para dejarnos pasar, y muchos se sonreían con disimulo, fijando la vista en los dos. En aquel instante Paris era visible para todos; ya no era aquella sombra, sólo percibida por mí, que en mi habitación surgía de la tela de un cuadro; era un sujeto real, y todos le veían, le saludaban, observando con malignidad, mas no con sorpresa, que anduviéramos juntos. (223)

This experience is the immediate precursor to Anselmo's final, total breakdown through which he finds a paradoxical sense of release. The rest of the narrative is largely taken up by the discussion between Anselmo and the narrator and provides the ultimate psychological explanation of Anselmo's experiences.

*La novela en el tranvía*, not having availed itself of the intermediary figure of a frame narrator, opens with the narrator's own experience of himself as a subject and not with an objective, socially-determined description. The first words with which the narrator starts to construct his persona are: 'Impulsado por el egoísta deseo de tomar asiento antes que las demás personas, movidas de iguales intenciones...' (485). This firmly directs the reader to consider the narrator's subjectivity even in as trivial a matter as being first into the tram, placing it in opposition to the conflicting desires of those around him. There is no immediate suggestion that this subjectivity is in any sense under threat; indeed, the narrator's only problem would appear to be that of keeping his parcel of books under control. It is only when his friend don Dionisio, against much resistance, finally persuades him to take an interest in the tale of the Countess and the dastardly Mudarra, and then leaves the narrative incomplete, that there is any indication that there might be something awry. The narrator has been introduced into a narrative and has started the process of suspension of disbelief while travelling on a tram; then, in what would appear to be an unconnected fashion, he proceeds to redefine that immediate physical context as a microcosmic representation of the subjective experience of the flux of life itself. The equivalence is therefore suggested that the narrator's interaction with the narrative reflects, or is a reflection of, his experience of existence. The trigger for the meeting of two previously distinct levels of ontological reality within the confines of the tram / existence is the fact that the narrator's assimilation of the next section of the narrative, in the form of the torn wrapping paper around the parcel of books, is also incomplete. The presence of 'Mudarra' in the tram confirms the implied parallels between the narrative and the subject's existence. Spires (1984) latches on to this episode as the moment that the narrative enters the fantastic. However, since he does not define his terminology, his

linking of the fantastic and the operation of the metafictional mode has to remain suspect:

The events have now taken a fantastic turn since the protagonist/narrator really believes he is observing in the flesh a fictional being [...]. If we had only the friend's [don Dionisio] incomplete story, the appearance of the majordomo would be merely fortuitous; since we also have the fictitious serial, his appearance is fantastic. (27-28)

Mudarra himself is an unstable construct. The clinching factor for the narrator that the person in front of him must be the majordomo is the 'M' printed on the outside of his folder. As Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) attests, such a pure signifier can become over-determined in the linguistic context. The narrator 'completes' the 'M', provides its signified: Mudarra. Even the name itself in its full form is replete with interpretative possibilities, reinforcing the process of over-determination. The verb *mudar* signifies change, movement and the sloughing off of an old skin. This has suggestive implications in terms of both linguistic and physical instabilities as the skin / surface of the body changes and makes much more elusive any fixed notion of identity. Implicitly, the subject's identification of his fellow traveller as Mudarra is inevitably flawed. This seems highly appropriate since within the 'fictional' narrative Mudarra presents different appearances to his employers as it best suits his manipulative purposes. His is an ideal name for a blackmailer and it proves highly destabilising for the narrator.

The narrator's meeting with 'Mudarra' starts the former on the Laingian cyclical process of subjective determination - social contradiction. In other words, from this point onwards the narrator is engaged in a search for the completion of the narrative, which on the secondary, transposed level, is the equivalent of the search for a complete and coherent subjectivity in the face of the ontological threat posed by social existence. He is repeatedly denied completion on both levels by changing elements of his social context. With reference to the story of the Countess to which he seeks the conclusion, the narrator becomes obsessed with verifying his own theories as to the eventual outcome of events. He searches for the climax, for the ultimate reading



experience of uncovering what you already know to be the case, of being proved right. On this literary and linguistic level it is an impossible task. There is no such thing as a complete text floating around in the tramcar, only a series of random and increasingly irrelevant shreds of other texts, a collection of linguistic shards and splinters, signifiers with no concomitant signifieds, which are impervious to his attempt to systematise them. As such this narrative responds to Armit's summary of a position adopted by Massey: 'The fantastic explores a series of endlessly shifting signs cast adrift from their system of signification' (65).<sup>6</sup>

With this in mind it seems unsurprising that the torn paper wrapped around the pile of books interrupts the narrative part of the way through yet another text within a text, in other words the forged letter purportedly from Rafael to the Condesa. The protagonist's quest for completion, for meaning and the satisfaction of the absolute that goes with it, promotes confrontation between the subject and the dominant literary and linguistic order. In the midst of this antinomical relationship between meaning and absence, the fantastic is born in the form of paranoia; nobody will speak the 'truth' to him, and all are in league to throw him off the trail. As each attempt to find the conclusion to the narrative is baulked, the chances of completion decrease, until finally clinical madness results. Once again, the fantastic is reabsorbed into reality, and cultural order is maintained at the expense of the subject.

In a retrospective aside located just after the first meeting with 'Mudarra', the narrator gives further evidence as to the importance of subjective coherence by noting that he selected for himself the role of the author, the creative 'I' who can lay claim to control over the fictional context:

Cada vez era más viva la curiosidad que me inspiraba aquel suceso, que al principio podía considerar como forjado exclusivamente en mi cabeza por la coincidencia de varias sensaciones ocasionadas en la conversación o en la lectura, pero que, al fin, se me figuraba cosa cierta y de indudable realidad. Cuando salió el hombre en quien creí ver al terrible mayordomo, me quedé pensando en el incidente de la carta, y me lo expliqué a mi manera, no queriendo ser, en tan delicada cuestión, menos fecundo que el novelista, autor de lo que

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<sup>6</sup> See O'Byrne Curtis (1996, 78-79) and Fernández Cifuentes (1988, 294-97).

momentos antes había leído [...] Yo, que he leído muchas y muy malas novelas, di aquel giro a la que, insensiblemente, iba desarrollándose en mi imaginación por las palabras de un amigo, la lectura de un trozo de papel y la vista de un desconocido. (490)

Indeed, the narrator's authorship becomes much more overt as the narrative progresses. He dreams of the tramcar going on a marvellous journey, conceiving of the carriage in terms of classical, literary monsters: the hypogriff and the dragon. The progression of travelling through city streets to traversing imaginary realms is, according to O'Byrne Curtis (1996), a repeated dynamic throughout a wide range of Pérez Galdós' narratives. It forms part of the intimate relationship between the madman, language and the city:

Estos paseos por la zona urbana, diseñada, en principio, de acuerdo a preceptos racionalistas, son paradójicamente los que despiertan con mayor ímpetu la fantasía y la facultad inventiva - presuntos síntomas de locura - de estos soñadores. El tránsito por la ciudad se constituye entonces como condición previa al viaje por los espacios irreales; los objetos y transeúntes que se encuentran a su paso, como estímulo para la creación de un mundo ficticio idóneo. (91)

However, these unreal spaces do not have to be overtly supernatural. From his mythical flights of fancy the narrator's unconscious mind then proceeds directly to continue the tale of the Countess, authoring the narrative and controlling the characters. The status in 'reality' of this new extension is initially ambiguous to the reader due to a change in tense at the start of Section X and a possible confusion as to whether it is the tram door or a door in the palace that is being opened: 'De repente se abre la puerta, dando paso a un hombre' (491). When he wakes from his dream the narrator continues to try to be an author to the 'characters' around him, but he finds that they are autonomous creations, unwilling to form part of his narrative and certainly not under his control.

The assumption of the position of author in a narrative so concerned with books, texts and unfinished plots could scarcely be incidental. It is one way of privileging the subject, of providing extra security against threats from outside. This is partially to do with the legacy of Romanticism, whereby the author had access to Knowledge denied to others. Yet in some senses Romanticism was on the wane, and the position of the

author was no longer impregnable. Galdós represents an intermediate stage in the literary dynamic that leads to the outright rejection of the author by Unamuno and Pirandello in the second decade of the twentieth century.

Ironically, the appropriation of authorship and its eventual ineffectiveness against radically unstable subjectivity is more explicitly demonstrated in *La sombra*. Once the narrator has given his own detailed description of of don Anselmo's house, the latter starts to tell his story which he prefaces with a verbose and inverisimilitudinous cataloguing of all aspects of the palace in which the action is to occur. The narrator is explicit in his estimation that this is at least in part an artistic creation:

Había, sin embargo, cierta vaguedad y confusión en el relato, y era preciso acostumbrarse a su peculiar estilo para encontrar el método misterioso que sin duda tenía. Al principio, como su fantasía estaba más suelta, divagaba de aquí para allí, entremezclaba la razón con sentencias de su cosecha, con apreciaciones que tenían a veces pasmosa originalidad y a veces una candidez cercana a la estulticia. Inútil es decir que había mucho de novelesco en todo aquello y que en las descripciones, sobre todo, dejaba correr muy descuidadamente la lengua. Risa causaba oírle describir su palacio, que, a ser como él decía, no tendría igual en los más florecientes tiempos de las artes [...] Él, sin sospecharlo siquiera, al agregar a su cuento mil mentiras y exageraciones, había producido una pequeña obra de arte, propia para distraer y aun enseñar. (197)

In this way the protagonist, don Anselmo, becomes both narrator and author in his own right, re-interpreting himself as a fictional character and Paris as a creature of his own literary, as well as psychological, invention.<sup>7</sup> This aggregation of authorship is another attempt to exercise control in the present over the irruption of the unreal in the past. That means that the flaw in Anselmo's subjectivity remains unresolved and the figure of Paris repressed, as is evidenced by Anselmo's continuing asocial behaviour and his previously noted tendency to conduct an endless monologue with himself.

One of the possible results of the confrontation between the unstable subject and the social context is a distortion of the spatial, temporal and linguistic dimensions of the latter by the former. Add the textual structures designed to provoke a combination

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<sup>7</sup> See Austin (1983, 43).

of laughter and revulsion in the reader and this then proves a serviceable definition of the grotesque, a modal field usually regarded as contiguous to the fantastic but nevertheless distinct from it. In his work on the grotesque in Galdós, Kronik (1978) offers a definition which lies alongside the operation of the supernatural:

The grotesque [has] the following traits: a plastic conception of the literary art; a juxtaposition of components that are perceived as incompatible, especially a fusion of reality and its contradiction; a sense of alienation - that is, a feeling of discomfort, of estrangement from an order; a distortion of lines that is more extreme and more problematic than the caricaturesque; and finally, a stimulus to laughter in which we sense a measure of unhealthiness. (41)

One example in each of the narratives will be sufficient to demonstrate the validity of these texts being considered grotesque according to Kronik's definition. In *La sombra* there are few moments that occasion laughter, the emotions provoked tending to be those of sympathy rather than anything else.<sup>8</sup> However, the explosion of the chemical experiment and its effects, firstly on doña Mónica and then on the cat, combine the requisite dark humour, pain and cartoon-like movement:

Y se desmayó en seguida, cayendo como un saco y aplastando con su cabeza la guitarra que muy cerca de ella estaba. El gato, que recibió en su cuerpo una gran cantidad del líquido hirviente, saltó de donde estaba lanzando chillidos de desesperación: el pobre maullaba, corría con el pelo inflamado, los ojos como llamas, quemados los bigotes; corría por toda la pieza con velocidad vertiginosa; subió, bajó, encaramóse al Cristo, saltándole de los pies a la cabeza, de un brazo a otro brazo; cavó sobre un caracol, resbaló por las botas de montar, enredóse en las ramas de coral, brincó sobre el esqueleto, cuyos huesos sonaron rasguñados frenéticamente; cayó de nuevo al suelo, se abalanzó sobre un ave disecada, cuyas plumas volaron por primera vez después de un siglo de quietud; se estiró, se dobló, se retorció el infeliz, porque sus carnes rechinaban como si estuviera puesto en parrillas; corría, corría sin cesar, huyendo de sí mismo y de sus propios dolores, y, por último, fué a caer, hinchado, dolorido, convulso, sediento, erizado, rabioso, en medio de la sala, donde pateó, maulló, clavó las uñas, azotó el suelo con el rabo y dió mil vueltas en su lenta y horrorosa agonía. (202-03)

The humour is obtained by careful use of hyperbolic exaggeration; the torrent of repeated grammatical structures have the cumulative effect of comic excess. In *La novela en el tranvía*, humour is injected through the repeated inadvertent injuries

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<sup>8</sup> See Turner (1971, 7).

caused to the caricaturesque English lady whose bilingual verbal atrocities are intended to be laughed at and not laughed with.

It must be recognised, however, that humour is not the inevitable result of hyperbolic exaggeration. Within the frame of *La sombra*, don Anselmo's house is described in great detail, investing it with a certain unstable atmosphere of its own. While denying Anselmo's popular reputation as a necromancer, his chemical apparatus takes on the confused aspect of a nightmare provoked in the layman by his ignorance of the components of scientific magic:

No se libraba de cierta impresión de estupor el que entraba en aquella habitación, donde la escasa luz de la lámpara producía extrañísimos efectos; porque, además de los cachivaches que hemos descrito, ocupaban la estancia sinnúmero de aparatos de complicadas y rarísimas formas. Alambiques que parecían culebras de vidrio proyectaban su espiral sobre enormes retortas, cuyo vientre calentaba un hornillo en perenne combustión. Reverberaba el disco de una máquina eléctrica, y todo el aparato nos amenazaba constantemente con sus ingratas manifestaciones. El sordo rumor de la llama del hogar, el chirrido del ascua, semejante a la vibración lejana de misterioso instrumento, el olor de los ácidos, la emanación de los gases, el asmático soplar del fuelle, que funcionaba con ansia y fatiga, como un pulmón enfermo, todo esto producía en el espectador ansia y mareo imposibles de describir. (191-192)

The setting is obviously concrete and the only thing that directly contravenes the reader's normal expectations of reality in the narrative as a whole is the figure of Paris, not his context. Nevertheless, it would seem that the grotesque may also reside in part within the construction of the subject. Both the narrator and don Anselmo subjectivise their context and both write hyperbolically when giving physical descriptions, undermining spatial coherence. In terms of temporal coherence, it is the narrator who begins the process of destabilisation:

En la pared cercana había un reloj parado desde hace cincuenta años: su máquina era el cuartel general de las arañas, y sus enormes pesas de plomo, caídas con estrépito hace veinticinco mil noches, habían roto un taburete; un cántaro, un Niño Jesús, yacían en el suelo inmóviles con la majestad de dos aerolitos. (191)

Of itself this cannot be considered as significantly destabilising, but the narrator soon returns to the subject at much greater length. In this latter example, inanimate objects

seem to gain a life of their own and time becomes a totally subjective and mutable experience:

En aquellos momentos de silencio, interrumpido sólo por la tenue vibración de la cuerda, el rumor de la llama y ese sonido incomprensible y solemne de todo lugar misterioso, era cuando más terror producían en mí los singulares objetos de la vivienda del sabio. Parecíame que todo aquello tenía vida y movimiento: que la casaca se movía, como si sus faldones cubrieran un cuerpo, cual si las mangas tuvieran dentro brazos. [...]

Se me figuraba asimismo que andaba el reloj con la precipitación y diligencia de una máquina que quiere recorrer en minutos los años que se ha estado mano sobre mano, es decir, rueda sobre rueda; sentía el tictac de las piezas, y creía ver oscilar el péndulo dando bofetones a un lado y a otro a todos los pájaros disecados, los cuales se empeñaban en volar moviendo con trabajo las escasas plumas de sus alas podridas, y, por último, en medio de esta barahunda, me pareció que el Cristo estiraba los brazos y el cuello, desperezándose con expresión de supremo fastidio. (192-93)

It is only after the narrator has expressed his own unstable subjectivity that don Anselmo pulls together the disparate elements that paradoxically make up their common experience. The clock had stopped fifty years previously:

Ella [la imaginación], en cincuenta años, me ha hecho vivir trescientos. Sí, las falsas sensaciones que yo, aunque apartado del mundo, he experimentado en mi vida, suman las vidas de seis hombres; he vivido demasiado, porque la fantasía ha puesto en mi tiempo millones de días. (196)

*La novela en el tranvía*, due to its single subject, is less complicated. It is in the monotonous movement of the tramcar, a literary microcosm, an enclosed space, a machine for random text generation, and in the dream activity of the subject that time and space become malleable. The initial distortion is once again negligible and would be of little consequence were it not to be expanded and exaggerated at a later stage: "Y usted, ¿adónde va?" me preguntó Cascajares, mirándome por encima de sus espejuelos azules, lo que me hacía el efecto de ser examinado por cuatro ojos' (486). As his journey progresses, the subject is rocked to sleep by the warmth and movement of the tramcar:

En esta situación continué viendo la hilera de caras de ambos sexos que ante mí tenía, barbadas unas, limpias de pelo las otras, aquéllas riendo, éstas muy acartonadas y serias. Después me parecía que, obedeciendo a la contracción de un músculo común, todas aquellas caras hacían muecas y guiños, abriendo y

cerrando los ojos y las bocas y mostrándome, alternativamente, una serie de dientes que variaban desde los más blancos hasta los más amarillos, afilados unos, romos y gastados los otros. Aquellas ocho narices erigidas bajo dieciséis ojos de diverso color y expresión crecían o menguaban, variando de forma; las bocas se abrían en línea horizontal, produciendo mudas carcajadas, o se estiraban hacia adelante formando hocicos puntiagudos, parecidos al interesante rostro de cierto benemérito animal que tiene sobre sí el anatema de no poder ser nombrado. (490-91)

The breakdown of the normal physiognomical paradigm into Goyesque, even esperpentic, grotesquerie leads in sequence to the abolition of dimensional restrictions on time and space,<sup>9</sup> and thence back into the even more threatening region of the narrative of the Countess.

Analysis of these two texts suggests that the grotesque could share the same motive force as the fantastic. Both have proved virtually impossible to define in generic and structural terms, both require a subjective reaction from the implied reader, and fundamentally, both are the expression of confrontation between unstable subjectivity and the social context that threatens it. For example, one of the most notable aspects of the structure of the grotesque in these two narratives is its reliance on extensive passages of precise descriptive detail. Often this detail is of everyday objects, but it is expressed in a fashion that somehow is paraxial to the normality usually inhabited by inanimate objects. This construction of the grotesque whereby what is familiar is defamiliarized, is therefore akin to the Freudian uncanny and inherently part of the underpinning of the fantastic. Armitt (1996, 67-70) draws together approaches by Kayser and Bakhtin to the grotesque and its most ritualised outworking, the carnival. The grotesque articulates 'a clear pathway between the world of realism and that of the fantastic' and functions 'in a manner that opens up an entry point between the two worlds' (68). The subjective experience of the grotesque exists in the diffuse, marginal hinterland of the fantastic invoking 'anxiety, insecurity and the terror inspired by individual and collective disintegration'(68). The fact that Armitt sees both the grotesque and the fantastic cohering around the surfaces,

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<sup>9</sup> For the relationship between the esperpento in Pérez Galdós and Valle-Inclán, see Amor y Vázquez (1977).

excesses and dismemberings of the body will prove instructive for several of the texts yet to be considered in this analysis.

That there should be such a close relationship between the fantastic and the grotesque is scarcely unexpected. Dostoyevskian fantastic realism suggests that reality inhabits the fantastic, and vice versa, precisely because of the ambiguous nature of mundane detail. It is rarely advisable to remove a culturally-specific literary dynamic from its context and transfer it wholesale into a distinct set of social relations: fantastic realism is tied to some particularly Russian concerns, such as the dislocation from their ingrained rural identity felt by the new urban population. Nevertheless, while at this stage Dostoyevsky and Galdós can have had no contact with each other's work, they are expressing similar concepts through similar textual strategies. The difference between realistic fantasy and fantastic realism is crucial: the former is inclusive, stable and unthreatening, the latter inclusive, unstable and threatening. From the preceding critical analysis, it is clear that these narratives are better described by the latter than the former. Monleón (1989) is at pains to emphasise that the fantastic has mutated significantly, but not that it has merely been consumed by the inclusive experience of reality:

El distanciamiento de Galdós con respecto al mundo gótico se lleva a cabo, precisamente, para enmarcar el tratamiento de lo fantástico dentro de unas nuevas coordenadas. Lo sobrenatural no se encuentra fuera de la cotidianidad, enajenado en épocas pasadas o lugares exóticos - como ocurría, por ejemplo, en Bécquer - sino inserto en el Madrid contemporáneo [...] El hecho de acercar lo fantástico al mundo urbano, de introducirlo en el hogar acomodado de la clase media, de hacer de él - en reminiscencia goyesca - un 'ente de razón', crea necesariamente una incertidumbre epistemológica, en la medida en que se le otorga a la sinrazón una condición y una prerrogativa comparables a las de la razón burguesa. (32)

When considering Bécquer's *leyendas*, one of the issues worth highlighting was that of narrative closure. In each case the text is ultimately unambiguous concerning the existence or otherwise of the supernatural. As in *El rayo de luna*, in *La novela en el tranvía* the cause of the irruption of the unreal into the social context is once again



the result of a psychological dysfunction, and this is made unequivocal in the concluding paragraphs of the narrative:

Después perdí por completo la noción de lo que pasaba. No recuerdo lo que hice aquella noche en el sitio donde me encerraron. El recuerdo más vivo que conservo después de tan curioso lance fué el de haber despertado del profundo letargo en que caí, verdadera borrachera moral producida no sé por qué, por uno de esos pasajeros fenómenos de enajenación que la ciencia estudia con gran cuidado como precursores de la locura definitiva [...] Ha sido preciso que transcurran algunos meses para que las sombras vuelvan al ignorado sitio de donde surgieron, volviéndome loco, y torne la realidad a dominar en mi cabeza. (496-497)

The narrative does not leave open the possibility of any other interpretation of events, although on the primary level there is little satisfactory indication of the cause of the narrator's breakdown. *La sombra*, on the other hand, proves to be a much more unstable text. The narrator and don Anselmo seem to have agreed between them that the latter was simply suffering from delusional paranoia:

'El orden lógico del cuento' dije 'es el siguiente: usted conoció que ese joven galanteaba a su esposa; usted pensó mucho en aquello, se reconcentró, se aisló; la idea fija le fué dominando, y, por último, se volvió loco, porque otro nombre no merece tan horrendo delirio.'

'Así es' contestó el doctor; 'sólo que yo, para dar a mi aventura más verdad, la cuento como me pasó, es decir, al revés. En mi cabeza se verificó una desorganización completa; así es cuando ocurrió la primera de mis alucinaciones, yo no recordaba los antecedentes de aquella dolorosa enfermedad moral.' (227)

Yet *La sombra* carries in its tail a sting which arguably projects fantastic hesitation beyond the end of the narrative, very much against the trend of argument throughout the narrative's development:

Al bajar la escalera me acordé de que no le había preguntado una cosa importante y que merecía ser aclarada, esto es, si la figura de Paris había vuelto a presentarse en el lienzo, como parecía natural. Pensé subir a que me sacara de dudas, satisfaciendo mi curiosidad; pero no había andado dos escalones cuando me ocurrió que el caso no merecía la pena, porque a mí no me importa mucho saberlo, ni al lector tampoco. (227)

Clearly this is neither the case for the narrator nor for the reader, or it would not have been given such a prominent situation in the text. On occasions it has been overlooked

completely in critical approaches to the text,<sup>10</sup> but Monleón has emphasised its importance in the destabilisation of all-inclusive explicability:

Obviamente, si lo que la novela propone es una visión del mundo racional, la figura de Paris tiene que 'haber vuelto' a presentarse en el lienzo; o, por lo menos, el narrador no debería dudar, máxime cuando Anselmo acaba de demostrar plena conciencia de la verdad de los hechos. Quien vacila aquí es el propio narrador, personaje que encarna la racionalidad [...] Esta inversión final de papeles lleva a que las premisas que parecían clasificadas vuelvan a ser puestas en cuestión, con lo que Galdós termina arrojando una sombra sobre la naturaleza de su propia creación. (1989, 34)<sup>11</sup>

In other words, the conclusion to *La sombra* reintroduces the structural hesitation present when Paris first assumes corporeal form, which had been returned to rationality through the interpretation of psychopathology. The fact that the hesitation now resides in the textual representation of the narrator, with whom the reader is most closely to identify, instead of solely in don Anselmo, is fundamental. Monleón is in no doubt that it undermines the entire reading process:

Las contradicciones e incoherencias señaladas dan pie a que el narrador deba ser visto con suspicacia y no con la credulidad que se le ha conferido. Se trata de un personaje que, investido estructuralmente de las características del narrador fiable, falla constantemente en su papel y deja así de ser creíble. Su anormalidad consiste, por tanto, en socavar su propia esencia, en negar, a través del discurso, su función narrativa. Su racionalidad queda en entredicho y, en este sentido, su caracterización se aproxima todavía más a la de Anselmo. Como si de un juego de muñecas rusas se tratase, los papeles en la novela se desdobl原因, se multiplican guardando, sin embargo, una misma identidad. El personaje-narrador se convierte así en eje fundamental: por un lado, asume (refleja) las incongruencias atribuidas al Anselmo-narrador; por otra, reproduce y proyecta, en tanto que 'lector' del doctor, una actitud que nosotros, como lectores de *La sombra*, hemos ido, a nuestra vez, repitiendo (reflejando) a lo largo de los años. Es en este laberinto de espejos donde radica el juego galdosiano, juego que lleva en última instancia a la imposibilidad de puntualizar los términos demarcatorios de la realidad. Una incertidumbre final se cierne decididamente sobre la novela. (38-39)

While critical approaches which pursue the notion of Galdós's reality, of which fantasy is a function, are valid for the protagonist's relation of his experiences, they

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<sup>10</sup> See Bosch (1971).

<sup>11</sup> See O'Byrne Curtis (1996, 33-45, especially 39). Her contention that the narrative is a struggle between the discourses of supposed rationality and irrationality, culminating in this admission of uncertainty by the narrator, is highly instructive.

are inadequate when faced with the elision of the fantastic through the structure of the text and the position of the subject within it.

One of the most superficially obvious aspects of *La sombra* and *La novela en el tranvía* is that the subjects are seen by society to have suffered a mental breakdown, to have gone mad. Case studies of characters in Pérez Galdós's narratives who are afflicted by madness are not unusual,<sup>12</sup> and the author himself went to some lengths to inform himself of clinical developments in contemporary psychiatry.<sup>13</sup> However, the interest displayed by Pérez Galdós is not an isolated phenomenon but the most obvious symptom in the Spanish context of a general interest in issues to do with psychology and an awareness of a change in the culture of psychiatry. Foucault (1967) sees the last years of the nineteenth century as an uncertain, intermediate time between the paradigm of social control into which the asylum had developed and the new 'talking cure' offered by the clinical and discursive practices of psychoanalysis. With reference to the decay of asylum culture, he writes:

There remains, beyond the empty forms of positivist thought, only a single concrete reality: the doctor - patient couple in which all alienations are summarized, linked and loosened. And it is to this degree that all nineteenth-century psychiatry really converges on Freud, the first man to accept in all its seriousness the reality of the physician - patient couple [...]. Freud demystified all the other asylum structures [but] he exploited the structure that enveloped the medical personage. (277)

Narratives which are involved in the representation of madness and mad people are unlikely to be able to avoid responding to some extent to the cultural shift in their contemporary context. The expectation would be to see the discourses and structures of the asylum intermingled with an anticipation of the language and relations of clinical analysis. The latter, in general terms, should come to dominate as time goes on, but this is bound to be an uneven and gradual process. The model of schizoid behaviour outlined by Laing<sup>14</sup> is only fully developed within a series of dualisms, of individual to individual behaviour, whose precursor is the asylum but whose fulfilment

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<sup>12</sup> See O'Byrne Curtis (1996, 25-31).

<sup>13</sup> See O'Byrne Curtis (1996, 50-52).

<sup>14</sup> See above, 54-55.

is the analyst's couch. The repeated insistence on madness, dual subjects and the presence of doctors in the narratives intimates that it is precisely in this context that the fantastic is the expression of underlying flaws and instabilities in ontological subjectivities.

Particularly precise analytical and critical attention has been paid to *La sombra* and *La novela en el tranvía* because they are in many ways illustrative of the literary expression of the fantastic in Spain during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, and even in some aspects of the early years of the twentieth. However, they are not the only texts written by Pérez Galdós to fit into this field of study; nor was he the only author to demonstrate an interest in it. Texts by authors such as Pedro Antonio de Alarcón and Emilia Pardo Bazán among others, although lying at the margins of their literary production and therefore often passed over in critical appreciations of their work, serve to broaden the perspective provided by the close analysis of the two texts studied to date.

One narrative that does embody the principles of the Asylum is *La máscara* by Emilia Pardo Bazán, published in 1897, and this despite its brevity and its apparent concentration on the validity, or otherwise, of a belief in the supernatural. The narrative is presented as a conversation between the protagonist, Jenaro, and the unnamed first person narrator. In the opening salvoes both of them set out their stalls on the question of whether or not the supernatural exists. Jenaro says it does, and that he can demonstrate it through personal experience, whereas the narrator, while at pains to keep an apparently open mind, rejects the possibility and demands strong, first-hand empirical evidence. In the meantime the narrator recommends a cure for Jenaro's ailment:

‘Acierta usted’, respondí sonriendo y fijándome involuntariamente en el rostro del solitario, cuyos ojos cercados de oscuro livor y cuyas demacradas mejillas delataban, no la paz de un espíritu que ha sabido encontrar su centro, sino la preocupación de una mente visitada por ideas perturbadoras y fatales. ‘Respetando todo lo que respetarse debe, propendo a creer que ciertas cosas

son obra de nuestra imaginación, proyecciones de nuestro espíritu, fenómenos sin correlación con nada externo, y que un régimen fortificante, una higiene sabia y severa, de esas que desarrollan el sistema muscular y aplacan el nervioso, le quitarían a usted hasta la sombra de sus concepciones visionarias.' (I, 379)

Clearly, even though there is no direct indication that the narrator is a doctor, that position has been assumed through the use of the appropriate discourse. Interpolated with the dialogue, the narrator provides a physical description of the protagonist's decrepitude as a parallel to his moral state. Jenaro maintains that the narrator will never witness anything supernatural since an open mind is a prerequisite for experiencing it. The narrator asks, with deep and biting irony, to share Jenaro's tale so that he too might be converted. Jenaro then launches into an account of his experiences at a masked ball at which he meets and falls for a beautiful and enigmatic lady. After the usual exhortations on his part for her to remove her mask, she reveals herself to be a corpse. He faints, and on coming to alone renounces his dissolute ways. The narrator suggests that it must have been a practical joke for which he fell in his inebriated state. Jenaro's response is merely to get up and walk away, at which point the narrative is concluded.

According to Foucault (1967, 258-277), the four basic principles around which the asylum was constructed were silence, recognition by mirror, perpetual judgement and the supremacy of the medic. In *La máscara*, silence is represented by Jenaro's muteness in the face of a rational interpretation and in the lack of struggle between the opposing discourses. The narrator is closed to Jenaro's understanding of events, and the only response to it is sealed in the narrator's own hermetic discourse. The narrator ironises the vocabulary of Jenaro's discourse, making a great show of being in the position of somebody who is open to the possibility of conversion while in fact remaining closed to it, in order to destabilise the protagonist's subjectivity. Judgement is swift and unwavering, even being delivered to the reader, via the generally pejorative tone adopted by the narrator, before the protagonist has the opportunity to outline the relevant events. The body must be disciplined in order to bring about moral rectitude and mental health. Most remarkable of all is the positioning of the

narrator and the moral, social and medical authority attendant upon that position. In addition to the medical regime already quoted, the narrator assumes through irony a moral authority based on the qualification of irrationality as mental disease:

El convencimiento de que no lograría persuadir a aquel enfermo de la mente, me obligó a reservar mis impresiones. Y dije a Jenaro en alta voz, condescendiendo: ‘Al menos, hágame usted “ver” ahora, con su narración [...] Crea usted que, mediante eso que llaman “autosugestión”, seré capaz de “ver” momentáneamente lo mismo que usted haya visto, y de saborear la poesía terrorífica de su relato.’ (380)

So in spite of the comparative lateness of its composition, the narrative structure of *La máscara* remains firmly embedded in the model of the asylum.

Foucault is very explicit in his observation of the direct linking of mental illness and moral inadequacy in the hierarchy of the asylum. The director, employed in a medical position, was empowered to a large extent by moral authority (270-71). For this reason the subject of *La novela en el tranvía* retrospectively describes his mental breakdown as a ‘verdadera borrachera moral’ (496) and don Anselmo refers to his as ‘aquella dolorosa enfermedad moral’ (227). However, this paradigm was being undermined in contemporary literature. The figure of the doctor who seemed to have little medical knowledge but enjoyed status and respect as a result of a privileged position in society became a figure of parody. Just one such is señor Dionisio Cascajares de la Vallina in *La novela en el tranvía*, introduced by the narrator:

El señor Dionisio Cascajares de la Vallina es un médico afamado, aunque no por la profundidad de sus conocimientos patológicos y un hombre de bien, pues jamás se dijo de él que fuera inclinado a tomar lo ajeno ni a matar a sus semejantes por otros medios que por los de su peligrosa y científica profesión. Bien puede asegurarse que la amenidad de su trato y el complaciente sistema de no dar a los enfermos otro tratamiento que el que ellos quieren son causa de la confianza que inspira a multitud de familias de todas jerarquías, mayormente cuando también es fama que en su bondad sin límites presta servicios ajenos a la ciencia, aunque siempre de índole rigurosamente honesta. (485)

The figure of the doctor is also allied to the position of author, which in turn is also a position of privileged subjectivity:

Nadie sabe como él sucesos interesantes que no pertenecen al dominio público, ni ninguno tiene en más estupendo grado la manía de preguntar, si bien este

vicio, de exagerada inquisitividad, se compensa en él por la prontitud con que dice cuanto sabe sin que los demás se tomen el trabajo de preguntárselo. Júzguese por esto si la compañía de tan hermoso ejemplar de la ligereza humana será solicitada por los curiosos y por los lenguaraces. (485-86)

Again the position of authorship is not made explicit, but Dionisio is indubitably the primary text generator when it comes to the locating of the narrative of the Countess inside that of the tramcar traveller and it is through his initial presentation of the narrative that the subject is made to suspend disbelief. As has already been noted, it is also through Dionisio that the narrative subject experiences plastic distortion of his surroundings. The doctor, then, is the subject's introduction to the paradigm of what is later defined as madness, which seems to confirm at least in part the Foucauldian premise that madness is socially, as well as neurologically, constructed.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most intriguing representation of a doctor is to be found in Pardo Bazán's *Hijo del alma*, published in 1908. By this date the intellectual context has undoubtedly changed, and a text such as this is unlikely to be completely pre-emptive of the impact of Freudian theories on authors and even on the reading public. Glick (1982, 536) reports that the earliest work done by Freud and Breuer in the early 1890s was translated and published in Spain almost immediately. Systematic translation and explanation of Freudian texts and ideas, however, were delayed until the second decade of the twentieth century (537-38), becoming widely available in the 1920s (540). Glick's overall assessment is that

The reception of Freudian psychology in Spain was marked by ease and rapidity of permeation, among physicians before Spanish translations were available and in the educated public afterwards, and by rapid integration of Freudian psychology within the general body of medical and psychological theory. (536)

It therefore seems impossible to definitively discount the effects on the production and reception of narratives about madness of the theorisation of catharsis and the possibility of the analytical model, and even early studies of neuroses and repression. Yet in Pardo Bazán's narrative the dominant discourse on the primary level of the text is that of Spiritual Naturalism, which is why it is appropriate to include even her later

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<sup>15</sup> For a more wide-ranging discussion of the role of psychiatric doctors in the period, see Cardwell (1996).

narratives at this juncture. *Hijo del alma* opens with the unidentified narrator commenting on the current perception of the general role of the doctor:

Los médicos son también confesores. Historias de llanto y vergüenza, casos de conciencia y monstruosidades psicológicas, surgen entre las angustias y ansiedades físicas de las consultas. Los médicos saben por qué, a pesar de todos los recursos de la ciencia, a veces no se cura un padecimiento curable, y cómo un enfermo jamás es igual a otro enfermo, como ningún espíritu es igual a otro. En los interrogatorios desentrañan los antecedentes de familia, y en el descendiente degenerado o moribundo, las culpas del ascendiente, porque la Ciencia, de acuerdo con la Escritura, afirma que la iniquidad de los padres será visitada en los hijos hasta la tercera y cuarta generaciones. (III,175)

The doctor-figure of *La máscara* also fulfils the role of confessor, and not only for reasons of narrative expediency. However, the question of moral authority and physical cures for defective rationality have either all but disappeared or, as in this case, become more complicated and multi-levelled. Nevertheless, once again the correspondence between doctor and (failed) author is established when the narrator moves from the overview to a specific case:

Habituado estaba el doctor Tarfe a recoger estas confidencias, y hasta las provocaba, pues creía encontrar en ellas indicaciones convenientísimas al mejor ejercicio de su profesión. El conocimiento de la psiquis le auxiliaba para remediar lo corporal; o, por ventura, ése era el pretexto que se daba a sí mismo al satisfacer una curiosidad romántica. Allá en sus mocedades, Tarfe se había creído escritor, y ensayado con desgarbo el cuento, la novela y el artículo. Triple fracasado, restituido a su verdadera vocación, quedaba en él mucho de literatería. (175-76)

At this moment, the narrator is introduced into the narrative in person as a friend of Tarfe, an author in their own right and as the recipient of many of the doctor's empirico-literary narratives. Tarfe is ironised, and his position as author undermined, by the narrator. Given the equivalence established between the position of doctor and that of author, there is consequentially a destabilising of Tarfe's primary authority as well.

On this occasion Tarfe offers a narrative of his own direct experience. A woman brings her listless son, Roberto, to his surgery; he is physically healthy but appears to lack the necessary life-force to propel him through the turbulent waters of puberty.



The doctor perceives that both mother and son are suffering from some extra-physiological condition, and with the doctor having removed the son from the room, the woman explains that he was born of a corpse. Tarfe encourages her to tell her story, since he sees that she believes that she is telling the truth. Previously happily married, the couple only lack a much-desired child. Her husband, also called Roberto, frequently has to go away for extended periods on business, and having received word of his imminent arrival she awaits him one night. Eventually she gives up and goes to bed, only to be woken later by his body next to hers, at which point they make love. She wakes in the morning to find him absent, and scurrying servants bring her the news that his corpse has been found not far from the house, murdered, but his money belt is hanging over the back of the chair in the bedroom. She takes offence at the suggestion that it might have been somebody else who came to her that night and takes out a picture of her husband to show to the doctor; the physiognomies of father and son are almost exact copies. The parallels between this and Bécquer's *El monte de las ánimas* are obvious. In the latter, Beatriz is convinced of the operation of the supernatural by the presence on her bedside table of a ribbon which could only have been returned by her suitor. She is already dead when her servants arrive to tell her that Alonso's corpse has been found a distance away from the house.

Tarfe provides a scientific explanation for the former occurrence which does not involve the operation of the supernatural. The obvious implication is that the woman, although endowed with self-belief, is an unreliable narrator. In other words she is suffering from a delusional condition which has brought her to the edge of madness. That madness, however, remains uninterrogated throughout the narrative and Tarfe deliberately and explicitly sustains her in her current state in order to gain access to the boy. Nevertheless, on the secondary level, Tarfe as author and narrator is not constructed as stable authority but as destabilised and ambiguous. The narrative revolves around questions of creation and of engendering. Tarfe 'creates' a narrative text, but as a failed Romantic, it is a flawed creation. It is worth postulating that his frustrated Romantic creativity is expressed through the text in the model of his other

position of authority and it is as a doctor that he seems to enter the overlapping confusion of masculine constructs: Roberto senior, the implied rapist and himself. The link between the rapist and Roberto is essential to the narrative structure; the former is mistaken for the latter by the woman and through deceit assumes his position of privilege. The connection between Tarfe and Roberto is implicit in the structural dynamic of analysis. In the diad of analyst and analysand the former is in a position of authority, just as had been the case in the asylum but in a more concentratedly personal and individualistic form.<sup>16</sup> One of the immediate concerns of the analyst in this situation is to identify and counteract any transference or displacement on the part of the analysand. For Freud (*OC VII*, 116-120), transference was an inevitable consequence of the process of analysis:

[Transferences are] new editions or facsimiles of the impulses and phantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the progress of the analysis, but they have this peculiarity, which is characteristic for their species, that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician. (118)

In this case, the woman's transference would be the displacement on to the doctor of the identity or nature of the husband / father figure involved in the engendering of her son. The analyst, of course, must be careful not to fall into the trap of counter-transference: the acceptance of the role ascribed by the analysand, be it consciously or otherwise, leads to behaviour on the part of the analyst which would reinforce the analysand's defence mechanism. Finally, the correspondence between Tarfe and the rapist lies in Tarfe's final words, which also constitute the end of the narrative: 'Miento dulcemente a la madre, y trato de salvar al hijo de la muerte' (178). Both masculine figures lie gently to the woman, one to engender life and one to give life the force to make it through one of the great boundaries of existence, puberty. Indeed, the object of creation of all three constructs is embodied in the figure of Roberto junior. For Roberto senior he is the long yearned-for child on whom his identity and authority / paternity is imprinted by the very likeness of their faces. For the rapist he is the sign of power, authority and victory, but flawed by the genetic fluke that brings

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<sup>16</sup> See Foucault (1967, 277-78).

the woman to believe in the supernatural. Tarfe, however, sees him as a creation whose form is unblemished but who lacks the necessary content, the necessary spirit to exist as an independent being in his own right, having traversed the great barrier of entry into manhood. The aesthetics which underpin the physical description of the boy are the fine tracings of decadence and the tantalising ambiguities of androgyny:

El estado del muchacho era singular: su cuerpo, normalmente constituido y desarrollado; su cabeza, más bien hermosa, no presentaba señales de enfermedad alguna; no pude diagnosticar parálisis, atrofia ni degeneración, y, sin embargo, faltaba en el conjunto de su sistema nervioso fuerza y vida. Próximo a la crisis de la pubertad, comprendí que al no adquirir su organismo el vigor y tono de que carecía, era imposible que la soportase. Sus ojos semejaban vidrios; su tez fina, de chiquillo, se ranciaba ya con tonos de cera; sus labios no ofrecían rosas, sino violetas pálidas, y sus manos y su piel estaban fríos con exceso; al tocarle me pareció tocar un mármol. (176)

Tarfe is working through his own repression, expressing his failed Romantic creativity in his attempt to animate a dying surface and capture, just once, the inspired heart of Imagination. The medical paradigm has altered significantly, and while the fantastic has been closed off on the primary level of the text, on the secondary Tarfe's flawed subjectivity has kept it open and ongoing in a situation which, at the close of the narrative, is far from its conclusion.

Pardo Bazán went even further with her revision of the construction of madness in *El espectro* (1909). The initial observations made by the narrator are of the general importance of being mentally balanced in the social context of the end of the nineteenth century. Lightly ironic in tone they are ambiguous as to what the narrator thinks of the weight given to this aspect of existence:

Como nadie ignora, esto de ser equilibrado y normal tiene actualmente tanta importancia como la tuvo antaño el ser limpio de sangre y cristiano viejo. Hoy, para desacreditar a un hombre, se dice de él que es un desequilibrado o, por lo menos un neurótico. En el siglo diecisiete se diría que se mudaba la camisa en sábado, lo cual ya era una superioridad respecto a los infinitos que no se la mudarían en ningún día de la semana. (III, 73)

The narrator then sets out to portray Lucio, the protagonist, as the ultimate in superficially psychologically balanced people, and contrasts this with Lucio's own perspective that everybody has something unbalanced about them. The narrator

adopts the opposite point of view, claiming that the momentary mental lapses suffered by all people are not sufficient to be classified as long-term destabilisation. The narrative then switches to a series of events in which Lucio suffers an acute nervous reaction to seeing a white cat, the physical presence of which, despite the misleading nature of the title, is confirmed by the narrator. Without prompting by the narrator, Lucio relates how he has always hated cats, and that aged twenty he had attempted to shoot dead a white cat only to find that he had instead shot his mother, who was wearing a white head covering. The wound was light, but she died soon after of the nervous trauma, and she died hating him. A conversation ensues in which the narrator asks if there were any reason why Lucio's mother might have suspected malice aforethought. Lucio suffers a further nervous reaction, and from that point onwards refuses to speak of the matter. The relationship between the protagonist and the narrator implicit in *El espectro* would seem to be suggestive of a form of proto-psychoanalysis. Instead of there being silence between the two opposing discourses, the narrator is compromised by being a witness to the materiality of the cat. Instead of judgement and treatment the narrator seeks to investigate, to understand. The protagonist's narrative, although unsolicited by the narrator, reveals as causational family structures and the formative experiences of youth. Clearly the text only scratches the surface of any such analytic process and the relationship between analyst and analysand is ruptured at the first hiatus, with Lucio retreating into a typical early defense mechanism, silence. There is no attempt made to involve the reader in any sort of hesitation; indeed, there is no claim made for the operation of the supernatural in any shape or form other than in the title itself.

The literature of madness was by this time becoming dominated by fundamentally closed narrative structures which in Spain soon led to the texts of authors such as Antonio Hernández-Catá and Miguel Sawa.<sup>17</sup> In these narratives the reader is presented immediately with a 'mad person' who proceeds to tell how they came to be in that situation, leaving the reader to reflect on how strange 'mad people' are. This is

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<sup>17</sup> For an analysis of relevant authors and texts of this period, see Ezama Gil (1994).

not to totally dismiss the claims of *El espectro* itself. It is perfectly possible to see Lucio in the light of the struggle between being stably constituted by society around him and the need of the subject to be seen and then to be invisible, like the insect on the wall (74). However, the anticipatory function of this form of literary expression has now clearly run its course, and in the light of its fully Freudian context, it will have to mutate to survive.

If there is one overwhelmingly integrative characteristic of this disparate group of narratives, then it has to be the centrality of the relationship between the narrator and the protagonist. Sometimes this is a single duality, sometimes there is a series of dualisms, with another narrator further framing the narrative. Significantly, this leads to a string of first-person constructs, inevitably foregrounding the nature of subjectivity which has become unstable in relation to the surrounding social context. However, it would be untrue to claim that all narratives of the time were resolvable into the onset of madness, even if only on the primary level of interpretation. Nor is it the case that questions of authorship and medico-moral authority are always of great importance. Yet even then the narrator-subject dualism remains an area rich in implication and interpretative possibilities.

*La mujer alta* by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, dated 1881 and published the year after, is a work largely overlooked even in analyses limited solely to this author. It is recognised that Alarcón did write fantastic narratives, but those cited are usually *El amigo de la muerte* (1856) and *El año en Spitzberg* (1854), which tie in with his acknowledged introduction of Poe to the Spanish literary scene (1858).<sup>18</sup> In some cases this omission is a shame, for example the valuable and revealing study by Bonet (1991), which would have benefited from the inclusion of an understanding of disintegrating subjectivity and the imagery that repeatedly accompanies it. More often, however, Alarcón, in his fantastic writings as much as with reference to his literary production as a whole, is viewed as a product of the twilight zone between Romanticism and Realism, as in this analysis by Estruch Tobella:

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<sup>18</sup> See above, 33-39.

Es innegable que hay en su obra numerosas influencias románticas: estilo retórico, gusto por lo inverosímil y folletinesco, escaso distanciamiento, personajes psicológicamente inconsistentes ... Pero no es menos cierto que su mundo narrativo tiene como origen y destino la sociedad de su tiempo, una sociedad que no describe en su totalidad, sino de manera sesgada, con las limitaciones derivadas de su ideología, su posición social y sus ideas estéticas. Es la suya, pues, una visión parcial de la España de la Restauración, pero estrictamente contemporánea, alejada de las ensoñaciones románticas. (1991, 126)

However, neither Estruch Tobella nor Cobo (1991) even mention the existence of *La mujer alta*. The narrative itself is divided into six chapters and there are three narratorial voices. The first narrator is unidentified and controls the first and fifth chapters and an epilogue at the end of the sixth. In the first he describes how a group of six mature, positivist men on an excursion to the country come to hear a tale told by one of their number, Gabriel. Gabriel in turn narrates the second chapter in which, many years previously, he had to visit his friend Telesforo to offer condolences on the recent death of his fiancée. Telesforo indicates that he has reason to believe that the conception of the world that they had previously shared is inadequate. Telesforo's narration constitutes the central narrative and covers the third and fourth chapters. They deal for the most part with his encounters with a strange, grotesque woman in the street at night. It is precisely this event of which Telesforo has had an innate terror ever since his earliest childhood days. Each encounter is the immediate precursor to Telesforo being presented with news of the death of a loved one; in the first instance his aged and ailing father, in the second that of his delicate fiancée. The fifth chapter is the verbatim report of a brief conversation that ensues between Gabriel and his friends in which he pre-emptes their rationalistic criticisms, observing that the story is as yet unfinished. In the final chapter Gabriel relates how he hears the news of Telesforo's death. On going to the funeral he too sees the woman described to him by Telesforo, the same in every detail, although nobody around him does. She in turn fixes on Gabriel but there is no direct confrontation between the two. He then finishes by saying that in the fifteen years since he has never seen her again and invites the opinions of his companions, but here the primary narrator intervenes, saying that it is

for the reader to make up their own mind, and provides a brief dedication for the narrative as a whole.

In the Romantic tradition of fantastic narratives, Alarcón, from his position of validating authority, said that the narrative was based on real events:

[En] *La mujer alta*, desde la primera letra del relato hasta el final del segundo encuentro de Telesforo con la terrible vieja, no se refiere ni un solo pormenor que no sea la propia realidad. ¡Lo atestiguo con todo el pavor que puede sentir el alma humana! (OC, 1968, *Historia de mis libros*, 10)

However, central to this current approach is not the reality of the events described in the narrative, but the constitution of the narrators and their relationships with their respective protagonists. Germán Gullón considers this to be of primary importance both in his analysis of Alarcón and when assessing the constitution of Spanish narratives of the time as a whole:

La narrativa española [...] desarrolla patrones narrativos autóctonos. Un elemento esencial es el de la figura del narrador que cuenta estas obras. El modernismo flaubertiano pone énfasis en la objetividad narrativa, en fingir que el texto se cuenta por sí mismo, de modo impersonal; por el contrario, la narrativa española se caracteriza por el énfasis puesto sobre la personalidad del que relata, sea Lázaro, Cide Hamete, o el narrador de *El niño de la Bola*. El juego de ficción nunca deja de figurar en primer plano, para recalcar su carácter de artificio que, a su vez, le confiere veracidad (ficticia), de que podemos dejar, reencontrar a los personajes al albur del que cuenta. La ficción galdosiana se separa de la de Alas precisamente en este hecho; don Benito empleará, incluso en pleno momento naturalista, un tipo de narrador muy en la tradición española, que nunca deja de inmiscuirse en la acción. (1991, 31)

Working from the central narrative outwards, the construction of Telesforo is clearly of crucial importance. He starts by describing himself to Gabriel as being no coward, but having a specific flaw in his masculine carapace, which, incidentally, is presented as being, at least in part, the result of the Romantic tradition:

No sé si por fatalidad innata de mi imaginación, o por vicio adquirido al oír alguno de aquellos cuentos de vieja con que tan imprudentemente se asusta a los niños en la cuna, el caso es que desde los tiernos años no hubo cosa que me causase tanto horror y susto, ya me la figurara mentalmente, ya me la encontrase en realidad, como una mujer sola, en la calle, a las altas horas de la noche. (223)

The difficulty that he faces is not that of physical danger in the night but that of being outside, alone, and coming across any sort of woman:

Pero si el bulto era una mujer sola, parada o andando, y yo iba también solo, y no se veía más alma viviente por ningún lado... entonces (ríete si se te antoja, pero créeme) poníaseme carne de gallina; vagos temores asaltaban mi espíritu; pensaba en almas del otro mundo, en seres fantásticos, en todas las invenciones supersticiosas que me hacían reír en cualquier otra circunstancia, y apretaba el paso, o me volvía atrás sin que ya se me quitara el susto ni pudiera distraerme ni un momento hasta que me veía dentro de mi casa. (223)

The night when he first encounters 'la mujer alta' has already been a profoundly destabilising experience. Despite not being a gambler by inclination, he had become involved in 'la selva oscura del vicio, llena de fiebres y tentaciones' (223). Having lost an enormous amount of money, he was making his way home 'tan a deshora, yerto de frío, hambriento, con la vergüenza, y el disgusto que puedes suponer, pensando, más que en mí mismo, en mi anciano y enfermo padre, a quien tendría que escribir pidiéndole dinero' (224) when he comes across the woman. De los Ríos (1992) locates the physical construction of the woman within the dynamic of the Spanish grotesque: 'Su descripción hace pensar inmediatamente en cualquiera de las figuras de las pinturas negras de Goya o en alguna esperpéntica mujer valleinclanesca' (81). Telesforo's reaction to her is that maybe in fact 'she' is a 'he' in disguise, but more than that his main concern is to avoid having his identity recognised, his subjectivity threatened:

No eché a correr en cuanto vi a la esfinge de mi vida, menos por vergüenza o varonil decoro, que por temor a que mi propio miedo le revelase quién era yo, o le diese alas para seguirme, para acometerme, para... ¡no sé! (224)

Telesforo cannot help wondering who she is, whether there is a logical explanation, or a subjective one, or even that she is the symptom of a social malaise:

¿Por qué? ¿Para qué, Gabriel mío? ¿Era una ladrona? ¿Era efectivamente un hombre disfrazado? ¿Era una vieja irónica, que había comprendido que le tenía miedo? ¿Era el espectro de mi propia cobardía? ¿Era el fantasma burlón de las decepciones y deficiencias humanas? (225)

Telesforo only gets his answer when he meets her for the second time, three years later, revealing an uncanny symbiosis in their lives:



‘Pero, ¿quién es usted?’, le dije sin soltarla. ‘Por qué corre detrás de mí? ¿Qué tiene usted que ver conmigo?’

‘Yo soy una débil mujer...’, contestó diabólicamente. ‘¡Usted me odia y me teme sin motivo! Y si no, dígame usted, señor caballero: ¿por qué se asustó de aquel modo la primera vez que me vio?’

‘¡Porque la aborrezco a usted desde que nació! ¡Porque es usted el demonio de mi vida!’

‘¿De modo que usted me conocía hace mucho tiempo? ¡Pues mira, hijo, yo también a ti!’

‘¡Usted me conocía! ¿Desde cuándo?’

‘Desde antes que nacieras! Y cuando te vi pasar junto a mí hace tres años, me dije a mí misma: “¡Éste es!”’

‘Pero ¿Quién soy yo para usted? ¿Quién es usted para mí?’

‘¡El demonio!’, respondió la vieja escupiéndome en mitad de la cara. (227)

The precise identity of the woman is in some senses superfluous. Nevertheless, this particular situation is one which recurs in various forms throughout this period of Spanish literature. For example, in Pardo Bazán’s *La máscara*, the protagonist, Jenaro, implores his mysterious, masked lady escort to reveal her face, and she acknowledges his feeling that this is somebody he has known for a very long time:

‘Ya lo sé, ya lo sé que me quieres y me buscas sin cesar... Ya sé que tras de mí corres a todas horas; ya sé que soy el fanal que te guía. Hace años que también espero el momento de reunirme contigo para siempre, hasta la eternidad... Bebamos ahora, que luego te enseñaré mi rostro.’ (382)

She finally reveals her face, a crawling, putrid mass of rotting flesh, and as he faints, she mocks him: ‘No soy la muerte; soy “tu muerte”, *tu propia muerte*, y por eso te confesé que me buscabas con afán... ¡Por ahora no podemos reunirnos... pero hasta luego, Jenaro!’ (382). The idea that each person has their own individual incarnation of death has its source in a tradition with a Classical provenance. The three Fates (*parcae* or *moirae*) who controlled the destiny of every person were represented as three women in the three stages of adult life: the youthful Clotho, middle-aged Lachesis and old-aged Atropos. From this myth there grew the idea that each person has a *moira* waiting for the fated and fatal hour of death to arrive.<sup>19</sup>

Strictly, of course, the presence of the ‘mujer alta’ does not immediately prefigure Telesforo’s death but that of members of his close family. In this fashion her role as

<sup>19</sup> See Grimal (1990, 278).

prophet of doom is the equivalent to the threat and execution of the destabilisation of Telesforo's social context. This is in addition to her direct influence over his own continued existence, all of which eventually induces the fight to be given up by the subject, as in the case of don Anselmo when he has failed in every attempt to rid himself of Paris. The jaundice that turns him green and brings about his death is the outward sign of the dominion established over him by his grotesque adversary.

In the narratives that have been considered so far, any event such as those attested to by Telesforo would have been the trigger for the protagonist to have his sanity called into question by the narrator, as is the case in *La máscara*. However, Gabriel does not turn inquisitor, but instead pre-emptively strikes at the arguments which his friends are summoning to their lips:

‘Os hago gracia, mis queridos amigos,’ continuó Gabriel, ‘de las reflexiones y argumentos que emplearía yo para ver de tranquilizar a Telesforo; pues son los mismos, mismísimos, que estáis vosotros preparando ahora para demostrarme que en mi historia no pasa nada sobrenatural o sobrehumano... Vosotros diréis que mi amigo estaba medio loco; que lo estuvo siempre; que, cuando menos, padecía la enfermedad moral llamada por unos *terror pánico* y por otros *delirio emotivo*; que, aun siendo verdad todo lo que refería acerca de la mujer alta, habría que atribuirlo a *coincidencias* casuales de fechas y accidentes; y, en fin, que aquella pobre vieja podía también estar loca, o ser una ratera o una mendiga, o una zurcidora de voluntades, como se dijo a sí propio el héroe de mi cuento en un intervalo de lucidez y buen sentido...’ (227)

In fact, what Gabriel does is to push to one side the question of Telesforo's unreliability and instead comes to focus that on himself. He rejects outright the paradigm of the ‘enfermedad moral’ which in other narratives was superficially accepted but undermined through complex relations between subjects. Clearly, from his position of narrative authority, Gabriel has already been implicitly accepted as reliable and it therefore causes extensive dislocation to the reading experience to place him in what had been Telesforo's situation. Gabriel revalidates Telesforo's experiences in a way that the protagonist himself could never have done: ‘¡El que desgraciadamente no se equivocó nunca fue Telesforo! ¡Ah! ¡Es mucho más fácil pronunciar la palabra *locura* que hallar explicación a ciertas cosas que pasan en la

Tierra!' (227). In this way it is made much more difficult for the experiences about to be related by Gabriel to be ascribed to madness.

With the return in chapter 5 to the narrative viewpoint of chapter 1, it becomes possible for Gabriel to turn from being a narrator into being the protagonist of chapter 6. On arriving at Telesforo's funeral, Gabriel sees a figure who can only be the fatal woman described to him by his erstwhile friend. Recognising her, she also recognises him, all of which Gabriel expresses as a threat to his own subjectivity:

Confieso que entonces mi miedo fue superior a la maravilla que me causaban aquellas nuevas *coincidencias* o *casualidades*. Veía patente que alguna relación sobrenatural anterior a la vida terrena había existido entre la misteriosa vieja y Telesforo; pero en tal momento sólo me preocupaba mi propia vida, mi propia alma, mi propia ventura, que correrían peligro si llegaba a heredar semejante infortunio. (205)

For Gabriel, however, the meeting proves not to have immediate consequences and he is able to tell his tale to his friends fifteen years later. This is in comparison to Telesforo succumbing to the combination of jaundice and inconsolable bitterness produced by the events that have brought him to the state of not wanting to see or be seen by anyone. There seems to be little correlation between Gabriel's experience of subjective instability and his long term personality development. It would seem that it must be accepted that an initial dislocation does not necessarily result in a long term threat. This would be represented in the manner in which the woman turns on her heel and leaves:

Yo tuve que apoyarme en el brazo de un amigo para no caer al suelo, y entonces ella hizo un ademán compasivo o desdeñoso, giró sobre los talones y penetró en el campo santo con la cabeza vuelta hacia mí, abanicándose y saludándome a un propio tiempo, y contoneándose entre los muertos con no sé qué infernal coquetería, hasta que, por último, desapareció para siempre en aquel laberinto de patios y columnatas llenos de tumbas... (228)

Yet there is a highly ambiguous comment made by the narrator in the epilogue which can be understood in any number of ways: 'Prefiero, por consiguiente, hacer punto final en este párrafo, no sin dirigir el más cariñoso y expresivo saludo a *cinco de los seis* expedicionarios que pasaron juntos aquel inolvidable día en las frondosas cumbres

del Guadarrama' (228, italics mine). Everything depends on the status of the narrator. If he is one of the group of friends who go up into the sierra, perhaps referring to himself in the third person with the words 'un poco literato el quinto' (221), then the greeting to five of the six friends would make sense since he himself would be the sixth. However, if that is not the case, and the narrator is constructed as omniscient and unidentifiable, then it seems strange that he only greets five out of the six, implying maybe that one of them has died. That one could be Gabriel, and if it was, how did he die? The conjectures are all but limitless, but what is without doubt is that all levels of the narrative have remained unresolved. This is unsurprising given the uncertainty built into the initial chapters of the narrative. Gabriel cannot remember precisely where Telesforo used to live (222), and the frame narrator does not remember the exact date of the excursion into the sierra (221). Indeed, he does not even recall the name of the place where the friends stopped to talk: 'sitio y fuente y pino que yo conozco y me parece estar viendo, pero cuyo nombre se me ha olvidado' (221). These words contain a distant but recognisable echo of the famous opening words of the *Quijote*, the effect of which is compounded by the archaic linguistic forms and self-consciously literary language of the opening chapter. The result is that this primary narrator is also seen to be unreliable, adding further uncertainty to an already unstable situation.

*La mujer alta*, despite its early date of composition, anticipates and in part counters many of the features of fantastic narratives in Spain for the next twenty-five years. Nevertheless its structure confirms the observation that these texts are linked by their concentration on subjectivities under threat from external, destabilising forces.

## *Modernismo* and the Fantastic

If it is possible to analyse texts from around 1870 until the mid-1890s and find in them a number of shared characteristics which are to a certain degree shaped by their relationship with the dominant movements of the time, then it is to be noted that towards the very end of the century there occurs a significant cultural shift. The requirement that narratives should display psychological realism and profundity was replaced by a new range of sensibilities. The *fin-de-siècle* witnessed a depression of the artistic spirit which was not limited to a particular country; a cross-cultural disillusionment with the values of involvement and identification. Schwab expressed this apparent malaise in the following terms in *Coeur double*:

We had reached extraordinary times, when novelists had shown us every aspect of human life and all that lay beneath thought. One was quite weary of feelings before one had experienced them: many people allowed themselves to be drawn towards a gulf of strange and unknown shadows, others were possessed by a passion for the strange, for the quintessential search for new sensations. (quoted in Cassou, 1984, 154)

The quest for the strange, the unknown, the sensational and the ephemeral was in effect a rejection of the recent and distant past both socially and culturally. This took its most extreme form in Decadentism, a negative movement characterised by the inherent denial of meaning and depth, the refusal of the subject to identify with his context and the innate impossibility of life having any ultimate or absolute value:

A basic characteristic of decadence has been a failure to recognize objective or timeless values that transcend and give form and direction to individual experience and effort. [The decadent's values are] confined within narrowly egocentric limits and unlikely to satisfy his desires. (Preminger, 275)

The concentration on the individual in isolation and the lack of satisfaction or satiation of desire suggests that any form of completion is being deferred. Instead, the experience of sensation and desire in the present undergoes a process akin to metonymic displacement, continually mutating and sliding away from the possession

of the subject. This can best be exemplified in the person of the dandy, the archetypal decadent, whose desire, according to Villena (1983), takes the form of a series of social masks which frustrate any notion of the depth of experience:

El dandy no es (como a veces se ha podido pensar) el heredero de Don Juan. El dandy no es, en absoluto, un seductor. Al menos no en el sentido erótico. Le interesa seducir, pero no seducir para el amor [...] El dandy quisiera estar ajeno al amor, porque se ama a sí mismo. Pero, como tal huida es prácticamente imposible, el dandy singulariza su pasión como hace con cuanto le afecta. Y busca la seducción gratuita en la que el dandy se seduce a sí mismo, aun sintiendo el amor por otra persona. Busca el riesgo, lo extraño, el escándalo (todo entra en su rebeldía). A veces sufre, porque no puede amar, y oculta su sufrimiento en el lujo. Otras, simplemente se deja amar, es apasionado, sabiendo que tal o cual amor le glorifica. El Eros del dandy es narcisista, exhibicionista, o (en muchas maneras) escandaloso. (23)

Consequent to the lack of any transcendental function of experience, life, and with it society, culture and literature, is understood to be inherently superficial. Even if only in passing, the surface of existence is therefore its only facet worth the effort of investigation.

However, Decadentism was not the only product of the reaction against the paradigms of Realism and Naturalism. Symbolism, while still in search of a new way of expressing current sensations, avoided rejecting out of hand the value of depth. In this it demonstrates a different attitude towards its context and, far more importantly, to the subject. Biely emphasises the distinction in attitude in *Between Two Centuries*:

It was then that the winged word Symbolism appeared; the product of the decadence of the period 1901 to 1910 had marked perseverance, firmness and the will to live: instead of decomposing, it concentrated on gathering its forces, and struggling on against the "fathers" who surpassed them in number and authority. (quoted in Cassou, 1984, 154)

According to R. Gullón, in the way in which it received and represented sensations according to a different series of aesthetic ideals, Symbolism drew closer to Romanticism than to any other movement.

El simbolismo, más que una escuela, es manera de creación caracterizada por la sugestión y, a veces, por el hermetismo. Con él la poesía se convierte en un modo de penetración en zonas de sombra, que [...] no son únicamente las de la noche, sino las del sueño, el delirio, el azar y aun la carne (pues la voluptuosidad

llegó a parecer un método de conocimiento). Y vista como exploración, la poesía implica ascensiones y descensos, visión de cumbres, y exploración de galerías, laberintos y subterráneos. Como experiencia, se relaciona en este período con doctrinas ocultistas y esotéricas, y la visión es parte del instrumental creativo. Quiere el poeta expresar, mediante un código verbal adecuado, analogías y correspondencias intuídas en el universo. En cuanto existe reconoce un alma: quizá natural, como la de los árboles o el agua, cuyas voces escucha: quizá incorporada, como en el espejo, donde algún personaje de Leopoldo Lugones encuentra amor y muerte. Traducir lo inexpresable y crear por ello un sistema de signos que lo declara son designios del poeta modernista. (1979, 21-22)

In other words, through the study of the surface could be found a way through into a further level of experience, a positive search for an experience of transcendental significance. The depths to be explored were substantially different from those represented earlier in the century in that they were to be viewed from the inside, and consequently surfaces could be viewed from an internal perspective too.

The relationship between Symbolism and Decadentism is by no means one of two mutually exclusive elements. Indeed, according to Balakian's enumeration of the dominant and constant elements of a Symbolist text, the latter is integral to the former. The three central attributes are: 'la ambigüedad de la comunicación indirecta, la filiación a la música y el espíritu "decadente"' (quoted in Risley, 1979, 294). Nevertheless, in spite of their shared characteristics, in general there would appear to be sufficient differences between Symbolism and Decadentism for them to be told apart. However, in Spain the process is not so clear-cut, not least because of the considerable influence exercised by Latin American writers, whose texts were often in advance of those produced at the forefront of European thinking. Consequently, a whole range of movements effectively collapsed into one another, merging almost seamlessly into a third literary tendency, *modernismo*. Paolini sees this eventually dominant discourse as a product of both national and international traditions:

Whereas in France romanticism, parnassianism, and symbolism were successive and conflicting literary movements, in modernism, an eclectic phenomenon, traces of all tendencies harmoniously blend simultaneously. The romantic legacy is related to the melancholy, sensitivity, intimacy, mystery, intensity, delicacy, and spirituality as seen in Bécquer or Rosalía de Castro; the parnassian tendency is represented by the perfection of form, the impeccable verses, the careful

rhyme and refined poetical techniques of Leconte de Lisle; and the symbolist heritage of Verlaine and Mallarmé is related to the interiorization of the literary work and to the musicality, rhythm, harmony, and the hue of the language and images. (1986, 39)

For this reason, in terms of Spain it becomes more relevant to talk of distinct but interwoven strands of *modernismo* rather than a series of autonomous movements.

At this stage, two particular areas of *modernismo* are of immediate relevance and they are fundamental to the representation of strangeness, sensation, profundity and superficiality: the spiritual and supernatural dimension of existence, and the operation of desire.

It has nearly always been the case that spiritualism has formed an essential part of understanding the nature of *modernismo*, but more recently its prominence has increased still further, for example in Jade (1983), where it becomes the central, defining characteristic. Fraser (1992) foregrounds the notion of a dualistic system of existence:

A component of Modernism's belief in Spiritualism is a firm belief in ghosts, spirits and apparitions. Basic to such spiritualist phenomena is the belief that there is a spiritual counterpart to all beings, human and non-human, animate and inanimate alike. The whole of Nature is infused with a soul which can manifest itself in the sphere of matter. (40)

In this sense *modernismo* forms part of the continuum of the persistence of a Romantic spirit in Spain: 'Symbolism and Decadentism supported the Romantic belief in a world of disembodied spirits running a course parallel to the tangible, rational universe' (Fraser, 46). The studies undertaken by Fraser and Jade enter into detailed analysis of the pervasiveness of questions such as theosophical thought and entire philosophical systems such as Pythagoreanism. Central to their argument is that *modernismo* is fundamentally underpinned by the desire for unity, completion and perfection beyond flawed, physical humanity. Fraser concentrates on Nájera, Darío and Lugones:

It is evident that the fiction of these writers and, by extension that of other prominent figures of the movement, exhibited a coherent, thoroughgoing spiritualist experimentation and a new cosmic vision of humanity possessing access to both rational and spiritual faculties as an antidote to bourgeois



materialism. Their fascination with the Occult was a response to the presence of mystery in life, and expressed not only a residual Romantic literary sensibility, but also the influence of numerous spiritualist movements around the world that celebrated the abiding unity of all natural phenomena as did the pagan nature cults of old. (124-25)

The concentration on a unified, coherent and transcendent universe of experience clearly owes more to the Symbolist tradition than to the Decadent.

This perspective is repeated in the analysis of the operation of desire in *modernismo*. In Jade's introduction to the chapter on 'Paradise Found: Sexual Love in Esoteric Tradition', she charts how Rubén Darío, and therefore by extension *modernismo*, still finds the source of sexuality to be spiritual in nature:

Darío's language [...] implies an unflagging faith in the possibility of salvation. This thrust toward integration is particularly poignant in Darío's poetry with regard to sexual love. By affirming the sexual nature of the godhead and by appealing to the myth of the cosmic androgyne, Darío creates a world in which physical desires are reconciled with and aid in the attainment of universal accord. (92)

Pythagorean philosophy led to the conclusion that sexual, erotic love was the way to most closely approximate to individuation both in the present life and in a spiritual sense:

Darío came to view woman as the source of all worldly knowledge and the attraction between man and woman as a path to perfection. A return to the union of male and female becomes a means of perceiving the prelapsarian primordial bliss of unity as well as intuiting the divine state. (92-93)

For the *modernistas* the platonic ideal, the worshipful object, is at the heart of their approach, but with the possibility of woman being more than a single-layered symbol:

Si concibieron floralmente a la mujer, fue por razones estéticas o estetizantes, como al describirlo vieron su anatomía desde un punto que propone nuevas percepciones de la figura. Los románticos no las habían ignorado [...] pero los escritores del fin de siglo sistematizaron su visión: el cuello es lirio, rosas los senos, magnolia el sexo... cada mujer un jardín [...] Cuando lo floral cede a presiones de otro género, emerge un tipo femenino más complejo, difícil de reducir a los límites del arquetipo romántico. (Gullón, R., 1979, 25)

From this perspective it would appear that women are being offered a privileged position in the *modernista* universe, but any autonomy such a position would seem to offer is illusory. The essential aspect of this is that both Symbolism and Decadentism

are male-generated discourses, and both regard women as objects distant from and alien to the male subject. For the Decadent, women are paradoxically both important and incidental. They are important because they make up a rich element of the superficial social fabric available to him through the use and abuse of which he can demonstrate his superiority to those who have failed to realise the non-existence of anything beyond the surface of life. They are incidental because they have no inherent meaning, no absolute value, and certainly do not constitute a route to transcendental Love. From within the Decadent aesthetic there arises a dominant representation, uncannily different from and similar to that suggested by the Symbolist tendency: assertive, cruel and ultimately powerful:

Dentro de la temática de la decadencia sobresale un arquetipo femenino. El fin de siglo se sometió a la fascinación de las crueles reinas, de las mujeres despiadadamente perversas como representaciones de la esencia primigenia de lo femenino. La iconografía de la época se pobló de procesiones de mujeres de belleza fría, criaturas irracionales y perversas que llevaban al hombre a su perdición. Esta figura misteriosa combinaba bien con el antifeminismo que las doctrinas de Schopenhauer habían difundido. Se la situaba en un marco de antigüedad oriental y bárbara, entre arquitecturas gigantescas y minuciosas, rodeada de joyas y riquezas. (Litvak, 1990, 249)

The women depicted by painters such as Gustave Moreau acted as a male nemesis, inherently paradoxical, dangerous, and highly erotic; everything in fact that society did not allow women to be, that women could not have imagined themselves as being:

[Es] una temática que permitía al fin de siglo expresar varias de sus obsesiones. Por medio de ella manifestaban a la vez nostalgia y deseo, atracción y terror, la belleza de las seducciones misteriosas pero temibles y crueles, el placer masoquista de la autodestrucción. La figura femenina en particular se yergue como un doble signo de alienación para el hombre, como mujer y como pagana, como imagen compleja de erotismo, figura nocturna de la tentación, la pecadora, la hechicera, la lúbrica y asesina, que destruye los valores tradicionales que separan netamente los absolutos del bien y del mal. (Litvak, 1990, 256)

A great deal of the attraction that such a model would provide can be inferred from a sociological survey carried out by Felipe Trigo which investigated the attitude of married women to sex. According to Litvak, the everyday experience of the average married man was completely the opposite to the Decadent archetype:

La esposa debía de ser pasiva, fría, y aceptar con resignación ciertos deberes repugnantes impuestos por el matrimonio [...] Sus [las de Felipe Trigo] investigaciones lo condujeron a la siguiente conclusión: De cien mujeres casadas, treinta y dos eran y habían sido siempre absolutamente insensibles en el acto sexual con sus maridos; cinco experimentaban dolor y repugnancia, cuarenta y siete mostrábanse casi indiferentes en la mayoría de las ocasiones y sentían placer muy raras veces, y de las dieciséis restantes, que parecían corresponder de un modo normal, aunque no constante a la sensación, sólo una, según testimonio corroborado por el marido, confesaba experimentar placer, hasta el punto de ser ella quien tomaba muchas veces la iniciativa conyugal. (1979, 176-77)

Undoubtedly, had husbands found their wives starting to behave according to this literary construction which seemed so attractive to them, they would have regarded it with horror as a perversion worthy of moral or medical correction and even social exclusion.

In practice, *modernista* texts had recourse to two related but distinct female archetypes. Rubén Darío's *Azul* (1967), the seminal *modernista* text first published in 1888, sketches out the feminine ideal with more reverence than fear, for example in *Invernal*:

... ella que hermosa, tiene  
 una carne ideal, grandes pupilas,  
 algo de mármol, blanca luz de estrella;  
 nerviosa, sensitiva,  
 muestra el cuello gentil y delicado  
 de las Hebes antiguas;  
 bellos gestos de diosa,  
 tersos brazos de ninfa,  
 lustrosa cabellera  
 en la nuca encrespada y recogida  
 y ojeras que denuncian  
 ansias profundas y pasiones vivas. (78)

Women can therefore be of great physical beauty. More than that, they can also become the eventual purpose of the search, the reason for bothering with the search at all, as Darío describes:

La vida se soporta,  
 tan doliente y tan corta,  
 solamente por eso:  
 roce, mordisco o beso,

en ese pan divino  
 para el cual nuestra sangre es nuestro vino.  
 En ella está la lira,  
 en ella está la rosa,  
 en ella está la ciencia armoniosa  
 en ella se respira  
 el perfume vital de toda cosa. (150)

Although the combination of desire and religious imagery is bringing together two elements of the cosmic unity being sought, it is also in part transgressive since the female body is being made into a sensual feeding ground for the male subject. This suggests highly erotic and experimental desire in action, a desire possibly more dependent on Decadent aesthetics:

La literatura y el arte fin de siglo se inician en el goce de lo prohibido. El placer parece inagotable, apto para superarse indefinidamente. La transgresión de las prohibiciones aun incrementa el placer y lo varía. De hecho, parece que el placer sólo es válido cuando viola algunos límites. El erotismo es profanación de lo divino, mancillamiento de lo bello, martirio de lo inocente. Se sigue la breve consigna de Sade: 'No hay voluptuosidad sin crimen'. De este espíritu le viene a Valle-Inclán el otorgar al crimen erótico una categoría estética. La desmesura del goce requiere que las prohibiciones sean cada vez más fuertes y su violación cada vez más peligrosa. (Litvak, 1979, 86)

Areas that art had previously regarded as largely either taboo or asexual were consistently exploited to add the thrall of sin to the thrill of passion, as is summarised by Sobejano (1968):

Y Rubén Darío alza la hostia de su amorosa misa a la faunesa antigua (*Ite missa est, Prosas profanas*, 1896). Y Valle-Inclán, por voz y manos de su Marqués de Bradomín, se complace en describir d'annunzianamente las tentaciones eróticas de una novicia. Y Francisco Villaespesa habla de las celdas solitarias donde en místicos espasmos 'las histéricas novicias / de lujuria se embriagan / con la sangre de los cristos', o pinta una nueva Mademoiselle de Maupin, sádica, ambigua y morfinómana. Y Manuel Machado solicita '¡Siempre amores! ¡Nunca amor!'. Y Felipe Trigo persigue en sus novelas paneróticas la consecución de una armonía difícil: 'Venus idealizada por el místico resplandor de la Concepción inmaculada'. Sólo apuntar las facetas de inmoralismo más típicas del movimiento modernista exigiría un volumen. Pero baste subrayar el doble sentido de la tendencia: la inversión de los valores morales establecidos por la tradición cristiana y la perversión de apetitos y placeres (sacrilegio, sadismo, masoquismo, paraísos artificiales) como muestra de un refinamiento individual opuesto a los instintos 'normales'. (211-12)

Constructed in this fashion, the female was designed to fulfil insatiable male desire. The full range of male-generated categories (e.g. mother - virgin - whore - witch) was open to exploration in any and every combination, and the more paradoxical sexuality could be made, the more contradictions, oppositions and dualities that could be incorporated, the more erotic it was considered. As Perriam (1995) illustrates, male desire centred on marking the body as a site for violence, transgression, and even authorship:

The *modernista* obsession with form frequently spills over into a fascination with the representation of transgressive desire. Naked flesh and sensually violent colour are to be found in early work by Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1958); virginity, witchcraft, violent death, and violent desire permeate Valle-Inclán's *Comedias bárbaras* (1907-22) and early poetry; Salvador Rueda (1875-1933) transgressively links martyrdom, penitence, writing, and sex in 'Mujer de moras' [Blackberry Woman], where brambles whip and tattoo a willing man's flesh as he picks the berries which, tossed over the woman's breasts, form 'an exotic script / with rare letters the colour of flames'. (54-5)

As is inevitably the case, many *modernista* texts represent desire somewhere between the extremes indicated above. Even so, until relatively recently the Decadent dynamic has been played down in the canonical valoration of *modernismo* in favour of the more obviously Symbolist tradition and there remains much to be said on the relationship between desire and transgression, especially when it encounters the operation of the spirit world and the supernatural.

It would be useful at this point to briefly recall the information in the introduction concerning the relationship between the discourses of desire and the fantastic.<sup>1</sup> Jackson (1981) defines fantasy as 'a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss' (3) and fantastic narratives as an 'impossible attempt to realize desire' (4). Dollimore (1991) picks up on this analysis and allies it to his own concept of transgressive reinscription: 'A principal medium of transgressive reinscription is fantasy - but again, not the fantasy of transcendence so much as the inherently perverse, transgressive reordering of fantasy's conventional opposite, the

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<sup>1</sup>See above, 2-4.

mundane' (324). Transgressive reinscription itself will become critical to the relationship between desire and the fantastic:

The perverse dynamic signifies that fearful interconnectedness whereby the antithetical adheres within, and is partly produced by, what it opposes. Within metaphysical constructions of the Other what is typically occluded is the significance of the 'proximate' [...] The proximate is often constructed as the other, and in a process which facilitates displacement. But the proximate is also what enables a tracking-back of the 'other' into the 'same'. I call this transgressive reinscription, which, also provisionally, may be regarded as the return of the repressed and/or the suppressed and/or the displaced via the proximate. (33)

What this suggests in the most straightforward terms is that if a subject (be it a body, a psyche, a text, a cultural system or a society) tries to exclude from itself something that lies within itself (something it regards as a perversion), the consequence will be that the rejected element will re-emerge once again at the very centre of the subject. This often happens by means of a series of circumstances which the subject will regard as threatening and due to its transgressive properties it will lead to the extensive destabilisation of the subject. When these circumstances are supernatural as far as the subject is concerned (or even if they are potentially so) then the fantastic is in operation. Dollimore makes clear how flawed and vulnerable the subject is in this situation and what is likely to happen to it as a result:

If perversion subverts it is not as a unitary, pre-social libido, or an original plenitude, but as a transgressive agency inseparable from a dynamic intrinsic to social process. Provisionally then, this concept of the perverse dynamic denotes certain instabilities and contradiction within dominant structures which exist by virtue of exactly what those structures simultaneously contain and exclude. The displacements which constitute certain repressive discriminations are partly enabled via a proximity which, though disavowed, remains to enable a perverse return, an undoing, a transformation. (33)

As can be seen from the way in which *modernismo* constructs its approach(es) to both the operation of desire and the existence of the spirit world, the potential for the activation of transgressive reinscription is immense. For example, if the male subject inherent in *modernista* narratives distances and excludes the female object of his desire, she may be reinscribed at the centre of his subjectivity in such a way as to

rupture the social reality which has served him so well up to this point. In terms of the Decadent archetype the female body, so beautiful and haughty, may become unbreachable and the male erotic experience unchangeably superficial and uninvolved. Even the ultimate possession of the woman would be unsatisfying as the process of displacement continues apace. There is also a comparison to be made here with the body of the text. The experience of the (male implied) reader is very similar; the surface of the text is impervious to empathetic involvement, leaving the bewildered reader, aware of his own rejection, contemplating the aesthetics of the text, but being disappointed by the fact that he is always one step behind, the text having the privilege of control via its self-marginalising structure.

The threat of the breakdown of the subject's reality therefore seems most likely to be caused through the operation of transgressive desire. How this might be represented in the case of *modernista* texts is more open to question. Although *modernismo* is fascinated by the movement of the spirit (and therefore would appear to be deeply involved in the psychologisation of the supernatural), this is expressed through an enactment of desire in the form of the body. That the body should then possibly mutate, be it only slightly or with obvious violence, would come as no surprise; it would simply be an example of the *modernista* fantastic in operation.

## The Refraction of Memory: Early Narratives of Valle - Inclán

Given the *mélange* of discrete and related influences which had an impact on the formulation of *modernismo*, it is not surprising that the term should end up being applied somewhat indiscriminately to a wide range of texts and authors. In the case of Ramón María del Valle-Inclán the situation is somewhat simplified by the fact that he wrote not only *modernista* texts but also essays which set out his critical understanding of *modernismo* as a whole. The two most significant approaches produced by Valle-Inclán on the subject of *modernismo* could scarcely have been more different in manner or form. The first, entitled *Modernismo*, was written in 1903 and extensively revised before its second publication in 1908, and again in 1914 (Valle-Inclán being an obsessive reviser of all his texts). In its comparatively sober prose it links *modernismo* to the shared characteristics of Decadentism and Symbolism:

Si en la literatura actual existe algo nuevo que pueda recibir con justicia el nombre de *modernismo*, no son, seguramente, las extravagancias gramaticales y retóricas, como creen algunos críticos candorosos, tal vez porque esta palabra *modernismo*, como todas las que son muy repetidas, ha llegado a tener una significación tan amplia como dudosa. Por eso no creo que huelgue fijar en cierto modo lo que ella indica o puede indicar. La condición característica de todo el arte moderno, y muy particularmente de la literatura, es una tendencia a refinar las sensaciones y acrecentarlas en el número y en la intensidad. (Valle-Inclán, 1987, 206-07)

The second text, *La lámpara maravillosa*, published in 1917, is a far longer piece of work and it fulfils the role of a summary of the ideas and sensations that motivated the first twenty years of Valle-Inclán's literary career at a point where he was about to alter tack once more. Although it is clearly impossible to characterise this beautifully crafted and highly complex text as fiction, it is as far as can be imagined from the



average critical treatise. Domínguez Rey identifies its fundamental characteristic as that of theory in practice:

*La Lámpara Maravillosa* de Valle-Inclán contiene el código estético de gran parte de su obra. Están en ella los presupuestos de la etapa modernista y, a pesar de cuanto se ha dicho, algunos rasgos de épocas posteriores [...] *La Lámpara Maravillosa* es además una síntesis de teoría y práctica del modernismo en tanto visión e interpretación del mundo. (1986, 7)

Valle-Inclán was without doubt conscious of his own status, conferred from outside and from within, as having an affiliation to the general tendencies of literary *modernismo*. This is even more clearly seen to be the case when it is taken into account that both *modernismo* and Decadentism have implicit in them more than just an intellectual assertion of their means of artistic production. A certain way of life is an integral part of these discourses; aesthetics and superficiality hold the whip hand, the outward appearance is a social and artistic construct that binds Art and Life together in mutual reflection. As inheritors of the Romantic tradition, *modernista* authors knew themselves to be privileged and gifted, chosen even, beyond the normal vocation of the artistic community. Almost of necessity, this had to be embodied in their behaviour and visual façade, just as much as some Decadents carried their literary hearts on their sleeves as self-stylised dandies. According to Ayala, Valle-Inclán is not only a *modernista* author but the epitome of the *modernista* aesthetic living on the world's stage:

There are those who [...] believe that the well-known picturesque elements of his personality are of secondary importance and therefore irrelevant to valid literary criticism. This does not seem to be the case. I would even say that in the case of Valle-Inclán these picturesque elements are of primary importance [...] Valle-Inclán was a closely integrated and self-conscious personality, who expressed himself equally in his life and work, and whose life and work are therefore necessarily interrelated [...] In the case of Valle-Inclán even personal appearance was an expression, and an important one at that, of his poetic genius [...] In Valle-Inclán, the mask *is* the man, and the bizarre legend which accompanied it and which he encouraged is likewise an essential element of his personality - a personality thoroughly and completely dedicated to aesthetic values [...] The aesthetic of modernism, which flourished in his youth, was quite in keeping with his personal leanings toward an extreme stylization which would lead, according to that school, to musicality, to a brilliant appearance, a dignified bearing, an artistic occupation, and the idealization of a vague, fairly

remote past - a *fin-de-siècle* inheritance, in part, of romantic Catholicism and medievalism. (1968, 40-41)

Nevertheless, it is the textual level with which this essay is primarily concerned, without laying aside the points included above. The monolithic description of Valle-Inclán's early narrative works as *modernista* can be broken down under close textual scrutiny. González López maintains that the *cuentos* correspond to two distinct worlds or aesthetic approaches: *mundo galaico-simbolismo* and *mundo hispanoamericano-decadentismo*: 'El mundo gallego, lleno de misterio y de amor por lo sobrenatural, como parte de este misterio, le llevó al *simbolismo*, mientras que el hispano-americano, de acentuado carácter tropical rebosante de sensualidad, le atrajo hacia el *decadentismo*' (1988, 283). Naturally there was a degree of cross-fertilisation:

Las dos corrientes estéticas, la del *simbolismo* y la del *decadentismo*, en las que se formó literariamente, se influyeron recíprocamente en sus primeros cuentos; y así en sus cuentos gallegos fue penetrando una nota sensual, que no había en un principio, y en los hispanoamericanos fue tomando vida un espíritu simbolista, que elevó lo sensual a símbolo del carácter hispanoamericano. (283)

While the very earliest *cuentos* were of a comparatively *simbolista* bent, the texts that make up the volume *Femeninas*, written between 1892 and 1894, are largely speaking *decadentista*, although *Rosarito* can be as easily understood as primarily *simbolista*:

Con *Femeninas* triunfa plenamente en el arte valleinclanesco la sensibilidad decadente, con un fuerte sentido erótico, morboso y perverso. Las mujeres, de encendido erotismo (la Condesa de Cela, La Niña Chole, la Generala, Octavia Santina) son la encarnación de esa sensibilidad decadente. Su erotismo se proyecta contra las morales de la sociedad burguesa. En algunas historias, como en *Tula Varona*, la nota decadente se expresa en la crueldad con que la mujer trata al enamorado. Este mismo carácter decadente aparece en *Epitalamio: Historia de amores* (1897). (285-86)

It is the aggressive sensuality and eroticism which takes Decadentism outside the conventions of the dominant social code, and places it in a position to attack the blind conformism of bourgeois morality. As will be seen in more detail later, this is a central feature of a series of four narratives called the *Sonatas* written by Valle-Inclán between 1902 and 1905 and whose narrator and protagonist is the Marqués de Bradomín. There are considerable parallels between the socially transgressive

Decadentism represented in the *Sonatas* and the 'themes of the other' identified by Todorov:<sup>1</sup>

De gran interés, como ya hemos indicado, es su empleo del discurso de la perversión para hacer comentarios furtivos sobre una serie de males sociales y el estado decadente de las clases altas en España. Además de estas tres perversiones que forman hilos temáticos que dan vida a las *Sonatas*, hay otra serie de 'pecados' sexuales que aparecen de vez en cuando para enfocar esa misma decadencia desde perspectivas diferentes. La necrofilia, el sadomasoquismo, el autoestímulo imaginativo (el onanismo mental), el narcisismo, la homosexualidad - todo esto aparece directamente o bajo una serie de disfraces y, en relación con la identidad sexual de Bradomín y su mundo, revelan acciones eróticas que llevan a todo menos a la reproducción. (Gibbs, 1991, 158)<sup>2</sup>

It is worth remembering that this overpowering sexuality is a means not an end, which is why sexual consummation is merely another part of the displacement of desire and a point of satiation is never reached. One good example of this is from *Sonata de otoño* which is already justly famous for its Decadent aesthetics.<sup>3</sup> In a rarified atmosphere of deliberate blasphemy the life of Bradomín's lover, Concha, comes to a climactic end in a conflagration of passion, sex and religion (1989, 95-98). Even her memory, superficially so important to the ironic Marqués, is instantly denied as he temporarily finishes working off his sexual frustration on her sister.

The identification of texts as being primarily Decadent would be equally valid for the majority of the *cuentos* in *Corte de amor* (1903), the exceptions being *Beatriz* and *Eulalia*, whereas the contents of *Jardín umbrío* (1903)<sup>4</sup> more obviously belong to the *mundo gallego-simbolista* definition. Yet, as has already been indicated, individual *cuentos* do not necessarily conform to the general pattern of the volume in which they reside. Perhaps three of the best examples of the *simbolista* tendency, as identified by Risley (1979, 304), are *Rosarito*, *Beatriz* and *Mi hermana Antonia*, although even he

<sup>1</sup> See above, 2.

<sup>2</sup> See González López (1988, 287).

<sup>3</sup> See Llorens (1975, 162-66).

<sup>4</sup> Valle-Inclán revised volumes as much as he did texts. The original *Jardín umbrío* contained only five *cuentos*, but in the 1905 version there were thirteen (entitled then *Jardín novelesco*). In 1908 *Jardín novelesco* was reprinted with eighteen *cuentos* and the subtitle of *Historias de santos, de almas en pena, de duendes y de ladrones*, which best expresses the *gallego-simbolista* nature of the collection. In 1914 the penultimate version of *Jardín umbrío* was published, totalling seventeen tales and including for the first time *Mi hermana Antonia*. The definitive edition was published in 1920.



admits that they are not 'pure' symbolist texts, because ideas and sensations are not communicated exclusively by inference but directly as well. *Rosarito*, the text which he examines most closely, is particularly useful as a comparison to Bécquer's Romantic *El monte de las ánimas* written thirty years before. Both *cuentos* incorporate similar scenes of hesitation, ambiguity and suspense; both are set at night in dreamlike atmospheres, but in the latter the heroine's perceptions and sensations are firmly linked to the operation of the imagination, whereas in the former sensation and symbol are their own ends.

González López (1988) maintains that as the two tendencies fuse together, it is the *gallego-symbolista* combination that emerges as dominant, and the proof of this is to be found in the *Sonatas*. Yet this is to negligently lay aside the eclectic nature of the *modernista* movement, implied in the critic's own words, and to be unnecessarily divisive:

La victoria del simbolismo sobre el decadentismo se puede ver en sus celebradas *Sonatas* (de *Estío*, de *Otoño*, de *Invierno* y de *Primavera*) en las que la narración brevísima del cuento se amplió a la novela corta; pues en las cuatro la historia decadente sirve para expresar un ambiente simbolista, de búsqueda de lo esencial y permanente de ese ambiente. (284)

It is with reference to the *ambiente* of these works that they can most completely be described as *simbolista*, a distinctive feature according to Zubiaurre:

En los años finiseculares y hasta, por lo menos, las *Sonatas*, los personajes señoriles se aureolan de un aristocratismo romántico expresado más por la heredada dignidad de los gestos y las palabras que por la auténtica nobleza de las acciones. En los donjuanes, y por ende en Bradomín, confluyen tres temas, según el mismo Valle-Inclán apuntaba: mundo, demonio y carne. Pero 'los donjuanes anteriores al marqués de Bradomín reaccionan ante el amor y ante la muerte; les faltaba la Naturaleza. Bradomín, más moderno, reacciona también ante el paisaje'. (1978, 30)

However, according to Gustave Moreau, an apparent increased interest in context does not mean that the primacy of the narrator and the author are being compromised: '¿Qué importancia tiene la naturaleza por sí misma? No es más que un pretexto para que el artista se exprese a sí mismo... El Arte es una interminable búsqueda de la expresión de sentimientos internos por medio de formas plásticas' (Litvak, 1979, 11).

Apart from in this very limited sense of the creator's 'sentimientos internos', at no stage in the *Sonatas* is there any sense of a search beyond the superficial experience of life. In fact the Marqués de Bradomín, the first-person retrospective narrator of his own past, distances himself through irony from any such possibility. As Bradomín the protagonist manipulates the people around him, and Bradomín the narrator manipulates the text, their joint nature echoes most strongly this description of the Decadent poet:

Here the poet tends to be concerned not with the 'fruit of experience' but with 'experience itself' and with private sensations; and his poems are likely to reveal a number of the following 'decadent' characteristics; search for novelty with attendant artificiality and interest in the unnatural; excessive self-analysis; feverish hedonism, with poetic interest in corruption and morbidity; abulia, neurosis, and exaggerated erotic sensibility; aestheticism, with stress on 'Art for Art's sake' in the evocation of exquisite sensations and emotions; scorn of contemporary society and mores; restless curiosity, perversity, or eccentricity in subject matter. (Preminger, 275)

These two Bradomines, however, are substantially not the same person. The protagonist ages from *Primavera* to *Invierno*, and develops to a degree along the way. The narrator writes all four from what is assumed to be a chronologically static post-*Invierno* perspective, and in effect his control over the text (selected memoirs as they are) dominates the psychological progression of the protagonist, as Gibbs demonstrates:

Hay una contradicción evidente entre la idea de tiempo lineal y progresivo (primavera-estío-otoño-invierno) y la perpetua vejez de la voz narrativa. A pesar de los títulos de las *Sonatas*, y de la supuesta progresión de juventud a vejez, el Bradomín de cada *Sonata* no muestra ningún desarrollo psicológico; es siempre el mismo viejo solitario y cínico. Este Bradomín viejo paraliza, por así decir, al protagonista. Le convierte en un muñeco gesticulante, una figura plana, en fin, en caricatura de los deseos y desengaños del anciano. (1991, 120-21)

Bradomín the protagonist is in a fundamental sense his own fictional self-construct, far now from his Romantic forbears:

No es el vendaval erótico de los dramas de Tirso y Zorrilla, visto desde fuera y al correr de sus aventuras pasadas y recreadas, resultado más de la memoria que de una presencia y un presente dramáticos. La voz de Bradomín puede pretender ofrecernos un retrato íntimo de este Don Juan, voluntarioso de la

juventud a la vejez, pero la introducción constante de la memoria crea una libertad, un distanciamiento irónico, que nos permite vislumbrar en Bradomín el resultado de su propia fantasía. (Gibbs, 116)

Throughout the *Sonatas* Bradomín the protagonist fills a variety of roles; father, son, surrogate husband and lover. But none of these roles changes the narrative perspective and the common and consistent response is to maintain the narrator's ironic distance:

En la voz narrativa de Bradomín, hay un desdoblamiento evidente: un estar dentro y fuera a la vez, un movimiento escurridizo constante entre tonos y perspectivas, ya cínicos, ya comprometidos, ya trágicos, ya realistas. Este desdoblamiento se produce con una riqueza de formas en que la movilidad del viajero - protagonista sólo abre las posibilidades del distanciamiento irónico. (Gibbs, 118-19)

The narrator is inherently unreliable; the aged Marqués is an experienced, deliberate manipulator of texts:

La primera pregunta que surge entonces es hasta qué punto este narrador que trabaja con la memoria es fidedigno, hasta qué punto podemos 'creer' que éstos son episodios representativos de su vida, hasta dónde son 'verdaderos' o 'falsos', glorificados o disminuidos, en fin, cuál es la relación entre la vida 'real' del Marqués y todo lo vertido en sus memorias. (Gibbs, 120)

The protagonist is a self-confessed inventor of texts, relates the narrator, and in each of the *Sonatas* when called upon to do so by a social situation, he makes up lies, firstly to continue the process of constructing a multi-layered social mask, and secondly to fulfil the apparent recurrent desire to entertain *amablemente*, and to play to the audience. In *Primavera* he makes up 'una leyenda piadosa y milagrera' for some Franciscan monks (1988, 44); in *Invierno* it is 'un cuento de conversión' for some friars (1989, 111-13), and in *Estío* a tale of tender love and abnegation for a Mother Superior (1988, 124). These fictions are adapted to the audience in order to subvert the recipients' underlying values where possible, and Bradomín always casts himself in the starring role (Gibbs, 122-23). Consequently the question must be asked as to what extent Bradomín the narrator also indulges in the temptation to create fictions in order to build up his own image in the mind of the reader, and to entertain and subvert at the same time. This all implies a position of supreme privilege for the

narrator, and allows further levels of distancing and irony. How indeed is the reader to understand the following claim by the Marqués de Bradomín at the end of *Invierno?*: 'Yo no aspiro a enseñar sino a divertir. Toda mi doctrina está en una sola frase: "¡Viva la bagatela!"' (1989, 183). Gibbs identifies 'la bagatela' as the corpus of traditional Carlist values: 'Tal es el sentido final de la "bagatela" de las Sonatas, esa risa irónica que señala la falsedad de los planteamientos ideológicos del mundo aristocrático de Bradomín.' (138). As such it would be a clever piece of self-reflexive irony by Valle-Inclán, since the values of Bradomín's world may closely reflect those of the author (Gibbs, 140). However, 'bagatela' also carries the meaning of 'trifle, a mere nothing', which starts to sound once again very much like the return to the *modernista* - Decadent aesthetic of the surface, and primarily Decadent as the ironic laughter of the narrator implies that behind it all, all the twisting inventions and turning shallow emotions, there is absolutely nothing. It is in this ultimately empty dual role of protagonist - narrator that the fundamentally Decadent nature of the *Sonatas* becomes fully apparent. Symbols there may be, but there is no indication of a search beyond the surface, and the sensations inspired by the use of symbols eventually fragment and disintegrate without having led the author, or the reader, to any form of transcendental experience.

There are similarities between the narrative viewpoints of the *Sonatas* and *Jardín umbrío*, but it is important to first contextualize the latter as it clearly lies within the tradition of the oral transmission of texts that stretches back through Romanticism to the Middle Ages and beyond. The tradition is especially strong in a still superstitious rural community such as that in Galicia, where the readers, or audience, are more than prepared to accept the abnormal due to their own cultural heritage, more Celtic than Spanish. Barja describes at length the psychology of the *gallegos*; protagonists, bystanders in the text, and even the implied reader:

Con su alma campesina, siéntese el gallego rodeado de los espíritus que habitan el interior de los bosques y en el fondo misterioso de las cuevas, y que él oye

quejarse por las noches en los gemidos del viento y del agua. Vive poseído del miedo a lo sobrenatural y extraordinario, y este miedo, que a todas horas y en todas partes le hace sentir vecina la desgracia, tórnalo tímido y supersticioso. Es siempre el poder y la asechanza del enemigo malo, la venganza de la muerte. Como un ladrón, acércase callada en el silencio de la noche; mas los perros la sienten llegar y avisan con sus aullidos lastimeros; y el viento anuncia su entrada con violento abrir y cerrar de puertas y el apagarse de las luces.

Toda esta manera de ser y sentir del alma regional; todo este poder y esta obsesión del misterio y el miedo a 'una cosa que no se ve'; todo ese fondo de fantasía legendaria y macabra; toda esta creencia supersticiosa en agüeros y en trasgos y en brujas, en diablos y en ánimas: todo eso es lo que Valle-Inclán nos da en estas historias. Y no sólo esto; danos también la Naturaleza a que esa alma está unida, y danos las costumbres y los tipos. Una galería de estos tipos, de hombres y de mujeres, desfila por las páginas de estas historias. (quoted in Zahareas, 1968, 274)

A description such as this is very reminiscent of the Romantic world as depicted in Bécquer's *Leyendas*. The manner of transmission is that of an inspired voice from within the body of the community, and this fully accords with the *modernista* aesthetic, as is made clear in Valle-Inclán's working guide *La lámpara maravillosa*:

Aun recuerdo la angustia de mi vida en aquel tiempo, cuando estudiaba latín bajo la férula de un clérigo aldeano. Todos los sucesos de entonces se me aparecen en luz de anochecer y en un vaho de llovizna. Nos reuníamos en la cocina: El ama, con el gato en la falda, asaba castañas; el clérigo leía su breviario, yo suspiraba sobre mi Nebrija. Llamaban a la puerta, en el regazo del ama avizorábase el gato, y entraba una vieja que acudía a la vela después de las Cruces. Era ciega, ciega desde mocina, ciega de las negras viruelas. Sabía contar cuentos, y todos tenían una evocación nocturna: Cielo estrellado, sombras de árboles, viento húmedo, luces por los caminos, martas por el filo de las tejas. Entraba con un estremecimiento de frío, llena de luna y de campo. Sus cuentos nunca sucedían en el mundo de nuestros sentidos. Tenían un paisaje translúcido. Eran relatos campesinos que convertía en mitos el alma milenaria de aquella aldeana ciega, parecían grimorios imbuídos de poder cabalístico, tan religioso era el respeto que ponía en el signo de algunas palabras. Las figuras, el ondular de los ropajes, el rumor de las pisadas, el temblor de las almas, las vidas y las muertes, todo estaba lleno de taumaturgia y de misterio. Emanaba una sensación de silencio de aquellos relatos forjados de augurios, de castigos, de mediaciones providenciales, y el paisaje que los ojos de la narradora ya no podían ver, tenía la quietud de las imágenes aprisionadas en los espejos mágicos. (1948, 122-23)

There is a clear correlation between this retrospective perspective, still closely allied to the two-stage first-person narrator, and the general context set out in the prologue to *Jardín umbrío* (1994) which sets the tone for the body of texts to come:



Tenía mi abuela una doncella muy vieja que se llamaba Micaela la Galana. Murió siendo yo todavía niño. Recuerdo que pasaba las horas hilando en el hueco de una ventana, y que sabía muchas historias de santos, de almas en pena, de duendes y de ladrones. Ahora yo cuento las que ella me contaba, mientras sus dedos arrugados daban vueltas al huso. Aquellas historias de un misterio candoroso y trágico, me asustaron de noche durante los años de mi infancia y por eso no las he olvidado. De tiempo en tiempo todavía se levantan en mi memoria, y como si un viento silencioso y frío pasase sobre ellas, tienen el largo murmullo de las hojas secas. ¡El murmullo de un viejo jardín abandonado! Jardín Umbrío. (65)

The *cuentos* themselves display a variety of narrative viewpoints. The basic structure is that of the tale told by Micaela to the child who then retells it as an adult; this may be explicit as in *Juan Quinto*, or implicit as in *La adoración de los reyes*. However, this pattern is varied by the involvement of the child narrator, his family and Micaela herself in the action of the text, e.g. *Milón de la Arnoya*, *Mi hermana Antonia* and *Del misterio*. In *El miedo* the same retrospective adult narrator is directly present in the text, but the first-person protagonist is now no longer a child. Instead he is a young man who fails what turns into a test of his manhood because of his fear of the unknown. It is only to be expected that the child who has undergone a variety of unsettling and supernatural experiences within a social context that is openly credulous should feel under threat when faced with inexplicable events. The direct involvement of the protagonist - narrator in the action of the text, as opposed merely to being an active agent in its transmission, is a clear parallel with the narrative structure of the *Sonatas*, and this means that there is the same potential for manipulation of the text by the adult narrator, whether he is implied or explicit.<sup>5</sup> The adult narrator may not be as active as the aging Bradomín, yet his interventions are crucial and they demonstrate that both the narrator and the protagonist are highly unreliable. It can hardly be insignificant that the *cuentos* that display the greatest operation of the supernatural are those in which the child protagonist is directly involved.

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<sup>5</sup>It is admittedly difficult to see how *Tragedia de ensueño* and *Comedia de ensueño*, the *cuentos* presented in dramatic form, fit into this definition of a corpus of texts grouped around the figure of the narrator, however illuminating they may be for Valle-Inclán's work as a whole.

Rather than attempt to analyse a wide range of the narratives in *Jardín umbrío*, it would seem to be more appropriate to look in detail at a series of three *cuentos* linked by their narrative structure: *Del misterio*, *Mi hermana Antonia* and *Milón de la Arnoya*. All three have a male, child protagonist (it can be reasonably assumed that in each case this is the same person) taking part in the action of the narrative; the same person is also the retrospective first-person narrator. The child is youngest in *Del misterio* and oldest in *Milón de la Arnoya*. Although the relative ages are not specified, this chronological order can be deduced from the child's family context. *Del misterio* sees him with his mother. In *Mi hermana Antonia* the relationship between the same child and mother is brought to a precipitate end, and in *Milón de la Arnoya*, the child's social world has developed to that portrayed in the prologue to the volume as a whole: his grandmother and Micaela.

The first and last of these three *cuentos* should be sufficient to briefly suggest the range of interpretative ambiguities that the dual role of protagonist - narrator brings about before undertaking a much more detailed analysis of *Mi hermana Antonia*. In *Del misterio* the child and his mother are in the presence of his grandmother and a mysterious and preternaturally prescient old woman, Doña Soledad Amarante:

Aquella señora me infundía un vago terror, porque contaba que en el silencio de las altas horas oía el vuelo de las almas que se van, que evocaba en el fondo de los espejos los rostros lívidos que miran con ojos agónicos. (137)

So the child is already receptive to fear, and in addition he is sleepy, so much so that the grandmother recommends twice that he should be put to bed. The child clings tight to his mother, afraid to be alone, and the subtext of the *tertulia* emerges: the child's father is a political prisoner, and his mother wishes to know through Doña Soledad's power of divination whether he is safe. Doña Soledad reports that he is safe, that he has just escaped from prison and is free, but that he has killed so to be. The mother asks for more information and the reply comes in what seem to be allegorical terms that he will remain safe, but that the blood he has shed will fall on the head of an innocent. By this time the child is genuinely terrified:

Una puerta batió lejos. Todos sentimos que alguien entraba en la sala. Mis cabellos se erizaron. Un aliento frío me rozó la frente, y los brazos invisibles de un fantasma quisieron arrebatar me del regazo de mi madre. Me incorporé asustado, sin poder gritar, y en el fondo nebuloso de un espejo vi los ojos de la muerte y surgir poco a poco la mate lividez del rostro, y la figura con sudario y un puñal en la garganta sangrienta. Mi madre, asustada viéndome temblar, me estrechaba contra su pecho. Yo le mostré el espejo, pero ella no vio nada. Doña Soledad dejó caer los brazos, hasta entonces inmóviles en alto, y desde el otro extremo de la sala, saliendo de las tinieblas como de un sueño, vino hacia nosotros. Su voz de sibila parecía venir también de muy lejos:

‘¡Ay Jesús! Sólo los ojos del niño le han visto. La sangre cae gota a gota sobre la cabeza inocente. Vaga en turno suyo la sombra vengativa del muerto. Toda la vida irá tras de él. Hallábase en pecado cuando dejó el mundo, y ya es una sombra infernal. No puede perdonar. Un día desclavará el puñal que lleva en la garganta para herir al inocente.’ (140)

Those in search of the Todorovian fantastic would find a good example here. It could all have been a nightmare; the child confesses himself to have been falling asleep. It could be that Doña Soledad's real ability is that of suggestion; the child hallucinates under the power of the fear that she inspires in him, and she accepts that as confirmation for the others of her own special abilities. As is only logical, he would have had the most suggestible mind there, less able to differentiate between the real and the imagined, as a young child often is. Alternatively the supernatural apparition could have occurred, and the child is especially perceptive either by his own nature or because the omen directly concerns him. Hesitation and ambiguity abound. Either way, it has a great effect on the narrator, both child and adult:

Mis ojos de niño conservaron mucho tiempo el espanto de lo que entonces vieron, y mis oídos han vuelto a sentir muchas veces las pisadas del fantasma que camina a mi lado implacable y funesto, sin dejar que mi alma, toda llena de angustia, toda rendida al peso de parvas pasiones y anhelos purísimos, se asome fuera de la torre, donde sueña cautiva hace treinta años. ¡Ahora mismo estoy oyendo las silenciosas pisadas del Alcaide Carcelero! (140)

Assuming that the narrator is not being creatively inventive, a necessary but undemonstrated condition, he remains somebody who is either very perceptive to the operation of the supernatural or the victim of a persecution complex. What he categorically is not is a reliable witness in whom the reader is likely to trust.

In *Milón de la Arnoya*, all of the child's family become caught up in a series of events which have supernatural, and specifically satanic, overtones. A woman,

Gaitana, arrives one day in the corral of the grandmother's house asking for protection from a notorious local bandit who, she claims, had held her captive by his demonic power. The grandmother allows her to stay but the bandit, Milón de la Arnoya, enters in disguise. He is thrown out by a pair of hired workers but his presence has thrown Gaitana into a fit and when he calls her from outside she breaks away from those restraining her in order to go and join him. Omitting for the moment any discussion of the possible operation of the supernatural to concentrate on the position of the narrator, the conclusion to the narrative poses an intriguing question:

Acudieron todos a la cancela y la [Gaitana] vieron juntarse con Milón de la Arnoya. Después contaron que el forajido, prendiéndola de las trenzas, se la llevó arrastrando a su cueva del monte, y algunos dijeron que se habían sentido en el aire las alas de Satanás. Yo solamente vi, cuando anocheció y salió la luna, un buho sobre un ciprés. (188-89)

The narrator is now far from the paranoid adult or hypersensitive child of *Del misterio*. He does, however, sustain a different perspective from those around him. The last sentence may just be a simple statement of fact, or a reaction to the mixture of supernatural and religious hysteria of the rest of his social context. It is both a mature and an ingenuous response, characterised by a certain emotional distance. The owl may be seen to have Symbolist resonance, its meaning not to be explained but sensed. It may even be the case that as in the *Sonatas*, the narrator is employing alienating irony, defying the desire to interpret and confirming superficial perception as the only measure of reality. Whichever of these possibilities each reader might understand for himself, the situation is ambiguous and ultimately a mildly marginalising reading experience.

Turning to *Mi hermana Antonia*, this narrative sees the protagonist once again in the emotionally suggestive state of *Del misterio*. Detailed studies have already been undertaken by Campanella (1966) and González del Valle (1988 and 1990), the latter taking the narrator's unreliability to its limit and suggesting that in expecting the supernatural he interprets perfectly normal human love and desire as satanic (1988, 185-86). Both argue for the child's possible misinterpretation of the events going on

around him, and illustrate the interventions of the adult narrator in the text which colour the recollection of scenes and people with emotional rhetoric.

The action of the narrative takes place when the narrator was still a small child. His house is in close proximity to a Roman Catholic seminary and he observes a strong attraction being formed between his elder sister Antonia and one of the seminarists, Máximo Bretal, who comes to their house to help the child learn Latin. The long days of watching and studying are interrupted at one point by the arrival of the Mother's former confessor, Padre Bernardo, a Franciscan friar. The child is not allowed to stay in the room as Padre Bernardo talks with the Mother, but as he leaves he is detained by Basilisa la Galinda, an old wet nurse who still lives with the family, and together they listen behind the door. The conversation they overhear is one in which Padre Bernardo appears to be pleading the case of Máximo Bretal who, claims the friar, is in grave danger of selling his soul to the Devil in order to gain success with Antonia and that only the Mother can avoid this by handing over her daughter, thereby removing the need for a pact. The child does not see how, the conversation having ended, Bernardo could have left the room without him seeing, but he does witness the exit of a black cat. Later Basilisa reports that Padre Bernardo is reputed to currently be far too far away to have attended the house in person. From this time on the Mother is increasingly bothered by the presence of the black cat which only she could see or feel, and which leaves her in great pain. The only person who can relieve her of this seems to be the young child who, initially at least, can frighten the cat away by forming the sign of the cross over his mother. On one occasion the cat is seen leaving, but soon after the child loses his ability to help his mother and the black cat, if it is there, stays hidden where it is. Eventually the Mother becomes very ill and even though the black cat is frightened away once more, she dies. As the cat flees on this final occasion, Basilisa, who was waiting for it with a sharp pair of scissors, manages to cut off both its ears. In the aftermath of this tragic death the child and his sister are taken away to live with their grandmother. While they are in the process of leaving the

house, the child catches sight of Máximo Bretal with a black bandage around his head, under which the child believes he sees that his ears have been cut off.

If concerns about the complete unreliability of the narrator are put aside, *Mi hermana Antonia* is the narrative which of the three considered here comes closest to relating overtly supernatural events such as disappearing people and Bretal suffering the injury to his ears. The basic cause of these events is the passion between Máximo Bretal and Antonia. It would seem that the driving force behind the attraction between them finds its source in the student. Risco sees Bretal as the only active agent:

Frente a este sujeto determinante de la acción, Antonia, lánguida, secreta, silenciosa, pasiva (que se sugiere fascinada por el estudiante, alimentando una callada pasión por él, pero sumisa por entero a la autoridad materna), reproduce, aunque con particularidades propias, un tipo de personaje femenino a la vez muy romántico y muy modernista, sin que por eso pierda en nada de su sugestión: ésta aquí reside, básicamente, en que la seducción de que es objeto se aproxima en mucho a la *posesión*; con lo que se establece un nuevo contraste, no menos perturbador y disolvente, entre una personalidad tan inocente, dócil y pura como se muestra y su atracción por - y casi dependencia de - un individuo que se relaciona con los poderes infernales: un erotismo ambiguo, malsano y malicioso culebrea entonces a todo lo largo de la historia. (1987, 258)

Clearly, a straightforward Jacksonian analysis suggests itself here. On one level Bretal seems to be motivated by desire, in a literal, erotic sense. This constitutes a breach in the dominant socio-moral discourse because he should not only conform to the dictates of normal society, but also to those appropriate to the more oppressive strictures of lifelong celibacy as a Roman Catholic seminarist. Through this puncturing of the discursive fabric erupts the fantastic, in the form of the demonic / supernatural, and the events that occur from there on remain both subversive and beyond the bounds of reality until, with a crucifix and a pair of scissors, that fabric is repaired, and the fantastic ceases its operation. It is also clear, however, that Bretal's desire is represented as being diabolical even before supernatural events begin to happen, for example at the moment when he pleads his case to Antonia: 'No te dejo. Tú eres mía, tu alma es mía... El cuerpo no lo quiero, ya vendrá por él la muerte' (69). This sounds more like demonic possession than passion, unless, of course, it is a bluff. It is at this point that desire attacks the dominant social order, and not long afterwards

supernatural events start to occur; the cat appears for the first time, and the pseudo-Padre Bernardo arrives to put the student's case. Both understandings of the text are possible, and there is no reason to hold passion and possession as mutually exclusive.

Antonia is presented as not at all to blame for the outbreak of such immoral and anti-social desire. Her behaviour is only as it is because she must have been bewitched by a charm contained in an apple that she has eaten, passed to her by an old woman; a cameo role for the traditional *trotaconventos* figure:

Máximo Bretal ya tenía Órdenes Menores cuando entró en nuestra casa para ser mi pasante de Gramática Latina. A mi madre se lo había recomendado como una obra de caridad el cura de Bretal. Vino una vieja con cofia a darle las gracias, y trajo de regalo un azafate de manzanas reinetas. En una de aquellas manzanas dijeron después que debía de estar el hechizo que hechizó a mi hermana Antonia. (121)

The apple is often used as the means by which to introduce evil or harm into a person's life disguised as something good. Ever since being identified with the fruit of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, the apple has also been regarded as the transmitter of self-consciousness, especially sexual self-awareness, into an otherwise pristine and innocent situation.<sup>6</sup> The charm that has so affected Antonia is therefore inherently erotic, and this acts as something of a counterbalance to Bretal's claims not to be interested in her body.

The supposition that Antonia was bewitched conforms to a Galician superstition that men pursue women via the operation of the supernatural, a perfect case in point being that of *Milón de la Arnoya*.<sup>7</sup> Claiming, once again, to have been enchanted by means of the very same 'manzana reineta', the woman is eventually reduced to a bestial level by her satanic owner-lover:

En aquel momento oyéronse grandes voces que daba en la calzada Milón de la Arnoya. Eran unas voces como alaridos de alimaña montés, y la renegrada al oírlas se levantó en medio del corro de las mujeres, antes de que la hubiesen tocado con el rosario bendito. Espumante, ululante, mostrando entre jirones la carne convulsa, rompió por entre los carros de la vendimia y desapareció. (188)

<sup>6</sup> See Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1996, 35-36).

<sup>7</sup> See González López (1988, 292).

Woman is confined to a very traditional role, not in possession even of the simulacrum of a male construct of her own autonomous sexuality. The *modernista* aesthetic is not entirely absent though, Bretal's words and actions placing Antonia on a different plane to himself:

Entrábamos en la capilla, y él se arrodillaba en las gradas de la puerta donde acababa de pisar mi hermana Antonia. Quedaba allí arrodillado como el bulto de un sepulcro, con la capa sobre los hombros y las manos juntas. Una tarde, cuando salíamos, vi su brazo de sombra alargarse por delante de mí, y enclavijar entre los dedos un pico de la falda de Antonia:

-¡Estoy desesperado!... Tienes que oírme, tienes que saber cuánto sufro... ¿Ya no quieres mirarme?...

Antonia murmuró, blanca como una flor:

-¡Déjeme usted, Don Máximo! (122)

Examples of the Symbolist, as opposed to Decadent, representation of women are not uncommon in Valle-Inclán's short narratives, but this does not mean that they are ultimately treated with the respect that this might seem to imply. For example in *Rosarito* the search for idealised unity is turned sour because of the sexual and sinful union between an old seducer and a young innocent. This is represented as a sensation more than an event, beautifully portrayed through the use of symbols. Death, probably murder but possibly suicide, is the result. The hairpin driven through Rosarito's breast symbolically alters the joint bliss of the consummation of passion into the violence of rape and the self-seeking destruction of innocence. The thief of the body flees, the suggestion of bestiality lingering beyond his presence.

Although the accepted reason within the family for how Antonia was bewitched is to do with the apple, in fact there emerges through the narrative a stronger means of enchantment. When Bretal is pleading his case that he seeks Antonia's soul and not her body, he attempts to convince her by holding her in the power of his gaze: 'Mírame, que tus ojos se confiesen con los míos. ¡Mírame!' (122). The narrator observes the eyes of people he meets with particular attention and they are one of the elements which from the start make Bretal a frightening figure, and Antonia a vulnerable one:



Antonia tenía muchos años más que yo. Era alta y pálida, con los ojos negros y la sonrisa un poco triste [...] Sobre todo recuerdo sus ojos y la llama luminosa y trágica con que miraba a un estudiante que paseaba en el atrio, embozado en una capa azul. Aquel estudiante a mí me daba miedo. Era alto y cenceño, con cara de muerto y ojos de tigre, unos ojos terribles bajo el entrecejo fino y duro. (119)

Bretal's eyes have an impact not only on the narrator but on Antonia too. Where his words and protestations are resisted, his cat's eyes hold her enthralled:

Y la mano de cera tiraba tanto de la falda de mi hermana, que la desgarró. Pero los ojos inocentes se confesaron con aquellos ojos claros y terribles. Yo, recordándolo, lloré aquella noche en la oscuridad, como si mi hermana se hubiera escapado de nuestra casa (122-23).

It is as though it is through her eyes that Bretal implants desire in Antonia, and through her eyes that her innocence, both spiritual and by implication physical, is lost. Enchantment by means of eye contact was a popular belief in many cultures and it has a continuing impact even now as phrases like 'to cast the evil eye' and its equivalent 'mal de ojo' attest.

Although the eyes, and specifically their colouring, are ultimately a superficial aspect of the body, it has long been the case that they are taken to imply something far more fundamental about a person's character.<sup>8</sup> Antonia's black eyes, for example, are commented on by the narrator on more than one occasion. With her mother on her deathbed 'Antonia la miraba, pálida y suplicante. Yo pasé rodeando y vi de frente los ojos de mi hermana, negros, profundos y sin lágrimas' (131). Initially it is necessary to note that black eyes, particularly in combination with a white face, form part of the *modernista* aesthetic of femininity. For example the following verse opens the second part of Rubén Darío's poem *Retratos*, the first half having dealt with the male counterpart of the female archetype:

En la forma cordial de la boca, la fresa  
solemniza su púrpura; y en el sutil dibujo  
del óvalo del rostro de la blanca abadesa  
la lura frente es ángel y el ojo negro es brujo. (1967, 137)

<sup>8</sup> See Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1996, 365-66).

Clearly this is an example of trying to create a paradox so that the female object might be regarded as transgressive and therefore desired with greater passion. The archetype is significant but care must be taken not to transfer the colour symbolism directly into other analagous representations. There is no indication that Antonia's black eyes have an enchanting power, or even that they are symbolic of evil (the suggestion is that Bretal is diabolical, but his eyes are not black). Instead of this, it is worth considering other female characters to see whether they share the same physical attributes as Antonia. It is quickly apparent that her mother, for example, is even more starkly represented as the intrusion of black into surrounding white:

Mi madre era muy bella, blanca y rubia, siempre vestida de seda, con guante negro en una mano, por la falta de dos dedos, y la otra, que era una camelia, toda cubierta de sortijas. Ésta fue siempre la que besamos nosotros y la mano con que ella nos acariciaba. La otra, la del guante negro, solía disimularla entre el pañolito de encaje, y sólo al santiguarse la mostraba entera, tan triste y tan sombría sobre la albura de su frente. (123)

The importance of her hands will become apparent later but the impression that the combination of black and white is inherited, or even somehow inherent to being a woman is confirmed in the person of a third generation, the grandmother: 'La abuela ya llevaba un pañuelo de luto sobre el crespo cabello, todo de plata, que parecía realzar el negro fuego de los ojos' (134).

In comparison to the deep, black eyes of the women, Bretal's are light and feline. The link between Bretal and the black cat would be clear in this even if there were no other evidence. However, the narrator makes implicit connections between Bretal and Padre Bernardo, and Padre Bernardo and the cat, so there would appear to be very little doubt:

De pronto, aquella tarde, estando mirándolo [a Bretal], desapareció. Volví a salmodiar mi latín, y llamaron en la puerta de la sala. Era un fraile franciscano, hacía poco llegado de Tierra Santa. (123)

Basilisa escapó conmigo, y vimos pasar a nuestro lado un gato negro. Al Padre Bernardo nadie lo vio salir. Basilisa fue aquella tarde al convento, y vino contando que estaba en una misión, a muchas leguas. (126)

In fact the black cat soon becomes the central symbol of *Mi hermana Antonia*, indicative of Bretal's presence at the heart of the family. The black cat has an extensive provenance in folk tales as a harbinger of misfortune and a representation of evil, not least because it was traditionally involved in the occult, being the normal familiar for a witch. This was specifically the case in Galicia: 'El gato es expresión de brujería en el ámbito de la vida aldeana de Galicia, y su presencia, nuncio de desgracias' (Campanella, 1966, 377). It is also a literary archetype, especially within the genre of the macabre, as tales such as *The Black Cat* (1843) by Edgar Allan Poe typify. Valle-Inclán also employed the same animal in *Beatriz*, where it seems to act as a moral barometer, its presence indicating, or even symbolising, the proximity of evil. In *Mi hermana Antonia*, however, the cat is not simply passive, a symbolic commentary on the action. It is the cat which seems to be the cause of the mother's illness and ultimate death, although precisely how it does so remains a mystery throughout the narrative. Given the fact that it does not physically attack her, it seems to act as an emotional or psychological trigger to a physical or, more probably, mental problem already residing within the mother.

Bretal's other incarnation, the apparently false Padre Bernardo, has a greater impact on the narrator than the cat does. Due to an incident when he kneels to receive the friar's blessing, the narrator associates him with a Satanic presence: 'Quedé arrodillado mirándole y esperando su bendición, y me pareció que hacía los cuernos. ¡Ay, cerré los ojos, espantado de aquella burla del Demonio!' (124). 'Hacer los cuernos' is a gesture which is widely recognised throughout various parts of Europe, particularly in Spain, Portugal and Italy.<sup>9</sup> The most common meaning for this gesture is to do with the horns put on the head of a cuckold i.e. on a husband whose wife has given over her body to another man. Making the gesture is an indication of weak masculinity on the part of the recipient, who is incapable of warding off the attentions of a stronger, more predatory male. Initially this does not seem to make much sense until a secondary meaning of the horn-sign is considered. Morris gives the following

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<sup>9</sup> See Morris (1979, 129).

alternative explanation for how horns can also simultaneously indicate the presence of the Devil:

The horns of the horn-sign are those of the devil, and [...] they relate to the gesturer rather than the victim. It is the gesturer who, summoning up the devil's aid by making the sign of the horns, *causes* the cuckoldry of the victim. In fact, most references to the gesture see it as mimicking the imaginary horns worn by the cuckold himself, rather than as the devil's horns that are causing the cuckold to be. But symbolic equations make strange leaps, and it may well be that the cuckold, in wearing the horns, was seen as someone who had been recently 'horned by the devil'. (123-24)

Any suggestion of cuckoldry seems to be improbable given that the child is so young and it is clear that the recipient understands it as a form of curse by the Devil. However, it is curious that this is not the first time that the child has noticed the horn-sign in an improbable context. The first time that he does so seems to indicate that it is either a function of an over-active imagination or something which resides within the atmosphere of his home:

Al cruzar aquella antesala donde ahumaba un quinque de petróleo que tenía el tubo roto. La llama hacía dos cuernos, y me recordaba al Diablo. Por la noche, acostado y a oscuras, esta semejanza se agrandó dentro de mí sin dejarme dormir, y volvió a turbarme otras muchas noches. (120)

The horn-sign itself is formed by holding up the four fingers on one hand and then tucking the middle two in towards the palm, leaving the first and fourth fingers pointing upwards. It is therefore a remarkably strong coincidence that the narrator's mother has two fingers missing on one hand, which is why she wears a single black glove and keeps it hidden away in the folds of her clothing. At no stage does the text indicate which fingers are missing and making an unsubstantiated suggestion would be premature. What the text does indicate is that one of the few things she does use the hand for is crossing herself (123), which is the action the narrator was hoping to receive from Padre Bernardo.

The final reference to two fingers in the narrative is an apparently marginal one. The fingers in question belong to Juan de Alberte, Basilisa's brother and the tailor who is the possible owner of the scissors with which Basilisa attacks the cat. In the

aftermath of the mother's death he enters the room along with a small crowd of other people: 'El sastre, con la cabeza vuelta, corretea tieso y enano, arrastra la capa y mece en dos dedos, muy gentil, la gorra por la visera, como hacen los menestrales en las procesiones' (132).

Increasingly it would appear to be the case that the supernatural and mysterious elements of this narrative cohere around the figure of the narrator's mother, and specifically around the black-gloved hand with two missing fingers. Risco (1987, 258) makes passing reference to sexual ambiguity as far as the mother is concerned as well as Antonia, but he does not pursue the subject beyond referring to the outward physical manifestation of her dual nature: the black hand and the white hand. Campanella (1966, 375) brings to mind that in Galicia the 'black hand', or '*mouraman*', is a demon who lives in the woods. However, it is by turning to some Freudian psychoanalysis that a possible explanation becomes apparent.

The first thing to notice is that the narrative makes no mention of a father for the children. Since the narratives of *Jardín umbrío* are inter-related, it seems to be the case that even though he was perceived to have escaped from prison in *Del misterio* he either never made it back or he has left since. This family situation of an absent father is frequently repeated particularly in the *Sonatas*, and also in *Beatriz*, *Rosarito*, and *Milón de la Arnoya*. Bretal is therefore the dominant male (as is Bradomín) and as Gibbs (1991, 152) points out, the mother figure is often herself highly eroticized while still trying to protect daughters who double as her rivals. Examples would be the Princesa Gaetani and María Rosario (*Sonata de Primavera*), Carmen and Maximina (*Sonata de Invierno*), and Concha both has and is a mother (*Sonata de Otoño*). Daughters tend to be destined for the convent, both figurative and literal, at least in part so that the mother can remove a rival from the vicinity.

Two possibilities flow from this simple fact. The first depends upon a significant degree of conjecture and therefore is only suggested as an intriguing hypothesis. If the fingers missing from the mother's hand are those which turn it into the horn-sign then it is possible that they were lost as either a literal punishment or a symbol of her

having been unfaithful to her husband while he was imprisoned. Whether literal or symbolic it would be a fitting result according to the biblical principle of *lex talionis*, or as a radical response to the New Testament injunction 'If your right hand causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away' (Matthew 5: 30, Revised Standard Version). The black hand, which she attempts to keep hidden from all around her (excluding it from most of the normal routines of life as the sign of perversion which she now rejects) but which occasionally emerges through the centre of the surrounding whiteness, especially when she feels the presence of the black cat, would therefore represent her transgressive sexuality. The black cat too seems to materialise in the middle of the white sheets (131), an example of inexplicable reinscription of the perversion which refuses to be repressed.

The other possibility involves the operation of the Oedipus complex. With the father absent, the young male child sees the way clear for him to move into the father's place at his mother's side. In this he faces opposition from the other male in the house, Bretal. This at least would make sense of Padre Bernardo's apparent act of making him a cuckold, signifying that he has been beaten by a stronger male who intends to take the primary position in the household, possibly with reference both to Antonia and to her mother. The illness would then be indicative of the struggle she has both with Bretal and with herself to prevent him taking that position, and the black hand a symbol of the fact that she must inevitably fail in her resistance. The fact that Bretal's cat's eyes are stronger than Antonia's black ones prefigures the result of the struggle. Ultimately in this world controlled by *modernista* aesthetics, women are constituted as the weaker sex. The only aid she receives in her struggle is from her young son who, in his innocence, is able to oust the black cat even though he is able to see it under her sheets. Without knowing what he is doing, the fact that he reclaims his position (in place of his father) enables her to be free of the black cat; however, even that is an unpredictable victory and he has no power whatsoever over the black hand, the weakness from which she can never be free.

This, however, is not the conclusion to the narrative. Basilisa's action in cutting off the cat's ears (the closest thing it has to a pair of horns), carried out with the scissors of another man who, incidentally, has his fingers intact, seals the action of the supernatural just as transgressive desire is brought to an end with the mother's death. The latter is indicated by the mother's hand being tucked away in sheets for the final time: 'Mi madre estaba yerta y amarilla, con las manos arrebujadas entre los pliegues de la sábana' (132). Death seems to have been the only way in which this transgression could be finally laid to rest. That the Devil has been forced out of social reality once again is attested to by the dehorning of Bretal in all his guises, the bloody bandages around his head symbolic of his castration for his involvement in the Oedipal triangle.

Whether the narrator is reliable, partly reliable or completely unreliable, the action of the fantastic in this *modernista* text is indisputable. The dynamics with which it moves seems to respond to the process of transgressive reinscription and it is expressed through linguistically marginal representations of the body. The complex relationship between gestures, fingers, hands, horns, ears and eyes, shrouded as they all are in the uncertain mists of impression and memory, demonstrates how the fantastic refuses to be repressed and how it erupts most powerfully through somatic mutation.

## Reinscription and the Body of the Fantastic: The Transitional Novels of Eduardo Zamacois

It has already been observed that fantastic texts in Spain around the turn of the century are usually produced at the margins of an author's more widely recognised literary tendencies. In the case of Eduardo Zamacois they mark both a period of transition and an enduring fascination. Known primarily as the wellspring of the vogue for erotic fiction which sustained the popularity of Felipe Trigo and Antonio Hoyos y Vinent, according to Luis Granjel (1980) he both established the basis for a native Hispanic tradition and did much to introduce elements from the French *galante* genre. This process of cross-fertilisation took place between 1893 and 1905: 'En toda su producción anterior a 1905 el ingrediente erótico es componente obligado' (32). A contemporary critic, González-Blanco, made the following reference to Zamacois in 1909: 'Antes de que él escribiese sus primeras novelas [...] toda nuestra bibliografía erótica hallábase reducida a infectas narraciones escatológicas, que erizaban los nervios del más sereno y alarmaban el pudor del menos timorato. La obscenidad era erotismo, antes de que conociésemos a Zamacois' (985). Trigo in particular went on to avoid drawing on the *galante* tradition and sought to expand the restricted possibilities inherent in Spanish Naturalism, so where Granjel describes Zamacois' work as 'amena y frívola y sensual' (33), Trigo's was 'seria y profunda, algo así como cursos prácticos de psicología y de fisiología' (33).

Aside from his continuing involvement in his own personal writing, Zamacois was also caught up in the commercial publication of short fiction, and this came to dominate his life between 1905 and 1910. After several abortive attempts he eventually succeeded in bringing *El cuento semanal* out on to the streets of Madrid, and despite a series of further setbacks it became a commercial success. Granjel offers



this analysis of the sorts of categories of material which made their way into the public domain through the pages of *El cuento semanal*:

Integran en el primero escritores a quienes corresponde el calificativo de eróticos; el segundo lo forman novelistas adscritos a un remozado realismo; finalmente cabe distinguir en el segundo de los grupos mencionados varios escritores a quienes ya Cansinos-Assens confirió el calificativo común de madrileñistas y costumbristas. Lo característico de estos escritores sería, en unos, su ligazón al realismo decimonónico y en otros una preferencia por la literatura erótica; vinculaciones ambas en casi todos matizadas gracias a la aceptación de ciertas novedades estilísticas y al influjo ejercido en ellos por la novela europea del momento, la francesa de preferencia. (142)

In the light of the path that Zamacois was about to follow, it is perhaps puzzling that any mention of the supernatural in the above assessment is notable only by its absence. For Granjel, when Zamacois returned to his writing he did so with a fresh set of objectives:

Un paréntesis que Eduardo Zamacois abre en su producción como novelista en 1905 y no clausura hasta cinco años después, separa la primera etapa de su vida de escritor de la que da comienzo en 1910 y que reinicia, acabo de indicarlo, con una labor literaria bien diferente. Su apartamiento de la novela 'galante' se confirma, pues aunque lo erótico seguirá presente en algunas de sus novelas, así en *El otro* y en la titulada *El misterio del hombre pequeño*, la inclusión de lo sexual en su trama viene impuesta por la peripecia que el argumento obliga a vivir a los personajes y no es consecuencia de un frío cálculo que busca asegurar, con tal proceder, la fácil comercialización de la obra. (35-36)

At the same time, Zamacois broke with his publisher, Sopena, who seemed loth to let a commercially successful author change his style of writing. He was thrown a lifeline by Renacimiento and from that point could indulge his new, apparently unrelated, interests, travel writing and the world of the spirit. Even so, he did not completely discard all his old literary garments and Granjel identifies the combination of elements which will be considered in greater detail here:

En *El otro* y *El misterio del hombre pequeño* su autor descubre la curiosidad que entonces debió sentir por conocer la por muchos creída influencia ejercida en la conducta humana por factores sobrehumanos; en ambas novelas este ingrediente confiere particular cariz al componente erótico que también está presente en su trama argumental. (37)

It would be incorrect to maintain that the exploration of the supernatural undertaken by Zamacois is limited to the two texts indicated above. Several of his short narratives employ some of the same techniques and thematic concerns, especially those included in the collection *La risa, la carne y la muerte*, published in 1930. In case there were to be any doubt on the part of the reader, the third section is subtitled *Cuentos de asesinos, ladrones y fantasmas*. However, it is the novels *El otro* and *El misterio del hombre pequeñito*, published in 1910 and 1914 respectively, which are vital to a wider study of the fantastic in Spain. Although Cruz Casado (1994, 27) pays them passing attention in his sweep of pre-Civil War twentieth-century fantastic literature, these texts have never been accorded the critical analysis they undoubtedly warrant.

*El otro* had initially been written as a short story, but with his change of publisher Zamacois decided to use that text as the final chapter of a novel of the same name. The narrative opens with Juan Enrique Halderg, Baron de Nhorres, awaiting his lover, Adelina Vera. Shrouded from the start in a dark, brooding and portentous atmosphere, the tale starts to unfold. When Juan Enrique and Adelina first met, she was the victim of physical, sexual and emotional abuse by her impotent and brutal husband, Alberto Riaza. The meeting grows into an affair which might have remained hidden had Adelina not become pregnant. The pair decide on murder, but once the deed has been accomplished by pushing Alberto over a cliff and smashing his head with stones, they gradually start to feel the baleful presence of an unquiet spirit. The bastard child, Honorato, sickens badly, and Juan Enrique increasingly attributes this to Alberto's malignant spirit undertaking a cruel revenge. Adelina is also in the grip of an unusually persistent force. Each night, when alone and asleep, she feels herself being visited by a presence who arouses in her new heights of sexual ecstasy. The visits become more regular and are repeated several times a night. Honorato passes away and a gap starts to open between the lovers, a gap seemingly caused by Adelina's night-time escapades and the onset in Juan Enrique of the impotence that used to haunt Alberto. Juan Enrique is successively further marginalised by Adelina, who has

turned cold and cruel to her former lover. The visitor to her bed at night is confirmed to be Alberto's ever-strengthening spirit, a fact which Adelina accepts with comparatively little perturbation. Juan Enrique turns into an emotional cripple, only once summoning the willpower to attempt to leave, merely to be prevented from so doing, he claims, by Alberto, who has not as yet finished exacting his revenge. When Adelina, at Alberto's behest, invites Juan Enrique to take a holiday from Madrid with her, he readily agrees. However, Alberto accompanies them, even increasing the frequency and freneticism of his visits to Adelina, and with Juan Enrique in such close proximity, the latter can no longer control his reaction. He shoots at Alberto, but only succeeds in killing Adelina. Remorse-stricken and full of panic, he finds the restraining hold over him is broken and he flees from wrathful justice. From this point until the narrative picks up again in the final chapter there is a lacuna of a couple of years. Having escaped the immediate consequences of his actions, Juan Enrique returns to visit Adelina's grave. He has a strange request to ask of the the cemetery-keeper, an old no-nonsense pragmatist without a superstitious bone in his body. Juan Enrique employs the man, Bonifacio Crespo, to place letters on Adelina's tomb. It transpires that Juan Enrique thinks himself to still be in contact with Adelina; he believes she is being tortured in the spirit-world by Alberto. Bonifacio agrees to the commission and fulfils it scrupulously, but soon, in spite of his hard-nosed attitude towards life, he begins to grow uneasy, and he tries to back out and return to his previous state of impoverished contentment. Unfortunately, it is too late. One night Bonifacio feels besieged by an invisible presence and while trying to renounce his part in the whole situation, senses the touch of another world. His death is followed swiftly by Juan Enrique's suicide, with the suggestion that the battle is about to be joined once more on another plane.

*El misterio del hombre pequeñito* picks up on many of the same themes and motifs as *El otro*, although the atmosphere is for the most part very different. The community of Puertopomares is made up of singularly ordinary people, even given the fact that the social group on which the narrative concentrates is that of the educated

bourgeoisie. The only idiosyncrasy to be made immediately obvious is that a very low proportion of this group are married. On the outskirts of the town itself, as befits people of lower social status and moral reputation, live Toribio Paredes, his sister Rita and Frasquito Miguel, the former's business partner and the latter's husband. Toribio and Rita find one night that they have been sharing the same, very specific dream: each feels that they have been visited by don Gil Tomás and told to murder Frasquito Miguel. Don Gil, very small in stature and with a yellowing face, could choose to mix with the same social group as the doctor, the judge and the mayor, but instead seems to keep himself to himself. The respect, even the fear he provokes in those who know him is well founded: without being aware of it himself, his spirit regularly leaves his sleeping body and visits other people in their dreams. In particular, his spirit sexually possesses all the women of the community. However, his hatred of Frasquito is motivated by revenge; Frasquito had murdered don Gil's father and although don Gil's waking mind is unaware of this, the spirit is determined to exact punishment. After incessant prompting and with the lure of financial gain, Toribio and Rita eventually murder Frasquito, successfully making it look like an accident. Having found Frasquito's carefully hoarded and elaborately hidden lifesavings, the Paredes move with Rita's four children, three of whom are by Frasquito, into the centre of the town and open a shop. The townswomen, meanwhile, still besieged by the spirit of the little yellow man, have been sharing their experiences, and public opinion starts to move against him. Rita continues to be troubled by her dreams of don Gil, this time he insists that she must murder the three children she had by Frasquito and thereby put an end to his malevolent line. She accedes and ensures that they are all run over by a train, but where before she was the epitome of emotional and psychological obduracy, Rita breaks under the strain and all but in a trance informs the judge of what she and Toribio have done. A trial ensues and don Gil is named by the Paredes as the author and originator of all these misdeeds. Appearing before the court, still unaware of what his spirit has been doing, don Gil rebuts the charges and succeeds in maintaining his innocence, although the people of Puertopomares more than half believe the accounts

presented by Rita and Toribio. His good fortune, however, does not last. Only one woman, doña Fabiana, has avoided don Gil's night-time clutches, and this because of her husband's aggressive and restless spirit. One night, don Ignacio wakes with the recollection of a dream in which there was a struggle between himself and don Gil; the following morning the little man is found dead in his bed.

Fundamental to any critical analysis of the operation of the fantastic in these narratives is an assessment of the relationship between the waking world and the realm in which spirits apparently roam almost without limit. In *El otro*, Juan Enrique senses Alberto's spirit soon after his body has been dispatched to the bottom of the sea and in his son's sudden sickening is certain he recognises the result of being cursed from beyond the grave (66-67). Dr. Carlos Fontana, to whom he recounts his suspicions, rejects such an interpretation as any good Positivist would:

Yo, como casi todos los médicos, soy materialista. Para mí, el alma es una secreción cerebral, un producto orgánico, como la bilis. Mi teoría será todo lo triste, todo lo desoladora que usted quiera, pero es la única sancionada por la ciencia. Renuncie usted á esas fantasmagorías que le atormentan y que son impropias de un hombre culto. Detrás de esta vida, amigo Halderg, no hay nada, si no es la evolución ciega de la materia que se pudre en la huesa para luego transformarse en aire, en lluvia, en planta. Cuando el corazón se para y la sangre se enfría y detiene en las arterias, el pensamiento se apaga en el gran sueño y todo ha concluído. (67)

Juan Enrique stoutly opposes this, not from the point of view of a superstitious belief in the supernatural but through a redefinition of what constitutes the natural world. This argument is backed by a wealth of pseudo-scientific discourse and hypothesis, often mirroring that employed by Fontana:

Consumado el fallecimiento del cuerpo, su alma aún puede subsistir quince, veinte, cuarenta años ó más... separada de aquél [...] En esta segunda vida de nuestra conciencia, las almas adquieren una acuidad sobrehumana que las permite vislumbrar el porvenir y conocer nuestros pensamientos más ocultos. Allí se reúnen, conversan unas con otras, se aconsejan, discuten, se separan... También gozan de una movilidad extraordinaria, semejante á la de las ondas hertzianas que las permite recorrer en pocos segundos distancias enormes. Esta nueva existencia, aunque infinitamente sutil, se halla también sujeta á las leyes del tiempo y de la evolución universal. Como los cuerpos, las almas que dejaron su envoltura carnal se transforman, envejecen y mueren. (69-70)

Consciousness, therefore, continues after death, but without the implication of immortality. For Juan Enrique this is a rigorous and rational approach; it requires no faith, posits no weakness of intellect and obeys no doctrine but that of science: 'Las religiones aceptan una vida después de la actual. Yo, no: para mí sólo hay una vida... pero dividida en dos fases, visible la una, invisible la otra, aunque inseparables. Y esa segunda existencia late en nosotros desde que nacemos' (73). The doctor, however, reacts to this new rationality as though it were incipient lunacy and the treatment he prescribes is straight out of a medical culture still dominated by the dogma of the asylum: 'No descuide ni los fosfatos ni las duchas; para combatir con éxito á los espíritus no hay como el agua fría...' (75). These words carry an uncomfortable echo of the medical advice proffered by Alberto in his capacity of doctor of a sanatorium to Juan Enrique, who presents himself as a patient in order that his presence around the house should not arouse too much suspicion. Juan Enrique is diagnosed as mildly unbalanced and feeling for the first time 'la fuerza tiránica de un carácter extraordinario' (37), he is initially prescribed medicine, which he subsequently avoids taking: 'Fiel á la línea de conducta que se había impuesto, Juan Enrique continuó asistiendo á la consulta de Riaza dos veces por semana. Sin causa aparente, su dolencia parecía haberse agravado. El médico le aconsejó tomar duchas' (38). He takes the showers on the premises, thereby introducing himself into structural aspects of the notion of being a sanatorium patient.

Given the detail which Juan Enrique attaches to his theory, it would be reasonable to assume that he has given it a fair amount of thought. Added to which, it was not something he received passively from another source: 'Es una teoría extravagante, completamente mía, que no he leído en ninguna parte' (68). Neither is it fully implemented in the action of the narrative; for example, there is never any significant evidence for the activity of more than one spirit, Alberto's, let alone for that of a whole society. The only person to corroborate Juan Enrique's analysis of the situation is Adelina and she takes a lot of convincing: 'Adelina Vera le escuchaba atentamente; ella no participaba de aquellos temores supersticiosos; Juan Enrique era un

neurasténico en quien la tisis, que heredó de su madre, comenzaba á realizar estragos evidentes' (96). Indeed, it is not until after the death of Honorato and the onset of impotence in Juan Enrique that she becomes convinced that her night-time spirit of lust has anything to do with Alberto at all:

Noches después, la joven experimentaba en sueños una alucinación semejante. ¿Era que Alberto Riaza iba acercándose á Adelina, ó era, simplemente que ésta, por obra de la exaltación creciente de sus nervios, estaba mejor apercebida y dispuesta para sentirle?... Lo cierto fué que aquel fantasma oscuro, nebuloso, vibrante de insaciable y refinada salacidad, que la joven, entreabriendo los párpados, veía cernerse sobre su lecho y envolverla luego en un abrazo de sombras, cobró de pronto las proporciones y la expresión de un cuerpo humano. Adelina Vera, que se había acostado muy fatigada y estaba segura de dormir profundamente, se preguntaba, como otras veces lo hizo, si no estaría soñando. Este vulgar fenómeno de bicerebralismo subsistió algunos momentos, pero luego se apagó, vencido por la intensidad de la alucinación, penetrante y regalada. El incubo misterioso, entretanto, iba definiéndose, hasta que sus facciones se precisaron. Era Riaza. (176)

Initially the text expresses a certain amount of hesitation, possibly borrowed from Adelina's own thoughts on the subject, as to whether or not the identification of the spirit is produced by her willingness to believe in him. Through the ambiguity of the objective, third-person narration, the text perpetuates and accentuates the uncertainty experienced by the reader. From this moment on, Adelina's acceptance of Alberto's presence is total and unconditional, avoiding too searching an interrogation of the phenomena which she is experiencing. As Alberto's spiritual form gradually solidifies and defines itself, the level of contact between the renewed husband and wife extends to two-way conversations. The third-person, impersonal narrative voice does not allow for the interpretation that Adelina is either confused, deliberately manipulative or mad. Nevertheless, the suspicion remains that Juan Enrique is not merely an observer of events happening around him, but is in some sense part of the generating force behind the spiritual occurrences. Juan Enrique's personal upbringing and ancestry would appear to predispose him to a nervous condition of the kind diagnosed by Fontana, especially the lack of social contact to which he was exposed until the age of thirty (12-13). The only other person in the narrative to have substantial contact with

the spiritual world as Juan Enrique has defined it is Bonifacio Crespo. He too is placed in a situation of considerable nervous tension and anxiety, and although the narrative does superficially encourage an explanation of his death which involves the action of a spiritual agent, it is implicitly equally possible that he simply frightened himself to death:

Abrió la ventana y arrojó los fragmentos de papel al espacio. Pero el viento, *semejante* á un espíritu, los devolvió todos á la habitación, llenándola con el rumor rastreado de aquellos pedazos, unos oscuros, otros blancos, que volaban de un lado á otro, deteniéndose sobre los estantes ó deslizándose por los rincones, bajo los muebles, como mariposas agoreras. Bonifacio Crespo, corriendo tras ellos, pudo coger algunos, que inútilmente quiso lanzar á través de los barrotes de la ventana; el viento los rechazaba; la ventana, abierta sobre la noche negra, los escupía; *parecía* una boca. Entonces el viejo sólo pensó en huir. Abalanzóse á la puerta; la llave, los cerrojos, chirrearon entre sus manos frenéticas; abrió. Una racha de aire apagó el quinqué, y los pedazos de papel se arremolinaron chocando como murciélagos en las tinieblas. Bonifacio Crespo *sintió* que unas manos le sujetaban por los hombros, y el terror le privó de sentido; su corazón se detuvo. Cayó al suelo de bruces, muerto. (320, italics mine)

The italicised words indicate that once again the narrative refuses to unconditionally confirm the action of the supernatural and that it may be that characters are allowing themselves to be psychologically affected by a strong series of coincidences and appearances.

One last aspect to be considered is the physicality of the spiritual form. If while dreaming Adelina comes to identify Alberto as her shadowy lover, the question must be asked as to what a person in a waking state might perceive. It is significant that the moment of identification happens directly after Juan Enrique has placed her under tremendous emotional and psychological pressure by saying that he can see Alberto's spirit while they are both awake. Three times Adelina says she is unable to see anything, yet for Juan Enrique the form is discernible at the very margin of his visual sense:

El barón de Nhorres, sin embargo, dentro de lo extraordinario de sus afirmaciones, parecía discurrir acordadamente. A Riaza no le distinguía bien. Estaba cierto de que era él, porque aquella sombra tenía las proporciones, el ritmo y las actitudes del muerto, mas no acababa de verla de modo limpio y



terminante; diríase que entre ella y él había un cristal empañado. Acaso, con auxilio de una lupa, hubiera podido fijarla mejor: así, a simple vista, era algo incoherente, neblinoso, tenue como la sombra que proyectase sobre la blancura del estuco el humo de un cigarro. (173-74)

The very marginality and uncertainty of Juan Enrique's perception seems to be a further example of the text refusing to confirm objectively the reality of what he sees in front of him. However, once he is sure in himself that he has seen Alberto, the visual perception becomes more regular, be it as a white streak in Adelina's eye (175) or a more substantial form at the moment of the fatal shooting:

El choque de un mal presentimiento le despertó á media noche; hallándose en actitud supina, su primera mirada fué para el techo; la luna anegaba la habitación en una evaporación luminosa, suave, como hecha de sedas y de gasas fosforescentes. Inmediatamente Halderg recibió la sensación de que 'el otro' estaba allí. Su corazón no se había equivocado: tendido sobre el lecho de Adelina aparecía la sombra negra de un cuerpo. (272-73)

It must be noted, however, that apart from the relationship that Adelina carries on while asleep, Juan Enrique is the only one to actually see the insubstantial spirit. This accords with the general observation that, although Juan Enrique's interpretation of the two-stage pattern of life is at no stage contradicted either by the narrative voice or by the most fully-developed characters, it is precisely the limited scope of its action which raises questions concerning its universal veracity.

The same fundamental scheme is in operation in *El misterio del hombre pequeñito*, but there are one or two differences. Don Gil Tomás enters the world of the spirits not through bodily death but merely through the corporal relaxation of sleep. Both of his parents died when he was still in his infancy, and his absurd physical appearance led him to live a life of voluntary social isolation, all of which unconsciously brought about the development of this behavioural trait to its fullest extent:

Esta vida de concentración y retrainamiento sirvió para dotar á su espíritu de estupendos y hechiceros vigos. Ya en los términos de la segunda juventud y sin motivo ostensible ninguno, experimentó su actividad cerebral una desviación peregrina. Apenas dormido [...] su alma sabática corría libremente, multiplicando á capricho sus amoríos y sus viajes. (66)

This secondary existence in the world of the spirit is not a replica of the limiting and socially repressive one in which his body is confined. The possibilities that it opens up to a man who feels socially marginalised because of his appearance are immense:

Dormido don Gil era inteligentísimo, elocuente, impulsivo, insaciable en sus determinaciones y apetitos, y no había diques, ni cerrados lugares, ni voluntad capaces de resistir á las apremiantes sugerencias de su deseo: en sueños él discutía con los hombres, les arrancaba sus secretos más ocultos; les dirigía, les imponía sus propósitos, y si le eran agradables les inspiraba ideas que más adelante, en el transcurso de los días vulgares, parecían surgir naturalmente del limo de sus cerebraciones inconscientes para convertirse en acción y provecho; él, finalmente, hallábase presente á todas las conversaciones, y horro de escrúpulos deslizábase lascivo y sultán en el lecho de cuantas mujeres hermosas, casadas ó doncellas, vió y apeteció en la calle. (67)

In the spirit-world don Gil is special and unusual, far more powerful than physical reality allows him to be. Additionally, in more general terms, the social characteristics of the life of the spirit as explained by Juan Enrique Halderg are given full, substantial and unequivocal expression. It transpires that don Gil is perfectly normal in not remembering during the day what his spirit has been doing during the night. His abnormality lies in the fact that his spiritual presence is so vivid that many times those he has visited or spoken with recall some aspect of that meeting on returning to consciousness:

En sus peregrinaciones nocturnas don Gil saludaba muchas almas que, como la suya, iban y venían sabrosamente, horras de la dura sujeción carcelaria del cuerpo. Con los espíritus de las personas dormidas, entremezclábanse los de las ya difuntas, y entre todos componían multitudes numerosísimas, que viajaban, se relacionaban y tenían quehaceres, como si revestidos se hallasen de carne mortal. Los finados disfrutaban de esta segunda vida de noche y de día, sin preferir la luna al sol, como cree el vulgo; los dormidos sólo gozaban de ella de noche, cuando el sueño les restituía su libertad [...] Reintegrado cada espíritu á su cuerpo en el momento del despertar, raras veces consigue acordarse de lo soñado; cree haber dormido profundamente y que en su reposo no hubo imágenes. Error. Dormir es soñar, y soñar equivale á vivir la vida de los muertos. Pero sucede que esas ideas e imágenes que estremecen al espíritu durante sus horas libres, por su tenuidad, rapidez y selección carecen de la grosería material necesaria para conmover los centros nerviosos. (163-64)

The relationship that don Gil has between the waking world and the one enjoyed by his spirit while his body sleeps is not a stable one. It is more akin to a learning process

and while Juan Enrique postulates that the spirit would grow weaker the longer it has been permanently separated from the body, in neither narrative is that demonstrated to be the case. Alberto seems to grow in strength and in erotic potency, and don Gil experiences an increasingly clear delineation between the two facets of his life:

Poco á poco su alma, demasiado fuerte para su cuerpecillo, había ido independizándose, y apenas el cansancio físico lo postraba, desataba sus ligaduras y, como esencia que se evapora, huía de él. Lo que al principio era casualidad y suponía trabajo, hízose luego fácil costumbre. (148)

If Alberto's spirit leaves sufficient traces in the physical, waking world for Juan Enrique to convince himself that he is present, there is eventually little room for doubt in *El misterio del hombre pequeño*. The first incident is witnessed by Rita Paredes and once again it occurs at the absolute margin of her senses, almost extra-sensory:

Rita, de súbito, alzó la cabeza y un frío extraño y rápido, un temblor á flor de piel, pareció deslizarse por entre la raigambre de sus cabellos: hubiese jurado que una sombra fantasmal, una especie de inquietud amarilla, acababa de cruzar la habitación en línea recta desde la ventana al aposento donde dormía Toribio. La mujerona abrió bien los ojos, reconcentrando en ellos toda su conciencia para mirar mejor, y ya no vió nada. Aquél fenómeno, fuese impresión real ó alucinación vacua de sus sentidos, apenas duró un segundo, y no obstante, había sacudido sus nervios con la violencia de una descarga eléctrica. (51)

Where Rita on her own might more easily ascribe her nervous reaction to a trick of the light and Toribio at the same time dreaming of don Gil could just be a coincidence, a similar event later in the narrative seems designed to push happenstance into strong evidence. Don Gil's two maids, Pilar and Maximina, are awake and working one night after their master has gone to bed:

Callaron las dos azafatas y á la vez levantaron la cabeza, y sus miradas quedaron fijas en un punto del muro. Inmediatamente sus ojos se buscaron.

‘¿Has visto?’

‘Sí.’

Examinaron la lámpara.

‘¿Habrà sido un temblequeo de la luz?’

‘No sé.’

Era un vapor tenue, una especie de mancha amarilla levísima, la que un segundo - sólo un segundo - imaginaron ver resbalar por la blancura de la pared. Las pestañas, en el abrir y cerrar automático de los párpados, suelen echar sobre las pupilas una sombra así. Lo extraño, lo alarmante, fué que, simultáneamente, idéntico fenómeno se hubiese producido en las dos. (120)

They then go together to see if don Gil is still in his bed, which he is, or at least his body is. The best they can come up with is that he seems to 'be there but not there'.

It is significant that even in *El misterio del hombre pequeñito*, in which the existence of the spiritual world is incontrovertibly represented, the movements of spirits are only discernible right at the edges of normal, waking senses. If nothing else it throws a different light on the equivalent process in *El otro*, which is more immediately understood to be a product of the narration's sceptical perspective.<sup>1</sup> An alternative explanation might involve the operation of the fantastic as it starts to break down the delineation between reality and unreality. Successive theorisations of the fantastic have indicated that boundaries and categories (which include some elements by excluding others) are not lines but spaces, or even 'space between' according to Armitt (1996, 53-57). Todorov understood the pure fantastic to be a line from which any given text could fall away into the yawning generic chasms at either side of the marvellous and the uncanny (1973, 25). However, a line can never exist in two dimensions and so the fantastic functions not only as 'a borderline phenomenon' but simultaneously as 'a site of hesitancy, uncertainty and disquieting ambivalence' (Armitt, 1996, 31-32). The notion that the fantastic exists in an area Jackson refers to as 'paraxial' (1981, 19) and operates through Dollimore's repositioning of otherness, the 'proximate' (1991, 33), suggests that the line is being expanded into an area because it is analagous to concepts which lie alongside it. Just as perversion is marginalised and excluded before it is reinscribed at the centre of the subject, so too is the fantastic pushed to an ill-defined boundary area at the edge of existence before it re-emerges at the heart of reality.

The ultimate example of the diffuse nature of the boundary area between the world of the spirit and that of the body is of course the climax to the narrative, the death of don Gil. This is the strongest evidence available in either *El otro* or *El misterio del hombre pequeñito* of the direct effect in one realm of events that take place in the other and a clear example of the dissolution of boundary limits which often

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<sup>1</sup> See above, 130.

characterises the fantastic. Here body and spirit are shown to co-inhabit the same 'space between' the two realms. The actions that don Ignacio remembers from his dream and the timing of them correspond exactly with the consequences discovered in don Gil's house:

'Luchando á brazo partido caímos los dos al suelo; mas él quedó debajo, y yo, teniéndole bien sujeto con mis rodillas, empecé á estrangularle. ¡Ah, qué placer, cuando le cogí por el cuello, sintieron mis manos!... El perneaba, quería morderme, luego me pareció que vidriaba los ojos...' [...]

A la mañana siguiente corrió por el pueblo la noticia de que el hombre pequeñito había muerto. Sus criadas, cuando fueron á llevarle el desayuno, le hallaron tendido en su cama, frío y blanco. Los médicos á quienes el juez, don Niceto Olmedilla, encargó reconocer el cadáver, no hallando en éste nada anormal, certificaron que don Gil había fallecido de un derrame seroso. (366-67)

A general comparison between the two narratives therefore shows that although the fundamental basis of reality is very similar, there is far less reason to regard its presentation as ambiguous in *El misterio del hombre pequeñito* than in *El otro*.

One of the difficulties of understanding what don Gil, and therefore his death, might mean on a level beyond the superficial is not that the text does not give enough information, but on the contrary, far too much. He is described as fulfilling a psychological function within the social collectivity: 'la personificación o expresión mental del arcano inconsciente' (86). Ursula Izquierdo dreams of him being a superhuman and numinous creature who works hand in hand with a classical representation of death (76-8), and later he becomes death itself and more besides: 'Ramitas [personificaba] la ignorancia ambiente; don Gil, la incultura, gofería y atraso de todos. En su cuerpecillo los fanatismos religiosos peores, las supersticiones, la fe en la virtud de las cosas ocultas, cristalizaron. También parecía tener el rostro de la Muerte' (359). Don Gil becomes singularly over-determined during the course of the narrative, but the feature that seems to link these things together is that society would wish to try and exclude them all from the functioning of an ideal model of itself.

If considerations of the world of the spirit were original for texts by Zamacois, the same is not true of *modernista* texts in general.<sup>2</sup> While the application of an entire system of occult philosophy is not appropriate for these texts, individual elements undoubtedly are. With reference to *El otro* and *El misterio del hombre pequeñito*, the single most important aspect is the projection of the spirit either outside the body or from beyond the grave. Sperrati-Piñero (1974), in a chapter entitled 'Facultades y fenómenos paranormales', has the following under the heading *Proyección astral*:

Consiste en la separación temporaria del doble o cuerpo astral, durante la cual éste puede actuar independientemente y a distancias considerables del cuerpo físico, presentándose con diversos grados de densidad. La teoría de los dos cuerpos pertenece desde hace siglos a la tradición ocultista y los teósofos se atribuyen un conocimiento igualmente antiguo respecto de la proyección astral. (152)

The action of the spiritual double on the texts has already been amply demonstrated. However, it is still worth noting an additional spiritualist doctrine which occurs only in *El otro*: animism. Fraser summarises its function in *modernismo* and at the same time emphasises the continuity of the Occult which extends beyond the range of a single literary movement:

In Hispanic tradition, Modernism was a watershed which combined the heritage of the Occult derived from Medieval traditions, Romanticism, and French Symbolism, and which incorporated magical doctrines and alchemical symbolism throughout the movement. In a sense, one of the distinguishing features of Modernism is the fascination with the spirituality of everyday objects, a spirituality which is frequently derived from alchemical doctrines. The subject of alchemy as a magical creed owes its being to a belief in animism. Alchemy is a magical Practice that grows out of an underlying animistic Theory. If the basic tenet of animism is a primitive, mystical belief in a spiritual essence that forms the cementum of the universe, it then follows that visible forms of matter are derived from this essential *materia prima*, and that all nature is in a state of flux. (92)

Animism is limited in *El otro* to Juan Enrique as he was before Alberto's spirit took over every waking moment:

Desde muy joven, el barón de Nhorres fué un contemplativo inclinado á oír la voz de las cosas. Todo tenía para él una elocuencia, un gesto: en los cuartos de

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<sup>2</sup> See above, 90-91.

los hoteles á donde llegaba, sus maletas, colocadas en un rincón, parecían preguntarle: '¿Cuándo nos vamos?...'. Por las noches, bajo el silencio, el crujir de un mueble, el gotear isócrono de una fuente, la trepidación de cristales producida por una ráfaga de aire, todos esos ruidos levisimos que anuncian la labor - labor de años, de siglos - con que el tiempo va agrietando los muros, le daban la sensación de que la tierra era algo vivo, contráctil como un músculo, consciente tal vez. En el campo, esta emoción se acentuaba: los caminos, alejándose hacia el horizonte, repetían el ademán expresivo y orientador de un dedo índice; cada flor tenía una melancolía ó una risa, cada árbol un gesto; los olivos eran tristes, las encinas le animaban con su aspecto de fuerza, los cipreses, erguidos y desdeñosos ante la desolación de los cementerios, parecíanle filósofos estoicos; las montañas, con sus ecos diferentes, eran como monstruos milenarios y enormes, dotados de voz propia. (Zamacois, 1910, 158)

This is very much an isolated description of animism, but it is precisely that factor of isolation which is of the greatest significance. That aspects of the occult spiritualism which informed *modernismo* are present in these narratives is incontrovertible, yet there is also no doubt that Zamacois was in fact operating to a degree within a post-*modernista* aesthetic, corresponding more closely to the 'skeptical prose which heralds vanguardism' (Fraser, 28). The sheer energy which Juan Enrique could sense behind the surface of all matter matches the 'poetic sensibility' (Fraser, 28) of the *modernista* aesthetic, but for him all that is now at an end, which in turn must have implications for the texts with reference to their position relative to *modernismo*:

La tisis, que roía la delicada constitución de Halderg, hizo que esta emoción se trocase, de plácida y artística, en penetrante y dolorosa. Sus nervios, al hiperestesiarse, tornáronle pesimista; en su ánimo la idea de la muerte prevaleció; la Naturaleza ya no le parecía la misma; la noche tuvo para su alma acobardada más fuerza que el sol. La muerte de Honorato afirmó definitivamente esta malsana disposición. (Zamacois, 1910, 158-59)

The fact that animism now no longer forms part of Juan Enrique's view of the world must call into question the *modernista* credentials of the portrayal of other aspects of the spiritual dimension. When Speratti-Piñero compares spiritual projection to the experiences of the mystic saints (1974, 152), she effectively highlights the transcendental function of separating body and spirit. The implication of both *El otro* and *El misterio del hombre pequeñito* is that once the spirit has wrested control from the body, its dominion is only temporary and that in spite of some increased abilities, there remain many limitations. If Juan Enrique is correct, the second, spiritual, stage

of life is merely delaying permanent biological non-existence, and that delay is also a process of decay, since the spirit weakens as time passes. The spiritual life is the opening of a new vista on the same conflicts that tormented his bodily life. In one of his final letters to his dead lover, Juan Enrique shows himself to be convinced of what is to be in store for him:

Me suicidaré, sí; ¿á qué espero?... De este modo, si vives, iré á reunirme contigo y mataré 'al otro'; y si él te hubiese estrangulado ya, le mataré también. Yo sabré buscarle. Cada alma tiene su sino, y el sino de la mía es acabar con ese hombre; tal es mi obligación, y las faenas que nos impone el deber no deben dejarse inconcluídas. (310)

Don Gil, despite his ignorance of his own condition, seems for most of the narrative to be in a position of total domination, both in his waking body and in his life as a spirit. However, even he ultimately finds that he is not invulnerable. He both fails to foresee his own demise and fails to appreciate that another spirit could challenge his apparent strength.

Juan Enrique's suicidal aspirations are not purely linked to freeing his spirit to act directly against Alberto. There is, in addition, in his overall spiritualist thesis a belief in the innate desire to return to the beginning of life and to rest:

'La vida, durante la infancia,' decía Juan Enrique, 'es tan frágil, porque los niños acaban de salir de la tierra, y ésta les reclama, y poco á poco les atrae y acaba por llevárseles.'

Alegó en apoyo de su tesis razones extrañas: la tierra, la gran retorta donde se elabora el milagro de la renovación de las especies, ejerce sobre todo ser vivo una acción centripeta, y subsiste en nuestra carne un recuerdo inconsciente de esa atracción; por esto, cuando el hombre tiene sueño ó está cansado ó sufre uno de esos terribles dolores morales que le quitan el deseo de vivir, siente la necesidad exclusivamente material de echarse, de acostarse en el suelo, de volver á su madre. Buena parte del temor que nos inspira la muerte debemos achcarlo al recuerdo, subconsciente también, de lo que en existencias anteriores hemos sufrido. Por lo mismo quizás los niños, cuya memoria orgánica posee más nociones de las metamorfosis por que su carne ha pasado, temen á la muerte y á lo sobrenatural más que los viejos; para éstos, la muerte es una regresión al Gran Todo, una devolución que hacen á la tierra de la materia que ésta les dió en préstamo, y ellos, durante sesenta ó más años, usufructuaron. (131-32)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Juan Enrique's avowedly non-theistic philosophy would appear to be compromised to a degree by the reference to the 'Gran Todo'. This expression forms part of Krausist discourse which includes the



In very basic terms, and without entering too far into possible psychoanalytic critical interpretations at this point, this retroactive pull is consistent with an identifiable aspect of fantastic narratives as stated, for example, by Jackson (1981):

The fantastic can be seen as corresponding to the first stage in Freud's evolutionary model, that stage of a magical and animistic thought mode when primitive man and the young child have no sense of difference between self and other, subject and object worlds. Fantasy, with its tendency to dissolve structures, moves towards an ideal of *undifferentiation* [...] Freud sees it as the most radical form of the pleasure principle, a longing for Nirvana, where all tensions are reduced. This condition he termed a state of *entropy*, and the desire for undifferentiation he termed an *entropic* pull, opposing entropy to energy, to the erotic, aggressive drives of any organism. (72-73)

Juan Enrique would appear therefore to hold paradoxical views, and contradictions remain apparent between what he says and the circumstances that surround him in the narrative. The tensions implicit in this situation will be exacerbated by a fuller understanding of why the spirit world functions in the fashion it does.

It is in *El misterio del hombre pequeño* that the motivating force behind the active spirit world becomes apparent. Those spirits released from their sleeping bodies seem to be pure energy:

Llegaban á lo invisible por montones, en grupos alegres, cual viajeros que se apeasen de un tren, é inmediatamente trasladábanse de un lado a otro con la misma vertiginosa velocidad de su deseo. Porque el alma, toda el alma, es deseo. (Zamacois, 1914, 163)

Don Gil, in the middle of this community of unadulterated desire and in spite of the myriad symbolic dimensions he accrues in other parts of the narrative, fulfils a special function quite in keeping with the impact he has on people's dreams:

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doctrine of 'todo en Dios' or 'panenteísmo', a synthesis of theism and pantheism (López Morillas, 1956, 38-39). Indeed the overall shape of Juan Enrique's conception of human existence is decidedly Krausist in origin: 'El yo se conoce a sí mismo como finito [...] Lo finito es lo parcial y lo parcial presupone necesariamente un todo que es su fundamento. Este todo es, según Krause, la esencia original o primaria - *Urwesen* - de la cual brotan los dos elementos, cuerpo e intelecto, que se contienen en la unidad del yo. El cuerpo forma parte de la esfera de la Naturaleza, el intelecto de la del Espíritu. Naturaleza y Espíritu son, a su vez, esencias finitas que, en calidad de tales, postulan una esencia superior, infinita, fundamento de todas las esencias finitas y fuente de toda realidad. Krause llama a esa esencia superior *Wesen*, que puede traducirse por Ser Absoluto o Dios. El sistema krausista es, propiamente hablando, una *Wesenlehre* o Teoría del Ser' (López Morillas, 33). It would seem from this that Juan Enrique's personal philosophy is not as original as he claims.

Resucitaba don Gil la leyenda de los terribles vampiros, siempre prepotentes, sombras de muertos que, según la cosmogonía egipcia, acudían a disfrutar carnalmente de los vivos. Era el sabat, la epilepsia sexual que alimentaba el frenesí de la misa negra, la encarnación del deseo inmortal, del dios Deseo, insatisfecho perpetuamente. Era el brujo, que reía en el espanto de la Edad Media, y en su cuerpo mezquino vibraba, semejante á un imperativo específico inexorable, los millones de amores fracasados, de apetitos incumplidos, de sus progenitores. A tanto abarcaba el nocturno ambular de don Gil: y, á la mañana siguiente, nada: la inacción otra vez, la somnolencia de un vivir ocioso, la fealdad de su cuerpecillo enano, sobre cuyo semblante absorto, el cansancio de lo soñado iba añadiendo, día por día, una amarillez nueva... (67)

As don Gil is in spiritual form the epitome of desire, the ultimately desiring subject, then in general terms those others operating most effectively in the spiritual realm must also embody very strong desires: Alberto is the most obvious example, but don Ignacio also eventually demonstrates a great degree of power in this area and the implication is that so too will Juan Enrique and Adelina. *El otro* is not explicit in its support of the primacy of desire, but given the focus and intensity of the narrative's events it seems a reasonable supposition. Juan Enrique only goes as far as to say that some spirits are stronger than others, with adults outlasting children (70). It is, however, important to reiterate that although desire is principally expressed as sexual, it is not necessarily so, as demonstrated by don Gil's pursuit of Frasquito Miguel and the possible subsequent revenge planned by the latter against Toribio and Rita. The operation of Frasquito's spirit is never unequivocally confirmed, but who else is likely to have been accompanying Toribio if not his erstwhile partner: 'Algo extraño, una especie de invisible sombra, parecía marchar a su lado por los caminos' (244)? Who, for that matter, is controlling Rita's movements as she delivers her fatal letter (287-291)? It could be don Gil, but he has nothing to gain and much to lose from the exercise, so more probably it is Frasquito once again. In none of the above cases is desire codified as erotically motivated.

Desire, at least in the sense that it is used with reference to the fantastic, is not exclusively the preserve of physical passion.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that its critical adjunct transgressive reinscription can function within the narrative structure in a variety of

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<sup>4</sup> See Jackson (1981, 61-63).

different ways. Perhaps the most extensive example is that of the relationship between Juan Enrique and Alberto, which serves to demonstrate many facets of the doubling process already much discussed. Alberto initially appears to possess attributes totally opposite and alien to those of Juan Enrique. On meeting it appears that in some ways the two are sufficiently alike to feel the beginnings of friendship for each other:

Todas las mañanas, durante nueve días, un coche le llevó al Sanatorio. Así, poco a poco, la costumbre de verse con frecuencia iba poniendo lazos de amistad entre los dos hombres. Alberto Riaza, especialmente, llegó á sentir por el inglés afecto cordial. (38)

However, through the accounts presented by Adelina, even before this passage it has already been shown to be the case that they are very different men. Alberto leads a double life characterised by violence, cruelty, sadism and impotence. Juan Enrique, on the other hand, allows Adelina's voice to be heard; he is caring and most of all he is fecund, the most emblematic aspect of the diametric opposition between the two and the one which precipitates the main action of the narrative. This well-delineated distinction, however, is not uniformly maintained. When Adelina is first visited by her erotic night-time incubus she is convinced it must have been Juan Enrique's spirit, yet he believes it to have been Alberto (91-92). The incubus has emotional attributes completely alien to her ex-husband and much more in line with those of Juan Enrique. From this moment until Adelina's absolute identification of her spirit-lover as Alberto (176), Juan Enrique begins to display behaviour which is obviously reminiscent of the sadistic doctor. As Alberto increases his hold over Juan Enrique's mind, the death of Honorato (154), who was the outward indication of the ultimate distinction between the two men, erases the sign of their difference. Both, in terms of the end result, are as fecund, or as impotent, as each other. This is rapidly followed by Juan Enrique suffering the same impotence in the sexual act itself as did Alberto (159). The parallels and contrasts implicit in this can be thrown into sharp relief by considering two closely related incidents, the first between Adelina and Alberto, the second between Adelina and Juan Enrique:

Poco á poco Alberto Riaza iba exaltándose: él amaba á su esposa y ella tenía la obligación de ayudarle á ser feliz.

‘Desnúdate’, ordenaba.

‘¿Para qué?’

‘Porque yo lo quiero: desnúdate.’ (25)

‘Desnúdate’, imploró.

‘¿Para qué?...’

Adelina era ingenua; Halderg la miró de hito en hito, ofendido; su cólera, sin embargo, era injusta, las palabras de la joven no envolvían ninguna burla; la razón de su pregunta era evidente, saltaba á la vista. El había dicho: ‘Desnúdate’; y ella contestaba: ‘¿Para qué?...’; significando así que los esfuerzos de ambos, en aquella ocasión al menos, serían vanos. (163)

Apart from the immediate parallels between the two situations and the vocabulary employed, the ultimate conclusions are very distinct. By that, the suggestion is not that she obeys in one and not the other, since in fact she does undress on both occasions, but that different linguistic discourses finally hold sway on each occasion. Adelina’s language is purposive and in the first instance this is overcome by Alberto’s causal response. By not answering her question he imposes his discourse on hers and she is left linguistically disempowered. In the second instance, Adelina’s purposive voice is the dominant one, and Juan Enrique’s causal discourse lapses into silence. He is incapable of the same action of imposition as carried out by Alberto. Adelina’s discursive control is confirmed shortly after, the point at which Juan Enrique admits to himself that he has lost her:

[Juan Enrique] inició una caricia. Ella le rechazó con suavidad.

‘¿Para qué?’, murmuró; ‘tú estás malo, yo también ... Seamos juiciosos. Ya sabes que, por ahora al menos, sólo debemos querernos como hermanos...’

Adelina Vera tenía razón negándose á las caricias vanas de su amante. Juan Enrique estaba enfermo, inútil. ‘Para qué entonces?...’ Halderg sintió la justicia, toda la justicia escueta y cruel de aquella interrogación que parecía un reproche, y esto acabó de helar su carne.

‘¡Dices bien!’ repitió; ‘¿para qué molestarte?...’ (180)

What this might indicate about the change in Adelina will be discussed at length later, but at present the only distinction that can be made between the two men who were initially so opposed is that in their similarities, Juan Enrique is proving to be the weaker of the two.

As the boundaries between Juan Enrique and Alberto become more diffuse, the former continues to grow in his awareness of the effect the past is having on him. Impotence strikes Juan Enrique in the same way as it did Alberto and it has a very similar outcome; the descent into sadism and cruelty. Indeed this happens precisely because it has already happened before:

Súbitamente, el curso de sus ideas cambió; emociones sádicas le acometieron; las cicatrices que rompían la tersura blanca de aquella carne, le hablaron el lenguaje esotérico de las lujurias dolorosas. ¿Por qué no imitar el ejemplo de Alberto Riaza?... Recordó la historia de aquellas tres argollas sobre las cuales el médico ató á la Deseada una noche. ¡Ah, si él pudiese!... Una fiebre desconocida le invadía. (168-69)

Again, the issue of linguistic representation raises its head. The scars traced across Adelina's white flesh are the orthographic signifiers of masculine desire permanently inscribed on the feminine text/body. Adelina is discursively marked, but as will be seen later, language can be rewritten. Nevertheless, in this instance Adelina has already won the discursive battle, and she is not willing to cede: "Al otro se lo permitía porque me dominaba; pero tú no me dominas, á ti no te temo..." (170). It is very soon after these events that Adelina accepts her incubus to be Alberto's potent and fecund spirit. Having once supplanted Alberto, Juan Enrique, stripped of all those characteristics which allowed him to designate his rival 'other', is supplanted in return. He is made the outsider, the powerless, the impotent. As in *La sombra* by Pérez Galdós, neither can he give up and flee, because he is prevented from doing so by his adversary. He tries to leave both Adelina and Madrid, but after a four hour struggle through the city streets he lands once again at Adelina's door, an exhausted and brow-beaten Golyadkin at the mercy of the copy of himself who has usurped his place. A tragic conclusion is inevitable as doubles are utterly incapable of living with each other, yet in the final analysis events never turn out as expected. It is Adelina who receives the fatal bullet and Juan Enrique remains unreleased from his mental torment.

Alberto is not ultimately Juan Enrique's opposite but his proximate, which 'enables a tracking-back of the "other" into the "same".'<sup>5</sup> Juan Enrique's perverse desire has been dis-covered by the fact that the unavoidable result of an attempt to marginalise and expel perversity is its resurgence at the very heart of the system which has tried to exclude it.

The constructs of doubling imagery and the marginal reappearing at the centre of a system do not end with Juan Enrique and Alberto. Those things that function as doubles of Alberto are by association signifiers of desire and they too cannot simply be expelled without being reinstated centrally. The cat, Riri, is one such signifier. The linguistic link, Riri - Riaza, is obvious, and from its first entrance it seems to embody an enigma, just as cats always are supposed to have done:

El gato se aproximó ronroneando. Era grande, negro, de un negro lustroso; su cuerpo ondulante avanzaba por la alfombra sin ruido. Después, de un brinco, trepó al regazo de su ama, y sus ojos fríos, redondos y amarillos cual monedas de oro, se hincaron en ella. Adelina empezó á acariciarle, como para conjurar algún maleficio. (57)

In its own fashion the cat also carries within it a linguistic signifier, in this case a diacritical mark of open interpretation, or even over-determination:

Ante ella, Riri, inmóvil, con su cabeza cuadrada y pensativa, parecía un signo de interrogación. Creeríase que acechaba algo [...] Poco á poco, la inquietud de Adelina se convertía en pavor; sintió erizarse el vello finísimo que aterciopelaba sus mejillas; pensó que Riri, mirándola tan fijamente desde su reposo de esfinge, como exigiéndola una confesión, conocía la muerte de Riaza. (57-58)

Riri also exercises the same hypnotic power as her erstwhile master. The cat's eyes, being yellow, are the same colour as that most closely associated with Alberto. The continued presence of Alberto's spirit turns both Juan Enrique (223) and Adelina (266) attractive shades of yellow. For Halderg such colours have clear significance: 'El negro, que simboliza la duda, el silencio y la nada; y el amarillo, que expresaba la muerte' (271).

A further signifier of desire is the portrait of Alberto which so seems to dominate Adelina's house. Juan Enrique, totally inappositely, had used the image of the portrait

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<sup>5</sup> See Dollimore (1991, 33).

fading in its frame as a simile for the gradual weakening of the spirit after the death of the body (71). Alberto's portrait, however, is strangely attractive and Juan Enrique comes to believe it to be the outward sign of the dead man's spiritual presence. Juan Enrique suggests moving the portrait to a less prominent position:

Aunque cohibida por cierta inexplicable repugnancia, Adelina accedió á que el retrato de Alberto Riaza fuese trasladado á la guardilla. Ella misma lo descolgó para que se lo llevase Dolores. Luego, ante el largo trozo de pared que el lienzo ausente dejó vacío, los amantes experimentaron un raro malestar. (118)

When this does not alleviate the problem, instead of re-placing it as had been the solution to first suggest itself, Juan Enrique decides to sell it, to be rid of it for good. So the signifier for desire is initially marginalised and then expelled. However, in its absence it comes to control their thinking, even to the extent of relegating parental concern for the ailing Honorato to the back of their minds (143), until at last they give in and Juan Enrique sets out to reclaim the picture. Although this proves difficult, he succeeds and he proceeds to rehang the portrait in its original position. At the very moment he completes the task, Honorato breathes, or rather screams, his last; the symbol of 'normal', procreative desire is eliminated and the sign for perverse desire is reinscribed at the centre of their living-space. It is unsurprising that Juan Enrique should suffer his attack of impotence and feel the need to adopt Alberto's model of desire in the immediate aftermath of this event.

The most obvious form of doubling in *El misterio del hombre pequeñito* is not the 'doubling by association' of *El otro*, but 'doubling by division'. In other words, don Gil as body and don Gil as spirit are all part of the totality of don Gil. It is not the case that desire only manifests itself through his spirit, and the easiest way to assess this is to be aware of the importance of his yellow skin pigmentation. The hatred the spirit feels towards Frasquito Miguel is expressed in this basic fashion:

La acción demoledora del tiempo, con alcanzar á tanto, no gastaba los caudales de odio que don Gil Tomás llevaba consigo; y á este rencor, estéril pues que no rebasaba los límites de lo subconsciente obedecía la palidez alimonada de sus mejillas, el estupor constante y la expresión de frialdad y lejanía de sus ojos, la sobriedad esquiva de su trato, su aire siempre distraído y toda aquella emoción

de pesadumbre y silencio, en fin, semejante á un vaho, que irradiaba su diminuta persona. (69-70)

Yellowness is the outward sign of his state of perpetual desire, be that desire sexual in nature or rooted in anger or revenge. Desire is the dominant aspect of every facet of his life and yellow is the representation of both the pursuit of that desire and the lack of fulfilment it provides even when the immediate objective has been achieved. When awake and incapable of enacting the desire that he feels, don Gil's skin colour in fact turns white. The first occasion is caught up in an argument with a physically formidable adversary:

El hombre pequeñito, convencido de su debilidad, no había intentado defenderse; ni siquiera habló; pero su ira, su rencor, su impotencia, le subieron al rostro como una ola lívida. Sus labios, sus ojos, hasta sus cejas, emborronáronse en la misma nube blanca; su biliosa amarillez hízose nieve; estaba horrible, epiléptico, fantasmal, y los transeuntes mirábanle asustados: hallaban imposible que aquel hombre, en cuya cabeza no parecía haber quedado ni una gota de sangre, estuviese vivo. (79)

If the desire in the above case is a mixture of an expression of anger and an anticipation of revenge (which he achieves very soon after), then in the next it is erotic. Being present at the mating of horses on a stud-farm has no little effect on don Gil: 'Cuando don Juan Manuel y sus amigos salieron de la parada, el hombre pequeñito iba densamente pálido. Varias mozas, que en sueños le tuvieron entre los brazos, sintieron deslizarse por su carne supersticiosa un calofrío de miedo' (213). Presumably, white skin cannot mean an absence of desire in these examples; more likely is that it has been internalised until it can be expressed at a more opportune moment.

There are indications of 'doubling by association' in this narrative, but they do not carry the same resonance as in *El otro*. Rather than creating doubles, it seems that don Gil infects those around him, as in the case of don Niceto, the judge. Presiding over the initial trial of Rita and Toribio might appear to have placed him under increased pressure from don Gil:

En pocos días don Niceto Olmedilla había adelgazado; su perfil de convaleciente empeoró; parecía más pequeño, más descolorido; las gentes por burla,



empezaban á encontrarle ciertas semejanzas con don Gil; en realidad, el pobre hombre, tanto por pundonor profesional como por vanidad y ansias de exhibición, había trabajado mucho. (301-02)

The similarity between the two men is further extended soon afterwards, as don Niceto appears before the baying mob: 'En aquel instante la puerta de la cárcel se abrió y surgió don Niceto seguido de varios guardias civiles. A la luz débil de los faroles, la figura minúscula y asustada del juez parecía una mancha amarilla' (304). Even so, the process of identification gets no closer than this.

However, desire in *El misterio del hombre pequeñito* does not merely revolve around don Gil or depend upon the inter-relation between the waking and spirit worlds. The young ladies of Puertopomares are held in don Gil's grip at least in part because the usual method for attempting to control desire is through the institution of marriage. Yet this process has suffered a severe dislocation because the male community can obtain what it wants without having to be beholden to a wife. When the single women go to the doctor with some ailment the answer is both simple and unfulfilable:

A sus preguntas Fernández Parreño contestaba siempre del mismo modo trivial: todo aquello desaparecería cuando se casasen. ¡Siempre el matrimonio! El matrimonio erigido en panacea de la mujer, en mixtura para aliviar los dolores de su cuerpo y de su alma, defender su honestidad y asegurar su vida; el matrimonio, que unas veces será rango social, y otras medicina y otras ilusión... Sin duda don Elías acertaba; evidentemente nada mejor que un esposo para conjurar el sortilegio vitando de la araña negra. ¡Pero si en Puertopomares nadie se casaba! ¡Si entre tanto mozo soltero eran contados los que manifestaban vocación de marido!... (233)

The male community has achieved the passive and unwritten institutionalization of adultery. Society, however, needs some object of condemnation and since it does not care to distance itself from the activities that take place at its heart, so it turns its attentions outwards, towards its margins and boundaries. Rita Paredes, before being reunited with her brother and subsequently marrying Frasquito, fought to survive hardship and poverty by a variety of means, but for the most part prostitution was the easiest avenue to follow. In her house at the edge of Puertopomares she made her

living under the shadow of a poplar tree standing in the yard. The poplar became the mute sign of the perverse desires enacted in that place:

Allí un viejo chopo levantaba, muy por encima de los bardales, la gracia verde de su copa recogida, sensible al viento. Este árbol fué en tiempos atrás como un gesto de orgía, como una cimera ó penacho de escándalo, alzado sobre la vulgaridad de la humilde vivienda. La casa de Rita, la barragana de tantos, se distinguía y señalaba entre todas por aquel chopo esbelto. Era su reclamo, su anuncio, su clarín. Desde muy lejos se divisaba. La gente rústica que se acercaba á Puertopomares por el lado opuesto del río, lo conocía bien; los mozos se lo mostraban unos á otros, extendiendo un brazo:

‘Es allí...’ decían.

Y hasta hubo quien aseguraba que Rita, muy avisadamente, llegó á adornarlo en las noches sabatinas con farolillos de colores, y cómo tales luces, balanceándose en la oscuridad á impulsos del aire, ejercían sobre los hombres, á una distancia de varios kilómetros, irresistible atracción. A propósito de aquel árbol popular y de las trazas hombrunas de su dueña, alguien había dicho: ‘Eres, Rita, como el chopo: alta y grande, pero de mala sombra.’ La frase gustó y vivió muchos años. (40-41)

Frasquito and Toribio cut down the poplar, but although ‘su perfil fálico [...] había desaparecido, su leyenda golosa perduraba’ (43). Even in its absence, the locus of perverse desire thus outlasts both the signifier and the function it signified. Neither is the perversity indicated by the tree limited to commercial sex: rape and incest, so society believed, were also played out under swaying branches and enticing lights:

Nunca fué simpático Toribio Paredes. Años atrás los suburbanos de la Puerta del Acoso, habíanle tildado secretamente de mantener relaciones con Rita. Nadie se sorprendió. Eran los tiempos en que la mujerona, de noche, ponía un farol en la sumidad del chopo del patio. Lujuriosos, abyectos, tiranizados por la más repugnante animalidad, los dos hermanos se buscaron. Su pasión maldita tuvo refinamientos abominables; se emborrachaban y su satiriasis urdía escenas brutales. La murmuración decía que una tarde, en el bosque, Rita se abalanzó sobre una zagala, sujetándola por detrás mientras Toribio la violaba. (244)

Rita and Toribio; prostitution, incest, rape and murder. These are the people who, with a thin veneer of family values and respectability, are accepted into the centre of Puertopomares. When their acts of depravity are finally discovered, for the social collectivity of the town the ‘other’ made ‘proximate’ is revealed to be the irruption of perversity which they thought safely controlled. The reaction is not simply to let the Paredes leave for trial, but to drive them out violently, to expel and exclude them

(303-06). The damage and brutality that the community of Puertopomares inflicts upon itself in so doing is a testament both to the power of desire and to the rupture and dislocation brought about by the processes of perversion and transgressive reinscription. Dollimore emphasises this as he tries to open out the all-encompassing nature of the debate:

To explore the history of perversion is to see how culture is not only formed, but consolidated, destabilized, and reformed. It is a violent history: perversion is a concept that takes us to the heart of a fierce dialectic between domination and deviation, law and desire, transgression and conformity; a dialectic working through repression, demonizing, displacement and struggle. (1991, 103)

Exclusion and violence cohere in the figure of the town idiot Ramitas who, although rarely present throughout the majority of the narrative, appears in emblematic fashion at disparate moments. He is the first person to be spotted on the dismal and depressing streets of Puertopomares as the narrative opens, forced outside into the driving rain by an apparently harsh and viciously uncaring society:

El idiota volvía la cabeza. Acaso comprendía su abandono, su desgracia que á nadie inspiraba piedad, y prorrumplía en llanto amarguísimo. Mojado hasta los huesos, intentaba refugiarse en cuantos almacenes de comestibles y tabernas hallaba al paso, pero de todas partes le despedían.

‘¡Tú, Ramitas!... ¡Fuera de aquí!...’

Le tenían asco. El seguía adelante. Lloraba y andaba. Su treno ronco, doliente, iba alejándose á lo largo de las calles, como el lamento de un animal herido. (Zamacois, 1914, 15-16)

Although always in the background, Ramitas does not come to prominence again until the outbursts of violence surrounding the arrest of Rita and Toribio and their transfer out of the town. In these cases his voice attains a primacy which expresses that of the social collectivity and is a catalyst for their actions:

Una veintena de mujeres y hombres se habían congregado delante de Correos y miraban hacia el bazar de los Paredes. Aquel grupo exaltado rumiaba venganza.

De pronto, una voz turbia y gangosa, la voz del tonto Ramitas, gritó:

‘¡Vamos á quemar la casa!...’

Instantáneamente todos se aprestaron á cumplir aquella iniciativa. (300)

Al ver llegar el vehículo la irritación de la multitud aumentó. Los manifestantes silbaban y arrojaban piedras. Un nutrido grupo de mujeres, entre las que iba el tonto Ramitas, se puso al frente de los amotinados: casi todas eran vecinas de la

Puerta del Acoso, hembras de armas tomar, familiarizadas con la sucia historia de 'la casa del chopo'. Sus pelambreras hirsutas, sus bocas impropiedades, sus brazos nervudos hechos á pelear con la tierra, agitándose furibundos, imponían miedo. Todos, á coro, voceaban:

'¡Qué no se escapen! ¡Desenganchar los caballos!...' (304)

So the original object of violence and exclusion is transformed into a source and nucleus for its further propagation. Ramitas, with his stunted personality and childlike vulnerability, is finally designated as the lack of knowledge which characterises society as a whole: 'Como el tonto Ramitas que, de año en año, arrastraba por las calles su gruñido idiota, don Gil llegó á ser un tipo representativo. Ramitas personificaba la ignorancia ambiente' (359). Apparently too inoffensive and too provincial to move into the vestiges of asylum culture, Ramitas is just one example of how violence is often visited on those who least seem to deserve it. The motif of infanticide is common to the two narratives and in both cases it is the connection between children and father which is the cause of the attack. Frasquito's three offspring, even without the prolonged illness betokening a drawn-out struggle, are just as much the victims of the influence of a malevolent spirit as is Honorato. They suffer the excesses of masculine desire just as they would have done had they been on the receiving end of sexual abuse, although it is worth noting that paedophilia and homosexuality seem to be expressions of desire that are too transgressive even for Zamacois.

In a sense, the boundaries of masculine perverse desire as depicted in *El otro* and *El misterio del hombre pequeñito* are far from arbitrary. That there are still obvious areas where these particular texts avoid treading, whether through unconscious fear or overt market-influenced choice, shows that there may yet exist sites of repression within the narratives. Desire is not the undifferentiated longing for an/y object but is still channelled within the more socially-acceptable forms of perversion: incest, rape, voyeurism, sadism and prostitution. Nevertheless, masculine perversity is subject to the dynamics of transgressive reinscription through the medium of the unreal, and it is shown to be genuinely violatory in both texts. In the case of *El otro* the harrowing scenes of murderous sadism as related by Adelina lead to perverse desire (Alberto)

being excluded by non-violent fecundity (Juan Enrique) only for it to be reinscribed both through Alberto's spirit and through Juan Enrique's changing behaviour. Don Gil, on the other hand, excludes himself from normal levels of social interaction and he is at first only marginalised by others by virtue of his appearance and disquieting aura. However, anger starts to build in the population at large as the women tell their menfolk about their dreams and as the toll mounts of suspicious deaths that have something to do with don Gil. Finally a decision seems to have been reached: 'Había que matar á don Gil; ó, cuando menos, obligarle á salir del pueblo' (243). Nothing immediately comes of this conclusion, in fact the narrative follows it with the tale of how Rita and Toribio finally find their way out of 'la casa del chopo' and into the commercial heart of the town: subsequent events then overtake all previous determinations. It is almost as though these two very distinct incarnations of desire are moving in harmony with each other along the lines of exclusion and reinscription. Don Gil's perversity is best explained by the fact that he offers women something they do not want but are not able to refuse; his attractiveness is paradoxical, evincing the same fascination expressed by Wilde in *De Profundis*: 'What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion' (quoted in Dollimore, 103). Attraction and repulsion become part of the same dynamic and for the women hard-pressed by don Gil's advances, 'en amor, lo horrible y lo hermoso suscitan emociones análogas' (Zamacois, 1910, 70). Doña Fabiana, on the first of the two occasions on which don Gil gets genuinely close to her, is paralysed by the conflicting emotions she feels:

Su pavor, efectivamente, en aquellos instantes, no tenía límites: un pavor que era asco; un asco que era, á su vez, violento deseo de entrega y capitulación [...] Experimentó entonces una repugnancia mayor; aquellas manecitas frías, alimonadas, suaves, blandas, de una blandura cartilaginosa, produjéronle la aversión que inspira el contacto de un reptil. Y, sin embargo, su voluptuosa enervación iba en aumento: la sintió en su vientre, sobre sus flancos; una especie de ardientísimo vapor la envolvía; todo su cuerpo temblaba cual si una corriente eléctrica lo sacudiese... (224-25)

This sensation is accentuated by the various physically revolting forms that don Gil seems to assume in other people's dreams. As the women of the town go through a particularly burdensome time don Gil's raquitic body, among other things, often turns into that of a large black spider still topped by his own lemon-yellow head (226-231). On most occasions much of the imagery that provides substance to their dreams is in fact a reflection of their own waking experiences during the previous day, but the yellow head is constant. Even the traditional versions of the incubus appear designed to excite horror and desire in equal measure:

La historia de los íncubos demuestra que éstos suelen revestir las trazas ó apariencias más repugnantes: mendigos, epilépticos, leprosos, viejos absurdos cubiertos de llagas, animales extraños, mitad hombres, mitad fieras, estremecidos por todos los instintos y las muecas y las delirantes piruetas del Diablo. (71)

However, it is not sufficient to merely term this the operation of masculine perverse desire. Both texts actually reveal a great deal about how masculine desire is constructed through the feminine and even about how the latter can succeed in its resistance to the former. Textual desire is expressed through a combination of visual and linguistic discourses, so that the implied reader, presumably male, gains the same sensations of voyeurism as the male protagonists. As Alberto, Juan Enrique and don Gil see / read the female body, the reader reads / sees the text. The reader is implicated in the protagonists' desire and therefore the experiences of culmination and insatiability are also shared. Fulfilment is automatically returned to the central experience of lack and eventually by extension to impotence, which is even suffered by don Gil in terms of the ultimate inaccessibility of doña Fabiana. Women are constructed to be the object of desire, and that is especially the case in terms of the representation of their own sexuality. Strong women, even those given as many masculine physical characteristics as Rita, are reduced to passive, quivering wrecks by the presence of the correct 'real man'; El Charro in Rita's case. Others are incapable of exercising their own volition, needing instead, like doña Fabiana, their husband's protection. Adelina undoubtedly has great strength of character, but as with the

decadent model to which she most obviously corresponds, the dominant characteristics she displays are part of a masculine discourse of desire. The first time Juan Enrique sets eyes on her he sees the coldness, domination and cruelty which he will not actually experience at her hands until she is fully reclaimed by Alberto's spirit:

Fué un anochecer, en la estación del ferrocarril. Halderg iba y venía pausadamente por los andenes, donde la llegada de cada tren ofrecía á su alma vagabunda amable distracción y esparcimiento. A su lado pasó una joven viajera, elegante y de extraña belleza: tenía el rostro muy pálido, la boca breve y cruel; los ojos, ardientes, luminosos y verdes, de un verde ajeno, formaban raro contraste con los cabellos dorados, casi rojizos. Halderg la observó largo rato fijamente, con ese glacial desenfado que tienen para mirar los aburridos. Ella parecía distraída. Halderg sintió miedo, frío; repentinamente, sin haber pensado en nada, acababa de experimentar á lo largo de su espalda la sacudida nerviosa, el roce cosquilleante, de un presentimiento. Trató de seguir paseando y no pudo; las piernas no le obedecían; su voluntad se había evaporado. Cuando la joven subió al expreso de Madrid, Juan Enrique, sin darse cuenta cabal de lo que hacía, medio sonámbulo, la siguió. (14-15)

This decadent aesthetic places the woman in a superior position to the man, to be adored from a distance in a reworking of the neo-platonic ideal. Even a perfect object is in the end simply an object, and so it is only by transcending the boundary between object-status and subjectivity that Adelina has a chance of escaping the masculine discourses of desire. Yet Adelina is apparently constructed in such a way as to prevent that happening; she is intended to belong to a literary paradigm (Decadentism, erotic fiction) which attempts to withhold any independence of action:

La desconocida sonreía, hallando aquel incidente aventurero y pintoresco. Además, la figura delicada, casi femenina, del barón de Nhorres, interesaba y predisponía en favor suyo: la palidez de su rostro afeitado, el brillo metálico de sus pupilas azules, casi grises, la línea cínica de sus labios, habían ese interés elegante y malsano con que cautivan á las mujeres las novelas eróticas. (15)

The decadent discourse constructs the feminine as a dynamic of tension with characteristic forces continually pulling in different directions. Almost mischievously Fontana suggests that maybe the cause of Juan Enrique's impotence lies in fact in Adelina, especially since Alberto suffered from the same form of sexual disempowerment:

Esa comunidad de sensaciones en dos hombres jóvenes y enamorados de la misma mujer merece tenerse en cuenta. En la historia, larguísima por cierto, de las aberraciones eróticas, se registran casos de mujeres extrañas, dotadas, sin duda, de un poder de fascinación especial, que sugestionaban á sus amantes hasta aniquilar en ellos toda espontaneidad voluntaria. Diríase que les embrujaban. Unas veces parecían sacerdotisas de algún rito cruel, y ordenaban: 'Mata á Fulano'; y el hombre, como un autómeta, llegaba al crimen. Otras, parecían vampiresas: 'Ámame' - decían. Y aquel mismo hombre las poseía hasta extenuarse... (182)

However, it may well be that Adelina does eventually manage to subvert the totalizing objectification of the dominant masculine discourse, and if she does do so then it is achieved through the operation of Dollimore's perverse dynamic and transgressive reinscription (1991, 33). The enthusiasm with which Adelina embraces Alberto's spirit as her lover seems disconcerting and would normally be explained with reference to the Janus-face of decadent eroticism outlined above. Seen from a different perspective, however, she concentrates neither on the lover nor his role in relation to society or social reality but on the expression of her sexuality. Unlike the women of Puertopomares she does not mourn the lack of marriage which might guard against the excesses of desire, but consistently follows the path of greatest erotic fulfilment, in relation to which the position of the reader is that of voyeur. The crucial consideration is that of the construction of this fulfilment; might it not, after all, simply be another aspect of the decadent aesthetic? It is in a linguistic approach that the answer is to be found. The clash between the female purposive discourse and the male causal discourse has already been discussed. In it Adelina succeeds in imposing her linguistic and erotic position over that of Juan Enrique; his discourse has long been largely incomprehensible to the female audience, Adelina and the Oruño sisters (141). Once she identifies her spirit-lover as Alberto, Adelina initiates a one-sided conversation with him, feminising his language of power, control and confrontation into that of forgiveness, co-operation and mutuality (177-78); later she feels he starts to respond in kind. In other words Adelina has now become the subject of her own sexuality and she constructs her objects of desire to conform to this subjectivity both linguistically and sexually. Her sexuality, constructed with the remnants of the dominant discourse



(ie. Alberto), is perverse in that it allows masculine desire to be present only on her terms; that she has no physical partner equates to the implicit perversion of masturbation, which would be far more transgressive at this time in women than in men. Additionally her sexuality allows repeated and total pleasure and fulfilment, in this case the implicit perversion being nymphomania. Her autoeroticism is in other words self-generated, seemingly infinitely renewable and only as (un)productive as the masculine discourse / intercourse of desire. The linguistic and erotic control Adelina establishes until Juan Enrique feels he must kill the 'other' exemplifies the concept of *jouissance* both with its Barthesian textual connotations (1975) and also those of Kristeva (1986, 138-159), through which feminine discourses in general have been validated in the face of the previous dominant hierarchies of patriarchy. Adelina's sexuality is therefore the subversion of perversion, creating a site of textual resistance to the limited transgression of what appears to be a text flooded with masculine discourses. *El otro* demonstrates on more than one level how desire expressed through the unreal generates the force of the fantastic to be a truly disturbing and destabilizing modal field.

*El misterio del hombre pequeñito* also belongs to a further marginalised narrative field, that of detective fiction. The title itself indicates as much and although the crimes and their perpetrators are made clear from the beginning, the detective question revolves around whether they will be caught and who will get the blame. The trial provides the climax to the narrative on the level of plot, and moral justice is served by don Gil's demise at the hands of don Ignacio. Jackson's reference to fantastic narratives being those which 'make visible the unseen' (48) is fulfilled in the trial and afterwards, in the sense that both desire and the supernatural are laid open and made public before finally being rejected as anti-rational and swept under the carpet once more.

Rescuing Zamacois from his relative obscurity not only helps reinvigorate a fundamental facet of the *modernista* literary discourse. More significantly, however, it also demonstrates beyond question the intimate link between desire, transgression,

perversity and the overall field of the fantastic. As such these narratives deserve to be studied with a great deal more attention than has happened so far, and there yet remain in them areas which would add much to knowledge of the period in Spain after the turn of the century.

## Fantastic Keys to Phantastic Lives:

### Miguel de Unamuno

The inclusion of texts by Unamuno in a study of the fantastic could be regarded as unexpected. Of all the authors here discussed, he is the one whose own image, both public and private, most dominates his textual corpus. Partly due to the fact that his texts are so idiosyncratic and innovatory, and partly due to his custom of introducing himself into the narrative or dramatic action, it is unusually difficult to separate each text from what Unamuno is thought to have intended it to mean. With the primary writings for most of his intellectual life being academic essays on politics, philosophy and theology, it is easy to see why fantastic fiction is a field with which he is not readily associated. However, as befits an author influenced by Nietzsche, a considerable range of both his fiction and non-fiction texts are intimately concerned with questions about the nature of subjectivity.<sup>1</sup> Specifically he is intrigued by what happens when a subject's public façade of stability is stripped away or when it fails to form effectively in the first place. Although clearly different to the narratives which have been studied up to this point, as will become apparent, these texts are motivated by experiences and expressions of psychological and somatic dislocation, fragmentation, and desire similar to those which sometimes overwhelmed the narratives of other 'non-fantastic' authors.

It is not the purpose of a study such as this one to undertake an exhaustive analysis of Unamuno's extensive and complicated contributions to the debate on existential ontology, especially since this has already been the subject of much discussion.<sup>2</sup> It is

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<sup>1</sup> For an extensive study of the impact of Nietzschean thought in Spain, see Sobejano (1967). More recently, however, the notion of influence has been questioned by Cardwell (1995), who cites Nietzsche and Unamuno as his primary example.

<sup>2</sup> See Ilie (1967), Lacy (1967) and Ellis (1988).

necessary, however, to provide a brief explanation of some of the Unamunian terminology to which it will be essential to make reference. With more regard for the broader European context in the philosophy of Hegel than for traditional Spanish models of thought, Unamuno tackled the issue of how the subject's experience of itself is riven, unstable and insubstantial. However, as Ellis explains, this does not remove the subject from existence altogether since it is objectified by its interaction with the Other:

Although man in Unamuno is characterized by a profound nothingness, he possesses an objective being called *serse* [...] Unamuno describes the Other as a kind of mirror in which consciousness discovers its reflection. It is when consciousness internalizes its reflection that it achieves the *serse* [...] Consciousness arises in the presence of the Other and through him discovers both the subjective and objective dimensions of the *serse*. (28-29)

The immediate effect of this can be quite positive. As is apparent in the following poem, the Other may often be the Mother, or her substitute, provoking intense identification. It is also notable that language can be introduced within a dyadic relationship as implied by this poem from 1924, not necessarily a triadic one as might be suggested by an approach based on the Oedipal paradigm:

Tú sí que me conocías  
tal como nací a ser,  
cuando '¡niño!' me decías  
me sentía yo nacer.

Ní mi madre me miraba  
con tan honda compasión;  
tu mirar me taladraba  
parte a parte el corazón,

dejándomelo desnudo,  
desnudo como nací,  
y ese mirar era escudo  
para guardarme de mí.

Tus ojos, dulces tiranos,  
que a la tarea se dan,  
tus ojos, dos negras manos,  
me amasaron como pan.

Tú me libraste del otro  
que ya no va a donde voy;  
tú del amor en el potro,  
me hiciste ser el que soy.

Eres mi madre, Teresa,  
por toda la eternidad;  
cuando me miro en tu huesa  
toco toda mi verdad.

(Unamuno, 1966, *OC VI*, 601)

On one level the poem is developing a relatively conventional amatory sentiment in a lyrical form - that love makes both subject and object somehow different and new in comparison to how they were in the past. In addition, however, it is also a representation of the constituting of the *serse* with Teresa taking the role of mother through the medium of language.

Even so, it soon becomes clear that this is not a comfortable or secure way to experience existence. In addition, it does not deal with the inevitable situation whereby the subject is at some stage faced with the denial of its all-encompassing desire. As the protagonist of Unamuno's ground-breaking narrative *Niebla* observes, the introduction of language, which seems so unequivocally constructive in the previous poem's first stanza, inevitably produces instability, duality and ambiguity. This is the case even when restricted within the subject:

La he estado mintiendo y he estado mintiéndome. ¡Siempre es así! Todo es fantasía y no hay más que fantasía. El hombre en cuanto habla miente, y en cuanto se habla a sí mismo, es decir, en cuanto piensa sabiendo que piensa, se miente. No hay más verdad que la vida fisiológica. La palabra, este producto social, se ha hecho para mentir. Le he oído a nuestro filósofo que la verdad es, como la palabra, un producto social, lo que creen todos, y creyéndolo se entienden. Lo que es producto social es la mentira... (II, 619)

Nevertheless, Unamuno did have moments of relative optimism, and he developed the technique of *monodiálogo* in order to circumvent as much of the problem as he could:

No hay más diálogo verdadero que el diálogo que entablas contigo mismo, y este diálogo sólo puedes entablarlo estando a solas. En la soledad, y sólo en la soledad, puedes conocerte a ti mismo como prójimo; y mientras no te conozcas

a ti mismo como a prójimo, no podrás llegar a ver en tus prójimos otros yos. (I, 1252)

In other words, language, when assimilated properly by the subject, is a basic facet of building successful object relations, but the process is perilous.

It becomes apparent that there is an alternative to the life suffered by the *serse* within the dislocations of a linguistic realm, if only there were a way to reach it. According to Ellis, Unamuno describes this as the *serlo todo*:

Because the *serse* depends on the Other, man is fundamentally alienated. He experiences alienation both in the private and social spheres [...] Man reacts against [his] role, and though only a *serse*, strives to achieve what Unamuno calls the *serlo todo*. This total being would represent the fulfillment of man's ontological hunger. It is precisely because man sees the Other as an obstacle in the attainment of the *serlo todo* that human relations are negative. (29)

So the Other is for the subject not only an essential element of the experience of existence, it is also the greatest impediment to making that experience a positive one.

If the subject cannot withstand the baleful, constituting gaze of the Other, it may seek peace either in suicide or in an attempted return to the time when subjective experience was all-inclusive, the age of psychological infancy. This brings the subject more decisively into the realm of the domination of the unconscious mind and phantasy, the latter being a term employed in Kleinian psychoanalysis and defined by Rivière as 'the original primary mental activity which usually remains unconscious' (Klein, 1952, 16). Phantasy is relevant to all stages of human life but it is in infancy where its action can most clearly be observed since at that stage there are no complicating social barriers in place. Unconscious phantasy is therefore the mental expression of instinctual needs, both somatic and psychological. The corollary of this is that the literary phantastic is the representation of that mental expression.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately it is inevitably an inexact representation due to the interference of the linguistic medium through which it is transmitted, although this may be mitigated by communication through marginal, gestural and other non-linguistic means.

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<sup>3</sup> The term 'literary phantastic' cannot avoid immediate comparison to that of the 'literary fantastic' which has become as widely used and as loosely defined as that of the 'fantastic' itself. For an approach based on the literary fantastic, see Cornwell (1990).

The period of psychological infancy to which the subject may seek to escape includes pre-natal experience and it is clear why the womb might seem to be an existential Utopia for the fractured, part-socialised subject. The return to the psychological pre-dawn is not death but de-birth, or as Unamuno termed it, *desnacimiento*. The concept of *desnacimiento* is of repeated importance throughout Unamuno's work, especially during the mid 1920s. It was St. Augustine (*Confessions*, Book XI) who first popularised the idea that time does not run forward into the future, but backwards from the future through the present and into the past. In both philosophical essays and works of fiction Unamuno manipulated the possibilities that this afforded him. In *La lanzadera del tiempo* (VIII, 495-98), an essay published in 1923, he considers the perspective that a genealogical tree grows backwards into the past, before typically quoting one of his own fictional constructs, Augusto Pérez, the protagonist of *Niebla* (1914):

Por debajo de esta corriente de nuestra existencia, por dentro de ella, hay otra corriente en sentido contrario; aquí vamos del ayer al mañana; allí se va del mañana al ayer. Se teje y se desteje a un tiempo. Y de vez en cuando nos llegan hálitos, vaho y hasta rumores misteriosos de ese otro mundo. Las entrañas de la historia son una contrahistoria, es un proceso inverso al que ella sigue. El río subterráneo va del mar a la fuente. (498)

*La lanzadera del tiempo* can usefully be read in conjunction with a further essay from the same year, *Nuestros yos ex-futuros* (VIII, 490-94). Of primary interest here is the idea that multiple possibilities in the future were open to a subject in the past, but were not selected. These unchosen futures nevertheless remain relevant to the subject in the present. Such an idea is scarcely original to Unamuno but by linking it to the reversal of the flux of time, it becomes more flexible than it had been previously. The subject would be able to move back and forth along time-lines: 'Volviéramos a vivir nuestras vidas, pero desde la muerte al nacimiento, y se llegase así al fiat lux y al principio en que era la Palabra, para volver a recomenzar el movimiento de la lanzadera' (491). In one of his poetic works from 1924 Unamuno

takes an amusing turn of phrase, 'ahí va mi ex-futura' and develops its more destabilising properties:

[...]

Y al quedarme sin ti yo me decía:  
 '¡Ex-futuro!... es terrible  
 que al nacernos a muerte un nuevo día  
 se nos muera el posible...;

que todo lo que nazca al nacer mate  
 al que pudo haber sido...'  
 Creí volverme loco de remate;  
 me sentí sin sentido...

¡Ex-futuro! ¡Ex-futuro! Es la tortura  
 de la raíz del ser,  
 ¡el insondable abismo de amargura  
 del hijo de mujer!

(VI, 634)

In spite of the rising panic in the verses above, caused apparently by the loss of so many of the subject's possible lives, the thought of a return to before the beginning of life is demonstrably a consolatory one, and one explanation for this is to be found in basic Freudian psychoanalysis. In several works, starting with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (OC XVIII, 1-64), Freud states that all instincts are essentially conservative, even reactionary. The fundamental ego-instinct is to return to a previous state of completion that is to be found in pre-existence, and in this is the motivation for Thanatos, the death instinct, whose purpose is to guide organic life back towards inorganicism. Eros, which might be expected to have opposing characteristics to Thanatos, is directed by the same principle to both complicate and preserve life:

Acting in this way, both the instincts would be conservative in the strictest sense of the word, since both would be endeavouring to re-establish a state of things that was disturbed by the emergence of life. The emergence would thus be the cause of the continuance of life and also at the same time of the striving towards death; and life itself would be a conflict of compromise between these two trends. (*The Ego and the Id*, OC XIX, 40-41) <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Although superficially very different, Unamuno and Zamacois have a common interest in reversing the flow of life. See above, 139.



However, *desnacimiento* is not represented in a constant fashion in every text in which it appears. Its earliest precursor is in the 1908 short narrative *El que se enterró* (II, 817-21). The protagonist, Emilio, has a growing presentiment that something terrible but unavoidable is going to happen, that he is about to die. As the days pass, he increasingly withdraws from company and locks himself away on his own, in his study, waiting:

A la hora de estar aquí sentado, con la cabeza entre las manos y los ojos fijos en un punto vago más allá de la superficie de esta mesa, sentí que se abría la puerta y que entraba cautelosamente un hombre. No quise levantar la mirada. Oía los golpes del corazón y apenas podía respirar. El hombre se detuvo y se quedó ahí, detrás de esta silla que ocupas, de pie, y sin duda mirándome. Cuando pasó un breve rato me decidí a levantar los ojos y mirarlo. Lo que entonces pasó por mí fué indecible; no hay para expresarlo palabra alguna en el lenguaje de los hombres que no se mueren sino una sola vez. Él que estaba ahí, de pie, delante mío, era yo mismo, por lo menos en imagen. Figúrate que estando delante de un espejo, la imagen que de ti se refleja en el cristal se desprende de éste, toma cuerpo y se te viene encima [...] Así estuvimos un momento, mirándonos a los ojos el otro y yo, es decir, así estuve un rato mirándome a los ojos. El terror se había transformado en otra cosa muy extraña y que no soy capaz de definirte; era el colmo de la desesperación resignada. Al poco rato sentí que el suelo se me iba de debajo de los pies, que el sillón se me desvanecía, que el aire iba enrareciéndose, las cosas todas que tenía a la vista, incluso mi otro yo, se iban esfumando, y al oír al otro murmurar muy bajito y con los labios cerrados: ¡Emilio!, sentí la muerte. Y me morí. (818-19)

Subsequently, the subject comes back to consciousness in the body of his antagonist, and begins life once more as a new person, to the mystification of all his friends and acquaintances who see only an inexplicably changed personality. The stages of the process are quite clear. During the period before the incident itself, activity was undertaken which could be argued to have precipitated the consequences; the solitude of waiting leads to heightened nervous tension. The Other comes in through the door, but it might as well have been from the surface of the mirror present in the room. Through eye contact with the intruder, the subject's perception of the physical surroundings loses its focus, and he slips into unconsciousness, only to come round in the body of his erstwhile guest. However, in this early case there are no specific reasons to refer to the subject's death as *desnacimiento*. His resurrection may owe

more to the *modernista* preoccupation with the occult and fashionable tinkering with Pythagoreanism and the transmigration of souls, as demonstrated by Jade (1983), Speratti-Piñero (1974) and Fraser (1992), than to a basic instability in linear time. Psychologically, the subject has not become infantilized, the patterns of his language use seem fairly normal after the event and he describes no regressive mental activity. Neither, in psychoanalytic terms, has there been a reversal of the Lacanian vector, returning the subject to the Imaginary. Instead he remains firmly in the Symbolic but less contented with life as a result of his trans-corporal experience. Even so, this episode will prove to provide a basic model for the representation of *desnacimiento* in later texts.

The mid-1920s saw not only essays and poetry on the subject of time and *desnacimiento* but plays and narratives as well. *El otro*, the dialogic drama which is the main object of analysis of this study, was first published in 1926, although it was subsequently heavily revised and the definitive version did not see the light of day until 1932. A further play also published in 1926 serves to indicate to what extent the latent potential of *El que se enterró* has been nurtured. In *Sombras de sueño* (V, 591-649), attention is focused on the character of Julio Macedo, a man who is trying to leave behind his past and forget his alter ego, Tulio Montalbán, who in turn is the ultimate aspiration of Elvira, the woman with whom Julio has fallen in love. Julio's personality, however, demonstrates the same sorts of instabilities as are to be found in *El otro*:

Macedo.- ¿No me será permitido ni siquiera darle ese nombre dulce como la leche de la madre en la boca del niño enfermo? Que así es mi boca, como la de un niño y de un niño enfermo. ¡Ser niño!

Elvira.- ¿Es que le gustaría volver a la niñez?

Macedo.- ¿A la niñez? ¡Más allá, mucho más allá!

Elvira.- ¿Cómo más allá?

Macedo.- ¡Sí, más allá de la niñez, más allá del nacimiento!

Elvira.- ¡No lo comprendo!

Macedo.- Sí, me gustaría volver al seno materno, a su oscuridad y su silencio y su quietud...

Elvira.- ¡Diga, pues, que a la muerte!

Macedo.- No, a la muerte, no; eso no es a la muerte. Me gustaría 'des-nacer', no morir...

Elvira.- Y por eso...

Macedo.- ¡Sí, por eso! ¡Un amor así, como el que busco, me valdría lo mismo! ¡Volver a la niñez! (611-12)

His ideal love would therefore be that of the infant perpetually held in the Imaginary, with Elvira being the object substitute for the original mother figure. Julio's Other, Tulio, must be expunged from Elvira's heart before Julio can achieve his desire.

Unamuno's most complex work on the nature of personality, specifically the literary construct of his own personality, is *Cómo se hace una novela* (OC VIII, 707-769). Published first in 1926, it was added to in an apparently piecemeal fashion throughout the following year and then later republished. It is for the most part made up of self-referential musings on the sadness and annoyances of his exile from Spain by Primo de Rivera, and on the future of his homeland. Worked in among the hyperbolic self-justification there is a piece of fiction, again strongly autobiographical, in which instead of describing how to write a novel as he says he was urged to do, he writes a novel about how to write a novel, although it must be said that in the end it does not turn out much like that either. It is the interpolated fictional elements of the text that are relevant here, although once again distinguishing between fiction and autobiography becomes increasingly difficult as the text progresses. However, before the interpolations are introduced, the narrator's autobiographical voice makes reference to the validity of the concept of *desnacimiento* even outside the context of more ostensibly fictional narratives:

¡Mi leyenda!, ¡mi novela! Es decir, la leyenda, la novela que de mí, Miguel de Unamuno, al que llamamos así, hemos hecho conjuntamente los otros y yo, mis amigos y mis enemigos, y mi yo amigo y mi yo enemigo. Y he aquí por qué no puedo mirarme un rato al espejo, porque al punto se me van los ojos tras de mis ojos, tras su retrato, y desde que miro a mi mirada me siento vaciarme de mí mismo, perder mi historia, mi leyenda, mi novela, volver a la inconciencia, al pasado, a la nada. (734)

Quite calculatedly and openly the author starts by creating the protagonist of the fictional interpolations in his own image, naming him U. Jugo de la Raza. U. Jugo is

discontented, the reason for which is identified by the narratorial / authorial construct who immediately destroys any illusion of character autonomy:

[A] U. Jugo de la Raza le gustan las novelas. Le gustan y las busca para vivir en otro, para ser otro, para eternizarse en otro. Es por lo menos lo que él cree, pero en realidad busca las novelas a fin de descubrirse, a fin de vivir en sí, de ser él mismo. O más bien, a fin de escapar de su yo desconocido e inconocible hasta para sí mismo. (734-35)

The protagonist is seeking his Other through fiction and through language. By extension he is also and more fundamentally hoping to constitute himself as subject. When he finds a novel that attracts him he identifies so completely with its protagonist that he starts fearing that he only exists inside that fiction. Reading by the River Seine one day, his eyes slide away from the page of the romantic autobiography in his hands and fix instead on the waters below, and they seem to him as still as a mirror. This, he finds, threatens to remove his new feeling of identity, and he has to start reading again immediately in order to not lose himself. Although he feels less at risk in its presence, U. Jugo discovers that language carries its own dangers. In the autobiography he reads that at the moment that its protagonist dies, the reader will die too. The twin perils of the watery mirror and written language provoke a nervous trauma, his quiescent hypochondria resurfaces explosively, and he leaves the book behind, forswearing ever to read it. This experience recalls to his mind a previous temptation to commit suicide by throwing himself into the mirror of water. Indecision ensues; he goes back for the book knowing that he cannot resist the desire for identity which it constructs in him, and starts to read again:

Un poco calmado abrió el libro y reanudó su lectura. Se olvidó de sí mismo por completo, y entonces sí que pudo decir que se había muerto. Soñaba al otro, o más bien el otro era un sueño que se soñaba en él, una criatura de su soledad infinita. Al fin se despertó con una terrible punzada en el corazón. El personaje del libro acababa de volver a decirle: 'Debo repetir a mi lector que se morirá conmigo'. (738)

The fright that this contact with the Other gives him is sufficient inducement to make him burn the book for once and for all. The following morning he wakes to see the ashes of the book, and they seem to him like the waters of the Seine, another mirror.

This is no solution to his dilemma, so he returns to the original wharfside bookshop to find another copy. It proves impossible. In order to distract himself, he heads for the Louvre, but in the Venus de Milo (representing both Art and femininity) he sees only ashes, water and the mirror, and in his anguish he decides to flee Paris.

Up until this point, deciphering the action is relatively straightforward, but the tense of the main narration now changes to the conditional perfect, and alternative trajectories for the protagonist are suggested. Finally he would have returned to Paris with another copy of the book, where he would have had to decide between the two forms of death inherent in reading or not reading: a decision to simply read very slowly is yet another delaying tactic. However, before a conclusion is reached, the narrator intervenes definitively to deny the value of finishing the story, chiding the reader for having any such desire so to do.

These events all take place in the original text, but even then the game is not at an end. In the revision of the text, the protagonist, while on his travels, returns to his childhood at a time when he could not read. This is then mixed in with some pure autobiography in which Unamuno recalls how his father died while he was still a very young child. He relates how he remembers being introduced to 'el misterio del lenguaje' by him in a room from whose ceiling 'pendía un espejo de bola donde uno se veía pequeñito y deformado, y de las paredes colgaban unas litografías bíblicas' (759). It was in this room that the young Unamuno encountered his father speaking French, an experience which clearly impressed his mind as confusing, arcane and frightening. These memories lead him on to consider in which direction the stream of learning flows (much as Augustine had thought about time), and to refer to the concept of 'perpetuidad hacia el pasado', itself born out of the 'primitive' belief in interuterine life:

Y ese *nirvana* a que los indios se encaminan - y no hay más que el camino -, ¿es algo distinto de la oscura vida natal intrauterina, del sueño sin ensueños, pero con inconsciente sentir de vida, de antes del nacimiento, pero después de la concepción? Y he aquí por qué cuando me pongo a soñar en una experiencia

mística a contratiempo, o mejor a arredrotiempo, le llamo al morir desnacer, y la muerte es otro parto. (759)

*Cómo se hace una novela* does not come to a conclusion even though it does eventually come to an end. Nevertheless, in spite of its confusing structure, it does represent, in parts, the most extensive approach to the issues of the constitution of the subject through the presence of the Other which will be concretised and dramatised in *El otro*.

It is important to realise that one of the fundamental characteristics of the Other is often his indistinguishability from the subject. To the subject, the Other is both good and bad, necessary and unbearable. This is played out in *Abel Sánchez* (1917), which deals with close relationships akin to those between brothers and twins. Joaquín, the protagonist, finally puts an end to Abel, his lifelong friend, rival and enemy:

Levantóse entonces Joaquín, lívido, se fué a Abel y le puso las dos manos, como dos garras, en el cuello, diciendo:

-¡Bandido!

Mas al punto las soltó. Abel dió un grito llevándose las manos al pecho, suspiró un '¡Me muero!', y dió el último suspiro. Joaquín se dijo: 'El ataque de angina; ya no hay remedio. ¡Se acabó!' (II, 756)

There is no suggestion of *desnacimiento* in this case, but the dynamics of the action (the antagonists face each other, life slipping slowly away) suggest a parallel to the experience of Emilio in *El que se enterró*. Joaquín dies of a broken heart soon after, emphasising the interdependence of subject and Other.

*Abel Sánchez*, although it does not engage with the possibilities of *desnacimiento*, does analyse in great depth another aspect of the relationship between the subject and its context: moral responsibility. It does this by the narrative finding its genesis in the story of Cain and Abel. In the original, biblical, narrative Abel made a worthy offering to God whereas Cain did not:

And the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." (Genesis 4:10-12, Revised Standard Version)

The brothers were opposites: Cain the evil, the guilty, the wanderer; Abel the good, the innocent, the victim. *Abel Sánchez*, however, does not allow these biblical pairs of opposing values to stand uninterrogated, representing Abel as partly responsible for his own death due to his inhuman disregard for Joaquín's deepest feelings.<sup>5</sup> The boundaries of right and wrong are made diffuse in the same fashion that the apparently opposing concepts of subject and Other are made imprecise in previous texts. The moral responsibility for any action slides indeterminately between the subject and the Other, and this becomes a fundamental concern in *El otro* of equivalent importance to the representation of the process of *desnacimiento*.

It is clear that in spite of its thematology of epistemological confusion and ontological fragmentation, *El otro* is a very precise text indeed. As the result of many years' contemplation of the issues involved, issues which have figured prominently in a high proportion of earlier works, the play is designed to be concentrated theme in concentrated form. It is as though the author has finally decided on the precise essence of many years of complicated and painful thought, and consequently has reduced complexity to specificity at every turn. *El otro* is like the eye at the centre of a storm; the tugging winds of narrative and dramatic development are constantly resisted, so that the text should not be dispersed centrifugally, but remain intense and sharply focussed. His choice of the dramatic genre, even given the fact that the eventual product is to all intents and purposes unperformable, has undoubted benefits. Opening *in medias res*, there is less pressure on the author to provide chapters on background, motivation and profiling. Appropriate items of information can only be leaked to the audience through dialogue, or through forms of communication whose medium is to be found in the textual margins, such as set design, programme notes and, when being read instead of performed, stage directions (an important consideration in this particular case given the play's previously noted reputation for unrepresentability). The effect is intensified still further by Unamuno's subscription to

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<sup>5</sup> For a more extensive approach to the use of the Cain and Abel myth by Unamuno, see Ilie (1961).

the doctrine of *desnudez teatral*, whereby the set was divested of all unnecessary props and decoration, the result being one of concentrated stylisation:

Y aun dentro de la tragedia como obra poética he tendido, acaso por mi profesorial familiaridad con los trágicos griegos, a la mayor desnudez posible, suprimiendo todo episodio de pura diversión, todo personaje de mero adorno, toda escena de mera transición o de divertimento. Los personajes están reducidos, con una economía que quiere ser artística, al mínimo posible, y el desarrollo de la acción, resultado del choque de pasiones, va por la línea más corta posible. El diálogo mismo tiende a ser lo menos oratorio posible. Y si hay monólogos, como en el antiguo arte clásico los había, es porque ahorran largos rodeos y son de una verdad íntima mucho mayor que la de éstos. (XII, 402)

Unamuno was aiming for realism of a sort, but it was that which can be found in a frank exchange of ideas and not that of a physical approximation to a verisimilitudinous setting. For him, the fuller the psychological profile, the more abstract the person created, and so the reality being sought was most readily located in abstraction. Theatre was to be essentially an aural, dialogic experience, not a visual one; a conversation between audience and the dramatic text in the persons of the actors, not a spectacle. This innovatory approach led to a play such as *El otro* being referred to as a *druma*, whose main character, according to Ellis (1988), 'achieves a profound self-consciousness. He realises that his role is no more than a being for the other characters, the audience, and the playwright' (70).

The play's geographical context is minimal; only the name of the town is provided, Renada. The action is set in Nowhere. This is usually taken to mean Nowhere-in-Particular, especially with reference to it being the name of the diocese in which *San Manuel Bueno, mártir* (1930) takes place. In fact, it could equally mean Nothing-at-All; the locus of the play is the notion of absence and lack, denying and invalidating its own function of representation in a way that might legitimately be described as deconstructive.

When presented without the ambiguities and uncertainties which form an integral part of the action, the story that is revealed in the play is in fact relatively simple. Twin brothers Cosme and Damián Redondo are brought up by their mother and the housekeeper, El Ama. The twins are seemingly identical in every way and when they



are older they both fall for and compete over the same woman, Laura. Cosme wins and marries her while Damián moves away, subsequently marrying Damiana. Cosme goes to the wedding without Laura but soon after his return he appears to those around him to have gone suddenly and unexpectedly mad, locking himself away from his wife and referring to himself as El Otro. His doctor, Juan, is bemused, as is Ernesto, Laura's brother, who has answered her distress call. Ernesto's arrival, however, prompts El Otro to confess to him, in deeply confusing and disturbing terms, how there has been some sort of struggle between the twins as a result of which one of them lies dead. El Otro, however, maintains that he knows neither the identity of the dead man nor of the survivor. There is no indication that this is a conscious ruse to evade the long arm of human justice. Of course, nobody can tell the twins apart, not even Damiana who has arrived to see if she can find her missing husband, happily admitting all the while that she believes she slept with both of them around the time of her wedding. Each character searches for the truth that suits them best and the pressure to identify El Otro grows ever greater until he commits suicide, leaving El Ama to urge the rest to give up their search for the 'truth' since it is likely that it is not there to be found. The action of the play corresponds to that part from Ernesto's arrival onwards.

In *El otro* the invitation is present to engage with its paradoxes and provide an interpretation other than the unresolved confusion and resigned faith-in-ignorance of the primary level of the text. For those who refuse that process of engagement there is an apparent sop to the frustrated intellect provided in the Epilogue:

Ama.- (*Poniéndose de pie y con solemnidad.*) ¡El misterio! Yo no sé quién soy, vosotros no sabéis quiénes sois, el historiador no sabe quién es (*Donde dice: 'el historiador no sabe quién es', puede decirse: 'Unamuno no sabe quién es'*), no sabe quién es ninguno de los que nos oyen. (V, 709)

In terms of a dramatic work, the second parenthetical stage direction opens up a further option for the director. As a narrative text though, such an aside remains calculatedly marginal despite its potential importance. Breaking down the barriers between author and text, Unamuno brings his own socially constructed self into the

equation, clearing the way for intertextual consideration of both himself-as-author, and of other texts in which he himself appears as a fictional construct. Since this is the only time Unamuno mentions himself in *El otro*, this is a relatively restrained intervention. Nevertheless, for the critically-engaged reader who is unwilling to let sleeping dogs lie, the principal difficulty remains quite how to begin the process of interpretation of the text, and with which analytical tools.

One important critical discourse which informs this approach to the text is that offered by Ellis (1988). Taking as its basis a comparison of the similar existential models of personality developed by Unamuno and Jean-Paul Sartre, it analyses several fictional works by both writers, of which *El otro* is one. Having linked the constitution of the *serse* with the image of the mirror,<sup>6</sup> Ellis interprets the text as dealing with the degeneration of two dimensions of a single personality (the 'being-for-others' and the 'being-for-itself'), whose search for the *serlo todo* ultimately leads to death. Since much of this current chapter is expressed in terms which do not belong to an existential discourse, there will be elements explored and discussed in it which either lie outside or contradict those set out by Ellis. While it is not viable to set out those differences in depth on every occasion, there are times at which the meeting of divergent discursive practices is productive and these will be examined in more detail.

In more recent years, *El Otro* has benefited from two separate critical approaches, both of which have applied psychoanalytic discourses to the complex task of unravelling the myriad implications of the text. The earlier, by Fox (1993), having first found it useful to establish a series of links between the text and the author's biography, sets out a straightforward Lacanian analysis. It emphasises the dislocations (linguistic and otherwise) resulting from the clashing of the Imaginary and Symbolic planes within a close and confused familial context. Many of the basic arguments which underpin this current chapter are similar to, and in part indebted to, those developed by Fox in the main body of his article. The later critical approach, by

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<sup>6</sup> See above, 159.

Sinclair (forthcoming [1]),<sup>7</sup> while explicitly valuing Fox's work, rejects a purely Lacanian discourse in order to include elements of Winnicottian analysis. Referring to its relatively late date of composition, she states that *El otro* '[forma] parte de una época en la que dentro del psicoanálisis se estaba estudiando cada vez más el ser en sus momentos más tempranos, es decir el ser en su estado pre-verbal' (2). Sinclair rejects as misplaced and inaccurate the interpretation that the text portrays a fulfilment of Lacanian discourse, preferring to refer to it as a problematisation, especially with reference to the construction of the Symbolic. Instead she concentrates on the distinction between Unamuno's own terminology of *serse* and *serlo todo*, otherwise described as 'vivir *con* el Otro' and 'vivir *sin* el Otro, en estado de "soledad radical"'. This approach is in accord with the other analyses of Unamuno's texts undertaken by Sinclair (1995, forthcoming [2])<sup>8</sup>. In the latter of these she states the basic premiss that 'In many of the fictional works of Unamuno the self is conceptualized and represented as in an extremely primitive state. Oedipal concerns are therefore of little import' (1). When they do arise, Oedipal considerations form a diversionary tactic on the part of the subject 'as a defence against the threat of non-identity'(1).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, it is clear that there are three immediate factors which complicate the personality development of both of the two subjects, Cosme and Damián. Neither individually nor collectively do they explain why Cosme and Damián suffer such an acute disfunction in their psychological development; the link between cause and effect is clearly not automatic. However, they do frame the process represented by the text and influence the precise form of expression of the subjects' trauma. Firstly, each subject has an identical twin with whom he has shared every intimate and formative pre-natal and post-natal experience. Secondly, each of them has been faced by a situation of having two 'mothers'. These first two factors are those on which Sinclair concentrates her analysis. Finally, there is no immediate

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<sup>7</sup> This article has been provided by the author in pre-publication form and page references will therefore not correspond to those of its published format.

<sup>8</sup> This article has been provided by the author in pre-publication form and page references will therefore not correspond to those of its published format.

indication of a father, or another person who might fulfil that function, at any point in their lives. It is this element which most preoccupies Fox.

The first factor, twinship, is relevant because it implies that each subject has never had the opportunity to be truly alone. That they are identical (the text does not even say which of the two was born first) means that they are more difficult to conceive of singly. The twin has a pre-natal relationship in which the mother plays no part and which precedes the mother - child bond, problematizing the formation of the latter. As Sinclair observes, this impediment may prove to be very important for the subject since the bond 'sirve de intermedio para llegar a conocerse como distinto, tanto del contorno como de otro ser (el ser de la madre)' (forthcoming [1], 6). In the case of Cosme and Damián the formation of that relationship is further confused by the undifferentiation between the biological mother and their wet nurse, and by the unusually involved attitude of the latter, El Ama, towards the twins: 'Los dos eran como mis hijos... Al uno le crié yo, al otro su madre; pero a los dos les quería como madre yo, el ama. Los dos...' (669) Despite the difference she draws between the two, even this is later eliminated as a distinguishing characteristic:

Ama.- Ven acá. (*Arrimándole a su pecho.*) ¿Te acuerdas cuando no estaban secos? ¿Cuando en ellos bebías vida? Alguna vez os cambié con vuestra madre, los dos os amamantasteis a mis pechos, los dos a los de ella... Os cambiábamos y yo cambiaba de pechos. Una vez de este, el del lado del corazón; otra vez del otro...

Otro.- ¡El del lado del hígado! (678)

This is a more than slightly unusual conversation. That a child should be able to retain a memory from the earliest stage of its existence is highly improbable, and the suggestion of it, along with the emphasis on the process of weaning, seems to be indicative of a neurosis being suffered by El Ama. In psychoanalytical terms this is certain to have had an effect on the twins, since as Klein (1957) identified, a subject's first object relation is with the mother's breast:

The first object to be envied is the feeding breast, for the infant feels that it possesses everything he desires and that it has an unlimited flow of milk and love which the breast keeps for its own gratification. This feeling adds to his sense of grievance and hate, and the result is a disturbed relation to the mother.

If envy is excessive, this, in my view, indicates that paranoid and schizoid features are abnormally strong and that such an infant can be regarded as ill. (10)

While the twins will have had a plentiful supply of milk, they also will have had the sensation that they are competing for the ultimate satiation of their desire. Since at that stage in their mental development each twin could not have had a conception of the other one as a distinct autonomous subject, the envy is displaced on to one of the fundamental characteristics of the pre-Oedipal child, the distinction between the 'good breast' and the 'bad breast'. The placing of such a strain on the infant is likely to heighten oral-sadistic tendencies predicated on the envy of the source of its nourishment. In other words, Unamuno has concretised a conceptual dichotomy, and has opened a breach in the wall of 'normal' personality development.

This potentially damaging situation is subsequently exacerbated by the absence of the father, the final of the three factors outlined above. The paternal absence is total, with no mention whatsoever being made of him throughout the play (unlike the mother who is merely no longer present for some unspecified reason). In Lacanian terms this lack does have a fundamentally destabilising effect, especially during the subject's difficult negotiation of passage from the Imaginary into the Symbolic, where the infant is first introduced into the system of conscious object relations and language. The role of the father is to be the third linguistic Other, the one who puts an end to the subject's apparent total affinity with the mother, who introduces discord into harmony and brings into operation the Oedipus Complex. Although apparently divisive and conflictive, the Oedipus Complex is a necessary stage for the developing personality to undergo for the subsequent assumption of 'normal' object relations, and the absence of the father creates problems. In the only direct reference to the subject, *El Otro* recalls how distorted and comic the fundamental Freudian narrative seemed to him when he first came across it:

Otro.- Recuerdo, ama, cuando él y yo, los dos juntos, vimos la tragedia de Edipo, el grandísimo pesquisa, el 'detective' divino... Parece cosa de Gran Guñol, y es lo más íntimo de la verdad y de la vida. (680)

This short speech is densely packed with literary implications. Oedipus is the standard bearer of Classical tragedy, which itself was much of the motive force behind how Unamuno decided to write his plays. Here, however, the Oedipal metanarrative is intimately linked to two far less 'serious' genres. The reference to 'Gran Guñol' ties tragedy to puppet theatre, which inevitably calls to mind the *esperpentos* of Unamuno's contemporary Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, where tragedy is deformed into bitter tragicomedy, and the characters are visibly manipulated by a demiurgical puppet-master. The second reference is to the avowedly 'popular' genre of the detective novel which met with increasing interest in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Just as the Oedipus story could be reduced to a 'whodunnit' (or more accurately a 'whodunnittowhom'), so could *El otro*. The detective genre is initially predicated on stable identities, so that motivation can be linear, and the reader feels there is the chance of finding out the solution before being told. Like a detective narrative, the text of *El otro* starts with the result (the crime) and then fills in the relevant information before dis-covering the solution, except for the fact that the solution is never dis-covered, possibly because one does not exist. Linear explanation and stable representation of identities are the products of relatively unproblematic linguistic representation and as such are aborted very early on in *El otro*. The genre of detective fiction too, therefore, ends up deformed and distorted.

Nevertheless, in spite of his reservations, *El Otro* seems to divine the underlying significance of the Oedipal narrative, both in general and for himself in particular. Even though to all intents and purposes there has been no father in his life, there is a suggestion that the concept of Father has been mediated in some fashion through his own experience, with one possibility being that it has been displaced on to somebody else. It is perfectly logical that the third element in the Oedipal triangle should be the other person with whom the subject has an 'extra', pre-existing relationship; the twin brother. In other words, for Cosme the linguistic thirdness is represented by Damián and vice versa, although it must be said that Sinclair (forthcoming [1], 8) disagrees

with the suggestion that the twin functions as the Lacanian Other, a point which will be dealt with at length later, as will Ellis's very different interpretation of the constitution of the Other (78). The resulting situation in which Cosme and Damián find themselves is irredeemably complex since the Other is also strongly identified with the inclusive totality of the subject in the Lacanian Imaginary, from which the subject could not definitively progress due to the first two of the three complicating factors already identified. This means that the Other is an integral part of the subject and this prevents the latter's successful entry into normal object relations in the Symbolic. El Otro identifies this problem as having been unbearable from a very early age:

Otro.- Desde pequeñitos sufrí al verme fuera de mí mismo..., no podía soportar aquel espejo..., no podía verme fuera de mí... El camino para odiarse es verse fuera de sí, verse otro... ¡Aquella terrible rivalidad a quién aprendía mejor la lección! Y si yo lo sabía y él no, que se la atribuyeran a él... ¡Distinguirnos por el nombre, por una cinta, una prenda!... ¡Ser un nombre! Él, él me enseñó a odiarme... (679)

This short speech summarises the basic building blocks of El Otro's personality disorder. The two subjects are externally distinguishable only by means of a non-essential addition to their appearance ('cinta', 'prenda') or by their names, and the same is true from the internal mental perspective of telling apart Self and Other.

The function of naming is of course crucial to the Lacanian approach. Firstly it indicates the movement of the now autonomous and identifiable subject into the realm of the Symbolic where it can relate to other such subjects through the medium of linguistic communication. However, this is perilous since the subject's process of self-identification is influenced by relational pressures, particularly those which are engendered by the most significant objects, typically the mother and father. The two subjects in question here learned to identify themselves as Cosme and Damián, and these names were more than usually important because they were the subjects' only distinguishing characteristics (although to what extent a name is a more inherent characteristic than, for example, a piece of clothing, is an arguable point). It is more

than ironic, therefore, that their names should be those of two saints popularly held to be twins whose feast is celebrated on the same day, and who are most commonly known for being the last two names on the list of saints of the Roman Canon of the Mass. According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Farmer, 1978) their reputation was as follows:

Their late and historically worthless Legend made them twin brothers and doctors who practised their art without asking for fees: extremely numerous cures of healing were claimed at their intercession. They are the patron saints of doctors: their Acts recount their skill in healing both men and animals. These stories appealed to artists, who depicted not only individual portraits but also whole cycles of their Lives [including] their most picturesque medical achievement: the grafting of a new (white) leg on to the (live) body of a cancerous Negro. (92)

It is precisely because these two saints are always considered in tandem that their names are employed here and, as Sinclair indicates (forthcoming [1], 5), their iconography does not provide them with a visual means of telling them apart. Their importance lies in their identity with each other, their unity with each other. As they lived and died together (martyred in the Diocletian persecution of 303A.D.) they were to all intents and purposes one person, and their hagiography as represented by Varagine had them spending their years after death together as well, at God's instigation: 'They be all of one substance, bury them together in one place' (1973, 175).

So as the subjects grew older, regarded as identical in every way, even in their one difference they were perpetually reminded of their common origin. The same is true of their surname, Redondo, the only surname to be provided for any of the characters in the play. As well as the more obvious general links to circularity and endlessness, the word *redondo* has specific relevance when referring to family origin: 'Se aplica a un nombre de linaje con el significado de igual por los cuatro costados' (María Moliner, 1990, *Diccionario de uso del Español*). The surname therefore reinforces the concept of identity and unadulterated uniformity. Along with the flaws in the completion of the Imaginary stage, the successful transition to the Symbolic and the new-found



difference introduced by language was mitigated against by external factors imposed from the outside.

The subjects can be supposed to have progressed through the normally choppy mental waters of childhood in a fashion in which their phantastic life would have been crippled by anxiety, and anxiety not only in the general sense but also in the psychoanalytical sense, as described by Felman (1987, 116): 'Anxiety is [...] the way in which the introjection of the symbolic system as a whole makes itself felt in the subject when any element in it is disturbed or displaced.' Attended at every turn by the recollection of a lack of individuality, always waiting to see when next they would be mistaken for each other whether for good or ill, they entered the next period of significant change in object relations, adolescence, without having resolved the contradictions left over from their infant and post-infant lives. The Oedipus Complex is ready to be displaced onto a different object, and is poised to be played out all over again. The mother's object substitute is Laura, and both Cosme and Damián fall on her in competition with each other. To each subject the twin is the father in the Oedipal triangle, and the physical struggle for possession of Laura is the very same as the phantastic Oedipal struggle. In this the mother (Laura) claims she has no choice:

Laura.- Enamoráronse de mí, frenéticamente, de donde nació un íntimo odio, por celo, entre ellos, un odio fraternal y entrañable. Como yo no los distinguía -ni una señal visible que los diferenciara-, no tenía que preferir el uno al otro, y, además, era un peligro que casándome con el uno se quedase el otro cerca...

Ernesto.- ¡Haber rechazado a los dos...!

Laura.- ¡Imposible! Me conquistaron! Me hacían la corte como dos torbellinos. La rivalidad era feroz. Empezaron a odiarse como no es decidero. Llegué a temer que se mataran el uno al otro, algo así como un suicidio mutuo. Y yo, que me despedazaran moralmente. No había manera de resistirlos. Y así, con su furor, me ganaron...

Ernesto.- ¿Cuál de ellos?

Laura.- Los dos..., uno..., el otro. Y decidieron que el que no se casara conmigo se ausentase. Yo no asistí a la decisión. Me aterraba verlos juntos. La escena me figuro que debió de ser espantosa...

Ernesto.- No, sino de un frío y de una quietud infernales...

Laura.- No sé, no supe, no quise saber cómo lo decidieron. Habían de separarse para siempre... Me casé con el que se quedó, con éste, con Cosme... (670-71)

Just as Cosme and Damián are predicated in part on their saintly predecessors, so too is Laura's name evocative of an illustrious antecedent. It was in Laura (supposedly of the family de Sade) that the poet Petrarch, one of the most significant influences on the Renaissance in Spain, found the inspiration for much of his lyricism. Writing of both her presence and her absence, this idealisation of a passive woman was also his Muse whom he worshipped both before and after her death until his old age. Then he turned his back on her, rejecting her out of hand in favour of the suit of the Virgin Mary. Laura was for him a person and an image that encapsulated division. Pairs of opposites were played out in his verses in the figure of his Laura: desire and attainment, presence and absence, temporal beauty and eternal beauty, flesh and spirit. For him she was, therefore, an unstable metaphor, shifting between fulfilment and inadequacy. Clear parallels can be drawn with El Otro and his object relations with Laura, who in turn is an object of desire (under the terms of the Oedipus complex) and a lack from whom he turns away after the crisis has broken.

From the point of view of the subjects' mental development, the problem is not so much that there had to be a loser in the contest for Laura's hand, as that there had to be a winner. From this moment on, at least for a while, Cosme and Damián are separate and identifiable individuals, disregarding, that is, the now hidden and repressed paradoxes in their personalities. It is Damián who follows the more normal course of the original Oedipal conflict: exiled into a foreign and uncomfortable world, his Oedipal desires are eventually displaced on to a further object substitute, Damiana. This is not a resolution of the situation, but it corresponds to the mechanism that is normally utilised to soften the loss of the mother. The choice of the name of this object substitute is of obvious relevance: the feminised version of the subject's name implies an extension of the relationship with the Self, a continued inability to fully exteriorise the object/Other, and to treat it as psychically separate. Alternatively, a Jungian perspective would suggest an entirely more positive interpretation: Damiana would be the anima (there is, after all, a degree of orthographic and phonological correspondence between the two words), the female unconscious half of the

personality towards which the male consciousness must work in order to reach the ultimate goal of individuation (in this case symbolised by marriage) in order to enjoy a satisfied and complete mental existence. Either way, the weaknesses in the circumstances ultimately do not allow Damián to operate as an individual, and this progress, if progress it is, is eventually reversed.

At this stage it is necessary to note that it is in the dual construction of Laura and Damiana, the object substitutes for the two mothers, that Ellis identifies the dominant notion of the Other in the play (78). This is an inevitable consequence of the sort of approach which regards El Otro as the product of different facets of a single individual. Sinclair, while rejecting the interpretation of a split single personality, also emphasises the active role played by all the women, Laura and Damiana included, in the construction of El Otro's undifferentiated duality (forthcoming [1], 6-8). For Fox, however, Laura and Damiana are more to be considered as victims of an infectious psychological dislocation than anything else (69-70).

For Cosme, the success he achieves in his fight over Laura brings its own reverberations. By exiling Damián he has defeated the figure of the father, Laius has this time been intentionally murdered by Oedipus, and the otherness of the third element in the triangle has been removed. In terms of mental development this is not progress but regression. Cosme has removed himself from the Symbolic and is attempting to return to the Imaginary, with Laura once again being cast in the role of mother. It is this attempt to achieve the impossible, to reverse time, that is the primary and direct cause of the fatal struggle that provides the immediate backdrop to the play.

However, the marriage of Damián and Damiana has its significance for Cosme too. While phantastically motivated by the Imaginary, Cosme continues to operate in the Symbolic world (this is the battle over the Real to which Lacan was referring). Consequently, on being invited to the marriage ceremony, Cosme attends:

Laura.- Me casé con Cosme, y Damián se fue. Mi padre murió en seguida, y no debieron de ser ajenos a su muerte los quebraderos de corazón que le

dieron mis dos furiosos pretendientes... Y algo después nos escribió Damían que él se casaba. Me alegré, porque me resolvía un temor, el de que un día volviese... Cosme se fue a la boda de su hermano...

Ernesto.- ¿Y tú?

Laura.- Yo no, no quise, no debí, y no he vuelto a verle... (671)

Apart from the opinion earlier expressed by Laura that the ideal would have been for the brothers never to meet again, initially this does not seem to have been too challenging a situation. However, events revealed in a conversation between El Otro and Damiana suggest otherwise. In this light Damiana is not a force for Jungian individuation but her intended role as the substitutory mechanism for the repression of Oedipal desire is reversed into being the personification of the enactment of desire:

Damiana.- Desde que te conocí cuando viniste a nuestra boda, no pude descansar de deseo. En brazos del otro me decía: ¿Cómo será el otro? ¿Cómo sus besos? ¿Será el mismo? (690)

Damiana.- Pero es que yo, en aquellos días que siguieron a la boda, ¿te acuerdas?... Porque ahora, en esta hora de la suprema confidencia, tenemos que confesárnoslo todo: en aquellos primeros días de la luna de miel...

El Otro.- ¡De hiel!

Damiana.- Os tuve a los dos, gocé de los dos, de ti y del otro, os engañé a los dos... (693)

Her behaviour, claims El Otro, brought the brothers into co-operation, bringing back the confusion of identities which characterised their formative years and preparing the ground for events to come:

El Otro.- Eso creíste tú; pero entre los dos nos pusimos de acuerdo para engañarte y fingimos creer en tu engaño. Y sólo gozaste de uno. Porque así los dos quisimos conquistar a la otra, y de allí nació nuestro común odio, así los dos queríamos defendernos de tu furor... Él que te cedía en aquellos días era el tuyo, ¡pobrecito!, y él que te rechazaba fingiéndose cansado y harto, era el otro, ¡pobrecito también! Y los dos temíamos a tu furor...

Damiana.- ¡Mí amor!

El Otro.- ¡Tu amor... propio! Y fué una lucha trágica. Y cuando creías gozar de los dos, sólo gozabas del uno. (693)

After the wedding and the confused events surrounding the honeymoon, Cosme presumably returns alone to Laura and an unspecified period of time passes. However uneventful it was, and however stable Cosme may have seemed to have been (Laura,

after all, does not indicate to Ernesto that she had been worried previous to the breaking of the crisis), neither the root disorders nor the newer stresses brought on by the wedding of Damián and Damiana have been resolved. The appearance of the subject's twin was clearly unanticipated (unlike in *El que se enterró*, in which the protagonist Emilio sat in his study and waited for something to happen), but surely it was not in itself so surprising as to induce trauma. For it to have had the effect it did, Damián's reappearance, or the return of the repressed in psychoanalytic terms, must have been occasioned by a sudden weakness in the strata of the ego unconscious which implements the system of repression. El Otro's account of the circumstances immediately preceding the moment of mental breakdown indicates that there may have been the equivalent of a psychoanalytic monodialogue taking place, a regression that might have been enough to trigger an overwhelming reaction from the defence mechanism which precipitated mental meltdown:

El Otro.- Tu hermana, mi mujer, se fue a arreglar unos asuntos de familia, y yo la dejé ir sola porque deseaba quedarme solo, revisar papeles, quemar recuerdos, hacer abono de ceniza en la memoria... Necesitaba hacer cuentas, ponerme en paz conmigo mismo. (661)

Two things stand out from the above: that Cosme was alone, and that he spent the time digging through the past. The latter activity was intended to expunge some of the instabilities caught up with his past and to resolve some of the paradoxes that were lying below the level of conscious daily life. However, the solitude of this activity constituted a great strain for somebody who, on the level of the phantastic, was still striving for full readmission to the Imaginary, and the reaction was overwhelming. What had been repressed was expressed in the person of the twin:

El Otro.-Estaba, pues, como te digo, aquí conmigo, cuando me anunciaron al otro, y me vi entrar a mí mismo por ahí, por esa puerta [...] Me vi entrar como si me hubiese desprendido de un espejo, y me vi sentarme allí [...] Y se me quedó mirando a los ojos y mirándose en mis ojos. (*Ernesto, inquieto, baja la vista.*) Y entonces sentí que se me derretía la conciencia, el alma: que empezaba a vivir, o mejor a desvivir, hacia atrás, a redro-tiempo, como en una película que se haga correr al revés... Empecé a vivir hacia atrás, hacia el pasado, a reculones, arredrándome... Y desfiló mi vida y volví a tener veinte años, y diez, y cinco, y me hice niño, ¡niño!, y

cuando sentía en mis santos labios infantiles el gusto de la santa leche materna..., desnací..., me morí... Me morí al llegar a cuando nací, a cuando nacimos... [...] Al rato me fué retornando la conciencia, resucité; pero sentado allí, donde tú estás, y aquí, donde estoy, estaba mi cadáver... ¡Aquí, en este mismo sillón, aquí estaba mi cadáver..., aquí..., aquí está! ¡Yo soy el cadáver, yo soy el muerto! (661-62)

From this moment on in the action it is inaccurate to refer to the previously constituted subjects Cosme and Damián. However much other characters invest their energy in applying the linguistic categories of the Symbolic in an attempt to discover who did what to whom, because of the fact that the newly fused third term, El Otro, lies outside their signifying system, the investigation of what 'really' happened is inevitably vain. In this fashion he displays the 'unexpected form of subjectivity' that Jackson (90) identifies as typical of the regressive fantastic. For Fox, now that there is no brother (or as it might be more appropriately written, brOther) to provide even the vaguest frame of reference, El Otro has developed a metonymic personality:

Ya no será el otro de alguien, como su parcial acceso al mundo de lo simbólico le había permitido ser antes [...] No será ahora más que el otro del otro, esto es, un significante en perpetuo desplazamiento 'horizontal' sin posibilidad de 'anclar' simbólicamente, de constituirse en referencia fija a un significado dado. De ahí su incapacidad para asumir la identidad de ninguno de los dos hermanos, para hacer que el significante 'el Otro', ya absolutizado, refiera a otra realidad que a la de sí mismo. (67-68)

Fox continues his analysis by going on to observe how the new composite subject might be diagnosed as suffering from 'psicosis paranoica' (68). As is clearly the case in *El otro*, the linguistic symptoms of this could be an instability in the use of first and third-person pronouns and alienated forms of self-referencing. In terms of the phantastic, as a result of the fundamental flaws in personality development and with the catalytic effect of solitude and the searching into the past, the subject has introjected from the outside to the inside in respect of the ego that which he had previously projected as a 'bad object', that is Damián's original defeat and exile. As Lacan indicated, this is not merely a reversal of the former process:

Introjection is not the opposite of projection. It is practically employed [...] only when what is at stake is symbolic introjection. It is always accompanied by a

symbolic denomination. Introjection is always the introjection of the discourse of the Other. (Felman, 1987, 111)

This process of introjection is inherently linguistic:

Introjection is not simply the symmetrical displacement of an object from the outside to the inside, but a movement from the outside to the inside of an object's name, that is, the assumption by the ego of a *relation* between a named object and a system of named objects. (115)

Introjection in these terms is an essential element of entry into the Symbolic and therefore of personality development. However, quite the opposite seems to be happening on this occasion, and that is clearly the result of the fact that everything is functioning in the wrong direction, regressing instead of progressing. Such a reversal hinges on a change in the meaning of 'assumption': whereas normally it means 'taking on' in a creative sense, here it is more like 'absorption of' in a destructive sense, almost a 'consumption' in fact. With reference to *Damián*, the name is consumed by the subject ego and the totality is made Other, an entirely new Thirdness, otherwise known as the renamed *El Otro*. Paradoxically, in this configuration, the creation of a third term does not bring into being a triangular relationship as it would normally do:

Naming the third element relates it to a system - language - not simply to me [...] The Symbolic is the differential situating of the subject in a *third position*; it is at once the place *from which* a dual relation is apprehended, the place *through which* it is articulated, and that makes the subject (as, precisely, this symbolic, third, place) into a linguistic signifier in a system, which thereby permits him to relate symbolically to other signifiers, that is, at once to relate to other humans and to articulate his own desire, his own unconscious unawares. (115)

Instead of the elements Self - Other - Mother, there are only Third (*El Otro*) - Mother, a reassumption of some of the characteristics of the Imaginary stage, but fatally flawed due to the fact that Otherness is now included in the dual relationship. This makes the situation radically unstable, which is why the representative signifier of the new Thirdness is one of non-identity, which is continually shifting metonymically away from meaningful signification, or to put it another way, every time one of the other characters tries to argue that *El Otro* is either *Damián* or *Cosme*, they fail.

Such attempts at identification actually make up a large proportion of the text's action. This is similar to the strategies employed to get *El Otro* to subscribe to a

specific signifier which at least represents the part of the subject otherwise rendered by the first person singular personal pronoun. Both Laura and Damiana claim in Act 3, Scenes 1 and 2 that unbeknownst to the rest of the characters, their partner (be it Cosme or Damián as husband or lover) carries a unique, identifying, mark on his skin in the most private of places. This mark is in fact intended to be one step further on from a name since it is a physiological characteristic as opposed to a given social construct, and therefore harder to falsify or hide. Once again there is a clear parallel to the story of Cain, who, as an indirect consequence of his action, was 'marked' by God:

Cain said to the Lord, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me this day away from the ground; and from thy face I shall be hidden; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will slay me.' Then the Lord said to him, 'Not so! If anyone slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.' And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord. (Genesis 4: 13-16, Revised Standard Version)

In Biblical terms the mark is therefore the sign of the survivor inscribed on the surface of the body and at the same time the sign of protection against justice being enacted by any other than God. El Otro is also beyond the arm of human justice, but more importantly the mark is intended as a signifier of difference, a method of telling somebody apart. However, the fact that both women want to look for it implies that even if they found it, it would not resolve the situation, and in any case El Otro prevents them from looking, maintaining as a result what is precisely his indistinguishability:

El Otro.- Sí, sí, mujer al cabo, más curiosa que amorosa. ¿Cómo será el otro por dentro? ¿En qué se diferenciarán? ¿Dónde estará el lunar, la mancha oculta que los distingue? Pero ¿sabes, acaso, si el otro no tiene la misma señal?

Laura.- ¿La que yo puse?

El Otro.- ¡Quietas..., quietas las manos! Por eso no me he dejado nunca desnudo y dormido a tu alcance. (688)

Once again, at the linguistic and textual margin an identifying signifier has its signified removed, and all that is left for it to signify is absence and ambiguity. The sign that



was thought to differentiate has slipped away into a process of continual deferral, thereby demonstrating Lacanian *différance* in action.

To return to the situation of the inverse introjection that brings about the creation of El Otro, it is important to realise that this regression runs very deeply. On the level of the phantastic Cosme was trying to reverse the process of mental growth by returning to the Imaginary from the Symbolic, and the result is that at the return of the repressed, the subject goes through the already familiar process of *desnacimiento*. In his narration of what happened, he describes a movement back in time, and it is significant that it is at the moment of the first object relation (the breast, with the implications that were discussed earlier) that he slipped backwards out of life.

However, there are some notable differences between this *desnacimiento* and those of other texts by Unamuno, in particular that of *El que se enterró*. Like Emilio, Cosme is also on his own when the crisis comes, but on this occasion it is the linguistic representation, the field of the Symbolic, that El Otro introduces first: 'Estaba, pues, como te digo, aquí conmigo, cuando me anunciaron al otro, y me vi entrar a mí mismo por ahí, por esa puerta' (661). In other words, the crucial element of what is said is the announcing, or the naming, of Damián, with all which that implies in terms of object relations. However, even though he is more unlikely than anyone else to be confused by the physical similarity of his twin brother to himself, he interprets that manifestation of the Other as Self, indicating a blurring of subject-object boundaries that is part of the Imaginary, hence the reference once again to the mirror. Clearly the Lacanian vector is negative in this case, and in terms of the phantastic, the subject is behaving regressively. This parallels El Otro's experience of having been through the accelerated process of living his life backwards until he reaches the memory of the mother's breast, which is the catalyst for the first separation between subject and object. Like Emilio in *El que se enterró*, he comes to consciousness in the other body. However, in this case the subject has fully regressed in his phantastic life to an Imaginary existence, which is why he will not, and indeed is

unable to, make a distinction between Self and Other, Cosme and Damián (or Damián and Cosme).

This comparison is certainly valid in the terms laid out, but there is a further consideration to be taken into account in order for the whole picture to be represented. There is not one scene of violence between the twins in *El otro*, but two. Both of them are narrated by El Otro but the second account is very different to the first:

Otro.- Sí, estalló el misterio, se ha puesto a razón la locura, se ha dado a luz la sombra. Los dos mellizos, los que como Esaú y Jacob se peleaban ya desde el vientre de su madre, con odio fraternal, con odio que era amor demoníaco, los dos hermanos se encontraron... Era al caer de la tarde, recién muerto el sol, cuando se funden las sombras y el verde del campo se hace negro... ¡Odia a tu hermano como te odias a ti mismo! Y llenos de odio a sí mismos, dispuestos a suicidarse mutuamente, por una mujer..., por otra mujer..., pelearon... Y el uno sintió que en sus manos, heladas por el terror, se le helaba el cuello del otro... Y miró a los ojos muertos del hermano por si se veía muerto en ellos ... Las sombras de la noche que llegaba envolvieron el dolor del otro... Y Dios se callaba... ¡Y sigue callándose todavía! (674-75)

The reader or spectator is immediately placed in a situation whereby a decision is necessary as to whether this fight is the same that was described so differently earlier on. There are so many mortal struggles evoked in the text (Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Damián and Cosme on at least two separate occasions) that this further description seems to take on a mythical or literary quality, linked in spirit to all those which have gone before. Ernesto, the great detective, leaps to the conclusion that it is a description of what happened on the evening of the crisis that brought ‘madness’, but as such it contradicts parts of El Otro’s earlier version which in fact does not refer to a physical fight at all. Fox (1991) decides that the differences between the two are due to the fact that the latter version of events ‘es una versión externa, que sigue el contorno “social”, por así decirlo, del argumento y halla en los celos su motivo epidérmico’ (66), whereas the former is internal, ‘percibida como la muerte del protagonista hablante’ (67). To be quite so categorical about which version physically occurred and which did not (implying, for example, that the corpse lying in the cellar

must have strangulation marks around the neck) is to risk making the same sort of mistake as identifying El Otro as Cosme and not Damián (or vice versa). In each of these cases the crucial element of the narrative is its ambiguity and undecidability, both for the characters on stage and the spectators in the stalls. An attempt at direct, linear interpretation of signification is destined to end either in contradiction or, as in this case, in a reductive view of the text.

The issue of the way in which the first twin dies is also complicated by a degree of temporal instability expressed in El Otro's speech. Although this is a product of El Otro's withdrawal from the normal process of linguistic signification, it also raises doubts over the order in which events occurred, or are occurring. There is a question, for example, whether the struggle brought about a death at all:

Otro.- ¡No hay bueno que valga! ¡Porque ahora mismo te vas a venir conmigo, a la bodega, a que te enseñe el cadáver del otro, del que se me murió aquí!... Ahí abajo está, a oscuras, muriéndose a oscuras... (663)

For Ellis, this is an indication that the play is a telescopic, elongated representation of a much shorter, highly unstable period of time sustained by El Otro's waning powers of enunciation:

Although the Other has symbolically destroyed the *serse*, Cosme and Damián remain present as long as he continues to speak. The death, in fact, has not occurred in a single blow, but is rather in progress [...] The play thus reflects the moment of death itself, and the apparent confusion is precisely the result of its temporal dissociation. (1988, 79-80)

Examples such as this demonstrate the structural and linguistic resistances in *El otro* to single, uniform interpretations.

Temporal and linguistic dislocations aside, it is in a sense quite remarkable that all the analysis offered up to this point has been dealing with events which occurred before the opening scene of the play. The two issues which present themselves in the action of the drama itself concern what is happening to El Otro and the part that the other characters play in this process. In simple terms, it would appear that El Otro is suffering from a traumatic neurosis. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (OC XVIII, 7-

64) Freud differentiates between Anxiety, with which the twins lived during their early years, and Fear or Fright which is the cause of traumatic neurosis:

'Anxiety' describes a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one. 'Fear' requires a definite object of which to be afraid. 'Fright', however, is the name we give to a state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it; it emphasizes the factor of surprise. I do not believe anxiety can produce a traumatic neurosis. (12-13)

The suggestion that anxiety does not produce a traumatic neurosis would seem to be supported by *El que se enterró*, in which Emilio is overtly preparing for the danger that he feels is coming, even though he cannot predict its manifestation. After the event he is withdrawn but does not show any signs of trauma. It can be said that El Otro is suffering from this condition because of the after-effects that he undergoes. This is how Freud defines the likely behaviour of the sufferer:

The study of dreams may be considered the most trustworthy method of investigating deep mental processes. Now dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright. (13)

In the aftermath of the crisis, El Otro reacts in a very similar manner:

Don Juan.- Sí; porque desde el día del misterio, en que él enloqueció, ya no duermen juntos. Él duerme solo, y encerrándose en el cuarto de tal modo que no se le pueda oír lo que diga en sueños. Y se dice 'el otro'. (656)

His sleeping patterns are not the only things that are disturbed. During his waking hours his relationships with the people and objects around him alter markedly:

Laura.- ¡Ay, Ernesto, Ernesto! Sin duda, mi pobre marido se volvió loco y le persigue ése que él llama 'el otro'. Es una obsesión fatídica; parece un poseído, un endemoniado, y como si ese otro fuese su demonio de la guarda... Le he sorprendido alguna vez - y no es fácil - como queriendo arrancar de sí al otro. Ha hecho tapar todos los espejos de casa, y una vez que me sorprendió mirándome en el espejillo de tocador, el que necesito...

Ernesto.- ¡Claro! El espejo es enser de primera necesidad para una mujer.

Laura.- ¡Pues no faltaba más! Pero me gritó: '¡No te mires en él! ¡No busques a la otra!'

Ernesto.- ¿Y por qué no sale de casa, a distraerse? Siempre encerrado...

Laura.- Dice que todos los hombres le parecen espejos y que no quisiera estar ni consigo mismo... (657)

El Otro's preoccupation with mirrors comes as no great surprise. The action of covering up all the mirrors in a house when someone died was a widespread superstition and on a literary level is almost a cliché. It forms part of the fascination with mirrors, reflections, doubles and insanity which was widely explored in the narrative fiction of many Western cultures during the nineteenth century. According to Otto Rank (1971), images in mirrors were often manipulated, distorted, eliminated or made independent of their originary subject. In particular, Schoppe, in Jean-Paul's *Titan* (1802) is so governed by his fear that he smashes each and every mirror as they cause his Self to advance upon him. Erasmus Spikher, the protagonist of Hoffman's *The Story of the Lost Reflection* (1815) has all mirrors covered up wherever he goes (in this case due to his lack of a reflection), and the same is true of Balduin, the hero of Hans Heinz Ewers' early film *The Student of Prague* (1913).

The direct cause of El Otro's fear is clearly the manner in which the mirror and mirror images, whether literal or metaphorical, have brought insecurity, pain and loss of identity into his life. In this there is a suggestive parallel established with Lacanian discourse. As Fox explains it, the mirror stage is 'la fase del desarrollo de la psique durante la cual el infante de entre seis y dieciocho meses reconoce por primera vez su imagen en el espejo y se descubre en cuanto a unidad separada' (1991, 63). In other words, the mirror and the objectifying images it creates ought to function as an unsettling but essential element of the psychological development of an infant. However, for El Otro, the mirror is not a symbol of independence and autonomy but a reminder that the threshold has yet to be truly crossed. Although Cosme and Damián managed to exist on the far side of the mirror, neither of them ever succeeded in cutting the ties that bound them to their undifferentiated past. The struggle in the study is an account of their return to the time before the mirror made them ill-defined subjects and objects for each other: their return to the Imaginary. No wonder, then, that El Otro is unable to stand the sight of the object which symbolises two agonising transitions neither of which have left him secure in his context or at peace with himself.

The function of the mirror in *El otro* is as important in terms of the existential discourse developed by Ellis as it is in terms of psychoanalytic criticism. It also sheds some light on the sort of death that Cosme / Damián and El Otro suffer:

The key [...] to the entire play is to be found in the mirror. We know that in Unamuno the mirror is a symbol of the 'other' consciousness through which consciousness discovers the *serse*. It is Unamuno's theory that the *serse* is the reflection of consciousness in the Other. Though this reflection is the only concrete being to which consciousness can lay claim, it is an alienated being that is experienced in anguish [...] Through the murder he has committed, The Other has thus attempted to overcome the anguish of being a *serse* by destroying this image in the mirror, that is, his being-for-others. However, because Unamuno identifies being-for-others with being-for-itself, this murder will amount to a kind of suicide. (1988, 77)

El Otro first narrates his version of the events which overwhelmed him to Ernesto very soon after they are introduced to each other. It is notable that El Otro should prefer to talk to someone completely separated from his life rather than to people much closer to him, such as the doctor or his wife. The role played by Ernesto is the subject of some debate but it would appear that, on careful consideration, his importance has been decisively underestimated in previous studies of *El otro*. Ellis pays him virtually no attention. Fox, having explained El Otro's re-entry into the Imaginary, states that subsequently there is an inevitable tension between El Otro and those who have remained in the now obviously unstable realm of the Symbolic:

[Los demás personajes] no tendrán más remedio que lidiar, cada cual a su manera, con esos significantes flotantes - un cadáver anónimo, un anónimo hermano vivo - cuya sola presencia pone de manifiesto el precario carácter convencional del plano simbólico en el que han construido sus respectivas realidades. Los personajes menos afectados emocionalmente por la tragedia, como sucede con Ernesto, cuñado de Cosme, y con don Juan, médico de la casa, vienen a actuar como defensores formales del orden establecido. (1991, 69)

According to Fox, after El Otro's death the only character who finds that a conclusion has been reached is the 'pragmático Ernesto, que expresa el bienvenido retorno a la estabilidad del orden establecido' (70). Sinclair, on the other hand, is in direct disagreement with the implications of these statements:

Fox señala a Ernesto, el cuñado del otro, y a Don Juan, el médico, como representantes del plano simbólico, del plano del lenguaje, en el que el ser está obligado a verse limitado por los demás, y en el que ve hasta qué punto su ser ha sido construido por las relaciones que tiene con los demás. Se da, por fin, más importancia a la función de estos dos personajes de lo que - para mí - nos permite el texto; es decir, Fox implica una valorización de lo simbólico que no creo que exista en Unamuno. (forthcoming [1], 3-4)

Given these opposing critical perspectives, it would appear to be necessary to look in detail at the first private conversation between El Otro and Ernesto, and from there chart the nature and ramifications of the incipient relationship that is generated between them, as well as the images with which they are identified. The first incident of note occurs just after the two men have sat down to talk. El Otro starts relating what happened and then interrupts himself, apparently apropos of nothing:

Otro.- Estaba, pues, como te digo, aquí conmigo, cuando me anunciaron al otro, y me vi entrar a mí mismo por ahí, por esa puerta... No, no te alteres ni temas. Y en todo caso, toma la llave. (*Se la da.*) ¡Ah!, pero dime si guardas alguno de esos espejitos para atusarse pelo y bigote...

Ernesto.- Sí, aquí lo tengo.

(*Lo saca y se lo da.*)

Otro.- Un espejo y una llave no pueden estar juntos...

(*Rompiéndolo y tirándolo.*)

Ernesto.- Vamos, sigue, que me...

Otro.- No temas. Me vi entrar como si me hubiese desprendido de un espejo.

(661)

El Otro proceeds unabashed, with his narration unabated and his action unexplained. Although Ernesto may have been taken aback, the destruction of the mirror is perfectly logical in the light of what has already been discussed. However, there are two other elements of significance. Firstly, the mirror seems to have been the second half of an exchange of objects (El Otro gives the key to Ernesto, Ernesto gives the mirror to El Otro). This is the first indication of the sort of relationship that will be formed between them. Secondly, the reason El Otro gives for destroying the mirror is not because he reacts to the mirror per se, but because a mirror and a key should not, and cannot, exist side by side. There would appear to be no primary level, superficial meaning for this statement. Ernesto presumably writes it off as the idiosyncratic statement of a madman. However, what is inexplicable, especially given the subject's

pivotal positioning in the action, is the almost total silence on the matter in critical approaches to the text. The honourable, if rather cursory, exception is to be found in Ellis's Sartrean comparison, which will be examined later.

The oppositional representation of the mirror and the key leads to the hypothesis that they may well also exist in opposition on a secondary level. Since the mirror has already been identified as intimately linked to a Lacanian analysis in certain possible approaches to the play, it might be expected that the key would form part of the same psychoanalytic and linguistic discourse. Unfortunately, while there is a clear correspondence between the mirror and the mirror stage, no such immediate parallel suggests itself for the key. However, by studying the occurrences of the key, and its related images, in the text, it may be possible to establish its position in Lacanian discourse. Through this, the nature of the dynamic relationship between Ernesto and El Otro can be more readily explained.

The destruction of Ernesto's pocket mirror is not the first time the key and its cognates figure in *El otro*. Images of shutting, locking, concealing (and not opening, unlocking and discovering which would be the other, more positive interpretation of the key) are introduced early in the first scene. In the introductory stage direction to Scene IV the key is directly mentioned for the first time: 'El Otro se va a la puerta, que cierra por dentro con llave, y se guarda ésta después de haberla mordido' (660). The action of biting the key is equivalent to that of biting a coin to check whether it is real, a gesture that exists in both Spain and the English-speaking world. It is quite possibly a reflex, unconscious, action that is linguistically marginal, in stage directions that are textually marginal, but as such it gives away or betrays in parapraxial fashion the active and destabilising effect of the phantastic.

After Ernesto and El Otro have talked in the study, the key remains in the possession of Ernesto, who probably keeps it out of regard for his own safety more than anything else. The next time the key occurs in the text, when Ernesto and El Otro come up out of the cellar having seen the corpse buried below, its use is indicative of the fact that a two-way relationship and a form of communication have



been established. Once again the communication is by gesture in a textually and linguistically marginal fashion, suggesting that on the level of the phantastic Ernesto has accepted the role assigned to him by El Otro:

Ernesto.- (*A Laura, señalando al Otro con la llave.*)  
 Ahí te dejo con él, con tu marido, que yo tengo que hablar con el ama.  
 (*Tomando a ésta aparte.*) ¿Qué misterio hay en esta casa? (665)

The relationship between Ernesto and El Otro is now set and in each metaphorical scenario, Ernesto is cast as the keyholder. The house has already been variously described as prison, cemetery and madhouse (655), and it is into that context which Ernesto is introduced:

Otro [a Laura].- Tu hermano se ha constituido en mi carcelero, mi loquero hasta que se aclare esto. (684)

After this point, Ernesto is willing to play the role demanded of him even on an overt and linguistic level:

Otro.- No deis voces, que nos va a oír el carcelero, el loquero... Y nos va a oír el Destino, el Otro de allí arriba, (*señalando al cielo*) y de aquí abajo (*señalando a la tierra*).  
 Damiana.- Que oiga y que venga, y que se acabe esto de una vez... Porque todos hemos enloquecido ya...

*ESCENA VI*  
 Dichos y Ernesto.

Ernesto (*Entrando*).- ¡Ya está aquí el loquero!  
 El Otro.- ¡Y carcelero y juez instructor del crimen!  
 Ernesto.- ¿Se llegará a saber la verdad? (699)

Ernesto is by this stage clearly caught up in role-playing the part created for him by El Otro at their first meeting. El Otro, however, is now fast approaching his end. Besieged on all sides by people demanding decisions and identity, he removes himself from the stage to commit suicide:

Otro (*Desde dentro*).- ¡Damiana! Ahí te dejamos nuestra maldita simiente, ahí se quedan otros nosotros... Las furias..., ¡las furias! ¡Muera Caín! ¡Muera Abel! ¡Por llave o por espejo, mueran!  
 (*Se oye un cuerpo que cae, mientras las mujeres quedan aterradas.*) (702)

At last the key casts off its previous marginal positioning and is placed overtly alongside the mirror in El Otro's final words, a significant moment of structural centrality. For the inattentive reader or spectator, this must be a baffling statement. If death by mirror is a concept which would seem to have a certain logic from the action of the play, death by key does not.

Ellis is aware of the importance of the key but when he considers it he does so only in relation to its final occurrence, disregarding the earlier, more marginal but equally important references. The resultant interpretation, therefore, raises more questions than it answers:

The key and the mirror mentioned in The Other's last speech can be related to the initial description of his dwelling place as a jail and a madhouse. The jail is the world of the *serse*, which arises through the 'Other' (the mirror) and is held together by knowledge (the key). The madhouse is man's hunger for the *serlo todo* - the freedom on which the *serse* is founded. The house of The Other, however, is also a house of death, for whether in society or in isolation man never achieves the total-being he desires and he ultimately dies. (1988, 80)

That the key is understood to represent knowledge will ultimately indicate a degree of overlap between Ellis's analysis and that which is presented here. However, that it exists in complementarity with, and as a support to, the function of the mirror contradicts El Otro's action of breaking the mirror with the key and his claim that they cannot exist side-by-side. Neither is it the case that the jail and the madhouse are necessarily presented in opposition. Ernesto represents authority in both of these metaphorical situations and, as ever, it is his role which is not being given its necessary weight.

To return to a Lacanian analysis, it would appear that, just as the mirror and the key co-exist in opposition, so do the fundamental stages of personality development of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The mirror stage represents both the plenitude of life in the Imaginary and the potential for change and progress from it: the mirror acts as a complex, shifting and paradoxical metaphor for the Imaginary. There is no equivalent term for the Symbolic but it seems clear that the key fulfils this nameless function in *El otro* and maybe even in a wider context. This is not to say that each

time the function needs to be represented textually, it will be done so in the form of a key, just as it is not necessarily the case that the mirror stage is represented as a mirror. The example of *Cómo se hace una novela* should be sufficient to demonstrate the point.<sup>9</sup> U. Jugo is terrifyingly caught initially between the river and the book, and then later between the acts of reading and not-reading. In this text, the function of the key is being fulfilled by the book and reading, as is the mirror by the river and not-reading.

If the key is indeed a metaphorical representation of the Symbolic just as the mirror is for the Imaginary, it is reasonable to expect that it will have implicit in its use the fundamental characteristics of the triadic stage of personality development. It must be intimately bound up in issues such as the entry into the world of language, the figure of the Father and the operation of denial of desire. Like the mirror and the mirror stage, the key and the key stage will have to be flexible and paradoxical in their operation and signification. The mirror represents the fullness of life in the Imaginary, the threat and the promise of the socialisation of the subject, the fear of fragmentation or of replication, and the means by which the subject can attempt to track back from the Symbolic into the Imaginary. Equally, the key is likely to have a multiplicity of functions which operate in a variety of ways.

Perhaps the most obvious division in the metaphor of the key is the dichotomous pairings of lock / unlock, close / open, hide / discover, disable / enable, protect / advance, conservative / radical. These pairings indicate two basic directions in which a key can be employed, just as there are at least two fields from and to which a subject can pass through the mirror stage (Imaginary > Symbolic, Symbolic > Imaginary). The concept of a Lacanian vector is therefore as applicable to the key stage as it is to the mirror stage.

Establishing the relationship between the key and language in *El otro* is not a straightforward proposition. This is due to the extensive linguistic dislocation caused by *El Otro* communicating with the Symbolic while psychologically existing within the

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<sup>9</sup> See above, 166-69.

Imaginary. Certainly, the key is equated with orality, as El Otro bites it when it is first mentioned in the text. He then goes on to pass the key over to Ernesto before telling of the events which removed Damián and Cosme from their independent contexts. This first expression would have initially seemed to Ernesto to have the potential for clarification and accurate linguistic representation, a great improvement on El Otro locking himself away and talking to nobody but himself, but this is soon found to be a false hope. Handing over the key carries the implication of the removal of the subject from the Symbolic and thereby the regressive characteristics of the key stage are those which predominate. El Otro's language becomes an obstacle to understanding and not a facilitator in the search for truth. Sinclair identifies the same characteristic: 'El Otro [...] nos impone una batalla incierta en el campo del lenguaje, que en Unamuno es método de defensa y no de comunicación' (forthcoming [1], 1). Once again, this is a constant factor in her analyses of other texts, for example with reference to *Niebla*: 'Language in *Niebla* [...] is used for purposes of concealment and self-deception, for covering over, or diverting from crucial issues of the self' (forthcoming [2], 1).

The source of language for the subject as it moves into the Symbolic is the figure of the Father, the Lacanian Other. As has already been discussed, because of the absence of the function of paternal authority, Cosme and Damián became each other's Other with whom each one struggled under the terms of the Oedipus Complex, originally over their mother(s) and subsequently over the mother-substitute Laura. Cosme won that fight and therefore achieved in his own right the status and authority of the Father, successfully ridding himself of the Other. Cosme's psychological existence at this point could therefore be described as an imitation of the Imaginary, since it is essentially diadic and not triadic. However, Cosme's reacquaintance with Damián only serves to emphasise how unstable his simulacrum of the Imaginary is, that he is in fact operating within the Symbolic and that whatever happens, his repressed Other will continue to return. As Cosme and Damián have become El Otro in their attempted return to the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the figure of the Father must be rejected. Somebody else, who is not Cosme / Damián / El Otro must be found

to fulfil that role, to be the dominant function in the Symbolic, to be the keeper of the key. Who could be more appropriate than Laura's (the mother's object substitute) closest male relative, Ernesto? It could, of course, have been her father, but he died in the aftermath of the fight between Cosme and Damián, a victim of the transference from the Mother to the object substitute of the terms of the Oedipus Complex. The fact that Ernesto fulfils this specific role in the familial structure explains El Otro's willingness to talk to Ernesto when he has been unwilling to talk to anyone else. By so doing he is aiming to loosen one of the remaining ties to the Symbolic, but he presents it in such an ambiguous fashion that Ernesto, even at this early stage in the role of the Father - confessor, sees it as an opportunity for clarification and the strengthening of the realm of the Symbolic:

Otro.- Mi Laura vive ya como si viviera con un muerto. Vete, que voy a ver si confesándome con tu hermano me doy nueva vida, resucito. ¡Vete! ¡Que te vayas he dicho! ¡Vete, vete! (660)

Ernesto is apparently invested with the authority of the Father, and in the key he is given the means of control and denial. He is confessor, jailer, warden of the asylum and the graveyard, and even possibly analyst since it is illuminating in many ways to regard sections of the text as elements of a session of psychoanalysis. The analyst, an outsider with authority, introduced into a situation that has already reached breakdown, is invested by the analysand with apparent overall control, but a control from which the analysand can withdraw at any time. The act of giving away the key might be seen as an act of transference, a defensive mechanism by which the analysand avoids dealing with part of the root situation by displacing it on to the analyst, thereby blocking the path to the unconscious and reconfirming the relationship between the key and the obstructive use of language. The fact that Ernesto is willing to join in with the scenario which is created by El Otro can therefore be seen as either a therapeutic strategy (in which case it fails), or more likely an example of counter-transference. This is particularly appropriate in the Lacanian

context, since he sees it as an inevitable by-product of the process of analysis, as Wright (1984) observes:

[It] can only be negotiated via the spoken word [...] Speech will open [resistance] up, for here [it] is directed against the father's law, the order of language, which implicates both analyst and analysand in something beyond a dual relation. (17)

The analysis is indubitably unsuccessful, and the Epilogue seems to take on the atmosphere of a discussion over case notes, a discussion which proves equally inconclusive.

Nevertheless, the metaphor is an interesting one since there is also something of the analytical in the process of *desnacimiento*. Mesmerism (hypnotism) was popular both in itself and as a literary motif during the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in works that border on the fantastic, for example Edgar Allan Poe's *The Strange Case of M. Valdemar* (1845). It shares with psychoanalysis the aim of removing conscious barriers and defences in order to release repressed elements of the unconscious. This is often brought about by putting the patient in a relaxed state and then taking them back through their life, either to a younger age or to a time before they were born, that is to a previous life. This is similar to what is represented as happening during the traumatic experience of *desnacimiento*. Of course, the figure of the analyst (Ernesto) was not present at the moment of *desnacimiento* itself, but the curious conversation between El Ama and El Otro which refers to his recollection of breast feeding hints that he is used to being regressed on at least one level, and he responds in his state of suggestibility by affirming the memory. Whether the regression has uncovered a 'real' memory, or whether this is an early example of False Memory Syndrome is another argument.

It could even be argued that analysis is taking place on yet another level. Unamuno's whole approach to theatre was that of an exchange of ideas between a dynamic text and an audience engaging with it in an active fashion. This would be a new perspective on the classical idea of cathartic involvement except that empathy is replaced by self-interrogation. That the audience would end up displaying the

characteristic defence mechanisms of an analysand is an intriguing idea, although in turn that may mean that the popularity of the theatre would be hugely diminished.

In one sense, therefore, Ernesto does take on the function of the Other in a triadic relationship formed in the following fashion: subject (El Otro) - Mother (El Ama) and Other (Ernesto). This position is, from one perspective, contradictory to that adopted by Sinclair: 'Así que, el pedir la presencia de Ernesto, como *tercero*, es una pedida que carece de fundamento. Ernesto no puede actuar como el *término tercero* en una situación en que no se sabe bien que ya existen dos seres. Y lo peor es que no lo sabe él' (forthcoming [1], 8-9). However, from another perspective, these approaches are in agreement since El Otro ensures that the relationship does not actually ever form in the Symbolic, however hard Ernesto may try. El Otro, from the start to the conclusion of the play, inhabits the Imaginary, beyond the reach of the turning key and the investigating judge, locked in a dual relationship with El Ama, who, in spite of her apparent and continuing sojourn in the Symbolic, straddles all stages of psychological development, as Sinclair so acutely observes:

Sólo queda el ama, la cual, como representante por excelencia del plano imaginario de Lacan, no quiere saber nada, no quiere que se distinga nada, no quiere que se recuerde nada. Todo lo quiere envolver, enrollar en un velo, o absorberlo dentro de un pozo en que no existen ni nombres, ni tiempos, ni personas. En el epílogo ofrecerá la explicación última de su actitud: si no sabemos nada, si no distinguimos nada, evitaremos la muerte. (forthcoming [1], 6-7)

El Ama is the only one who ever really grasps that El Otro is not in fact simply either Cosme or Damián. Although the relationship between them is not perfectly seamless, there is at least an identification in their shared condition as the survivor and product of an indistinguishable pair:

Ama.- Mira...

Otro.- (*Tapándole la boca.*) Ya te tengo dicho que no le nombres...

Ama.- Pero dime aquí, al oído del corazón... ¡Si lo he olvidado, lo he olvidado!... Tú eres, tú serás para mí los dos. Porque los dos sois uno.

Víctima o verdugo, ¿qué más da? ¡El uno es el otro!

Otro.- Ésa, ama, ésa es la santa verdad. Todos somos uno... (678)

So, whether by the mirror or by the key, *El Otro* must die. Since the death occurs off-stage, there are no indications as to the precise circumstances and the means of *El Otro*'s exit remains undecidable. For Ellis, this is a highly appropriate way for the curtain to fall on a life characterised by division and identification:

There is a logic to the fact that the audience does not witness the death of The Other. This is the death both of his being-for-others, his objectivity, as well as the death of his being-for-itself, his subjectivity. It is also the annihilation of that profound freedom on which the *serse* is founded and which expresses itself as a hunger for being. To 'know' this moment, the spectator himself would have to die. (80)

However, what is clear is that re-entry into the Imaginary is no more assured of a successful conclusion than struggling imperfectly in the Symbolic. As Sinclair indicates, the alternative to language is not freedom: 'Al no entrar en el terreno del lenguaje, nos quedamos en el campo de la locura, que es la situación del individuo en su soledad radical' (forthcoming [1], 1). Perhaps most disturbingly of all, as becomes abundantly clear during the epilogue, each and every person, male or female, twinned or not, from the tribe of Cain or from the tribe of Abel, faces the same fatal conclusion.

Ama.- Todo hombre se muere, cuando el destino le traza la muerte, sin haberse conocido, y toda muerte es un suicidio, el de Caín. ¡Perdonémonos los unos a los otros para que Dios nos perdone a todos! (709)

Retreat into the phantastic is no protection for the unstable subject; it is no escapist Utopia and ultimately an inadequate solution to the demands laid down by social existence.

It would appear from all that has been discussed that *El otro* is intimately involved in the representation of phantasy. It is important to consider, if only briefly, the relevance of this phantastic text to the object of inquiry of previous chapters: the fantastic. One link between the two is suggested by Rivière as she argues that language is an ineffective tool for exploring the phantasy: 'Unconscious phantasies are largely "unspeakable" and unconscious emotions are often "ineffable"' (Klein, 1952, 22). The parallels with part of Jackson's approach to the fantastic are striking:



The fantastic is predicated on the category of the 'real', and it introduces areas which can be conceptualized only by negative terms according to the categories of nineteenth century realism: thus, the im-possible, the un-real, the nameless, formless, shapeless, un-known, in-visible. What could be termed a 'bourgeois' category of the real is under attack. It is this *negative relationality* which constitutes the meaning of the modern fantastic. (1981, 26)

The common attribute of negativity is clear, as is their relationality. Just as the fantastic is predicated on the real, so is the phantastic on language. Furthermore, the phantastic is often necessarily expressed in non-verbal terms: 'We feel therefore that such fantasies could not have been expressed in words; and that in so doing one has destroyed their nature and character' (Klein, 1957, 21). With reference to *El otro* this demonstrates the need for insistence on elements such as the somatic mark of Cain and the textually marginal key which eventually erupts, inexplicably, right through the centre of the body of the text. The phantastic is represented through the body in the same fashion as the fantastic is, demonstrating the intimacy of the relationship between the two. As a phantastic text, *El otro* becomes an intriguing example of how the fantastic changes and adapts as it develops within a given literary tradition.

## Conclusion

The preceding chapters are intended as a foundation for an interrogation of a range of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century texts whose importance can only be discovered through critical discourses which recognise the workings of the fantastic. The selection of texts and the methods of analysis are designed to facilitate the reinscription of what to date has been repeatedly marginalised in studies of Spanish culture of the period. The intention has not been to delimit these texts, or even the period, with yet another stultifying and rigid system of categories. Rather, not only does this thesis attempt to highlight the richness of the tradition of fantastic narratives which lies still partly ignored in Spain, it also seeks to shed light on the detailed and complicated functioning of the fantastic narratives themselves.

Keeping firmly in mind the aim of avoiding a further categorisation or series of categorisations, it is nevertheless appropriate to observe that this thesis has revealed what might be regarded as a flexible and dynamic continuum of the fantastic in Spain. The narratives by Pérez Galdós, Pardo Bazán and Alarcón are shown to be both an extension of and a departure from the late-Romantic works of Bécquer. They respond to both broad, imported cultural influences and particular domestic pressures, and they are fuelled by the wider cultural climate of increasing fascination with all aspects of human psychology. However, it is not accurate to say that narratives from this period are defined by this process of psychologisation. Rather, as is frequently the case with the fantastic, they shrug off a single, linear form of development by mutating at the margins and through the interstices of the texts, rendering unstable the scientific truth which is the resolution of the narrative on its primary level.

The impact of psychology in general and the psychologisation of the fantastic in particular can also be traced through those narratives by Valle-Inclán analysed in this thesis. In particular, texts such as *Mi hermana Antonia* refract images received and

represented mentally through the lens of uncertain memory and unstable narratorial perspectives. The recollection of past life, specifically that which is experienced during the emotively suggestible state of childhood, proves to be fertile ground for the operation of the fantastic. Even so, and in spite of the reinstatement of specific Spanish and Romantic paradigms, this is not to claim that the fantastic can be explained away by appealing to a formulaic process of social and cultural shaping. Instead, the fantastic re-emerges in insidious and threatening fashion by means of aesthetic codes characterised by their superficiality. The languages of gesture, appearance and suggestion allow the fantastic to mutate beyond the clutches of this manifestation of psychological delimitation.

Although it might appear in some senses paradoxical, the paradigm shift towards regarding humans as primarily psychological entities poses a threat to the fantastic. This is at the core of Todorov's truncation of his structural genre; via psychology, 'the real' has definitively appropriated the space in which the fantastic could previously function. While this is apparent in Zamacois' text *El otro*, there is an additional menace represented very clearly in *El misterio del hombre pequeñito*. The fantastic might be closed out not only by psychology but also by the unequivocally supernatural. The fashionable adherence to exotic occult doctrines created parallel levels of spiritual experience whose effect seemed to be to render harmless the operation of the fantastic. However, there is also a sense of inevitability in the way in which the fantastic once again mutates in order to regenerate its radical and destabilising force. Manipulating the texts' own discursive strategies, the fantastic is re-expressed through the body of the text, sometimes through linguistic margins and sometimes through physical margins until it is reinscribed in the centre of the reading experience.

Although the fantastic has already been shown to be capable of relatively complex transformations in order to continue its on-going process of textual destabilisation, it is perhaps the case of Unamuno's *El otro*, alongside others of his texts, which most fully reveals both the flexibility and the continuity of the fantastic. Here the fantastic

roams around areas of personality development so far from earlier examples that the metonymic mutation which in other cases ensures its survival and prospering is visited upon the concept itself. Where the fantastic might be rendered impotent by the continuing process of psychologisation, the phantastic employs and adapts the very concepts and strategies of psychologisation in order to inhabit space where it can find a new, and arguably more threatening, lease of life. *El otro*, therefore, in spite of its obvious differences from the earlier texts, is indicative of yet another stage in a dynamic which is only predictable in the fact that it is mutable.

The fantastic itself is shown through this range of narratives to respond to a range of critical discourses which reveal elements and patterns without ever being able to fully define, contain, or resolve the action and structure of the text. The apparent resolution offered by approaches and texts which form part of the progressive psychologisation of the fantastic, particularly those from the late 1890s onwards, is in turn undermined by its reciprocal effect on the constitution of the body. This continual ebb and flow between psychological and somatic expression and representation would appear to be the final refutation of Todorov's historical limiting of his generic concept of the fantastic, should a further rebuttal still be necessary.

A further indication of the dynamic nature of the fantastic can be observed in the relevance of the concept of transgressive reinscription. Physical symptoms often occur at the level of the skin, which is the surface, or margin, of the body. Sometimes, as in the cases of Adelina Vera in Zamacois' *El otro* and the child Roberto in *El hijo del alma*, the skin is the site on which are inscribed the incomprehensible signifiers of perverse desire. However, such writings on the body are never simply an end result but another stage in the continual process of deferral which leads to successive destabilisations of the subject.

It seems appropriate that the fantastic operates in this fashion in narratives since the fantastic itself has been subject to its own process of exclusion, its own writing on and at the margins of the canonical body. Its innate mutation and consequent

indefinability has ultimately enabled it to resist the smothering discourses of reason identified by Jackson:

The dismissal of the fantastic to the margins of literary culture is in itself an ideologically significant gesture, one which is not dissimilar to culture's silencing of unreason. As an 'art' of unreason, and of desire, fantasy has persistently been silenced, or re-written, in transcendental rather than transgressive terms. (1981, 173)

In spite of the recent surge of interest in, and even tolerance of, the fantastic, this uneasy standoff remains. Sporadic insurrections by the fantastic at the heart of the academic and literary worlds have not yet definitively altered either the canon or the curricula which lay the rails for future pedagogic or investigative journeys.

In spite of this apparent impasse, much remains to be explored in terms of the fantastic in Spain. Preliminary and tentative sallies I have undertaken into the relationship between the fantastic and Surrealism suggest a radical alteration from those of previous or other contemporary narratives. Equally intriguing is the common ground shared by the fantastic and the literary construction and representation of madness. As this thesis has demonstrated, the same narratives are frequently involved in both of these questions at the same time and from analysing texts from late twentieth-century Spain it would appear that as the fantastic mutates according to the socio-cultural context, so does the representation of madness. One thing, however, would appear to be certain; fantastic narratives will continue to change and progress, giving them the distinction of being one of the most challenging and fascinating areas in which to be employed.

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