

**Wealth, Poverty and Social Mobility in Restoration Spain:
A Critique of Liberal Society in the *Novelas contemporáneas* of
Benito Pérez Galdós**

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Abstract

This thesis analyses seven of Galdós's key *Novelas contemporáneas* – *Lo prohibido* (1884-1885), the four *Torquemada* novels (1889-1895), *Ángel Guerra* (1891) and *Misericordia* (1897) – in the context of contemporary discourses regarding the socio-economic changes which Spanish society had experienced from the 1830s. Adopting a socio-historical approach, this study emphasizes the variety of ideologies which Galdós's contemporaries embraced in response to the changing socio-economic circumstances of their own time, as well as the author's own engagement with these diverse currents of thought. The particular focus is to examine Galdós's preoccupation in these novels with questions relating to the creation and distribution of wealth in the modern money-centred society of Restoration Spain. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 analyse in detail the historical account of the ascent of the bourgeoisie which Galdós presents in *Lo prohibido*, the *Torquemada* series and *Ángel Guerra*. In these novels, Galdós links the wealth of his bourgeois characters to the speculative climate which resulted from the economic policies of the liberal State. In *Ángel Guerra* and the last of the *Torquemada* novels, *Torquemada y San Pedro*, Galdós brings into focus the social effects of the most representative of these liberal policies, Mendizábal's 1835-1836 *desamortización*. I examine Galdós's engagement here with the intense contemporary debate on this controversial policy. Chapter 4 analyses Galdós's treatment of the themes of pauperism and charity in *Misericordia* in relation to contemporary discourses on the *cuestión social*. This study reveals Galdós's perception, which he shares with other contemporary authors, of living through a time of profound social transformation.

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Abbreviations

<i>AG I</i>	<i>Ángel Guerra Part 1</i>
<i>AG II</i>	<i>Ángel Guerra Part 2</i>
<i>AG III</i>	<i>Ángel Guerra Part 3</i>
<i>RIBFIS</i>	<i>Revista ilustrada de banca, ferrocarriles, industria y seguros</i>
<i>TC</i>	<i>Torquemada en la cruz</i>
<i>TH</i>	<i>Torquemada en la hoguera</i>
<i>TP</i>	<i>Torquemada en el purgatorio</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Torquemada y San Pedro</i>

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Abbreviations	iii
Introduction	5
1 Changing Fortunes and the Financial World in Galdós's <i>Lo prohibido</i>	14
Continuity and Change in the Economy of Spain	15
Salamanca and the Emergence of a Bourgeoisie	19
The Madrid Bourgeoisie of <i>Lo prohibido</i>	23
Mystic Money: The <i>Bolsa</i>	27
Women in Business: The <i>Salones</i> of Eloísa and María Juana	34
Competitive Consumerism and the Quest for Distinction	39
An Extractive Elite: Corruption in <i>Lo prohibido</i>	50
The Moral Alternative: Camila as the New Version of the <i>ángel del hogar</i>	55
Conclusion	58
2 From Usurer to <i>Marqués</i>: Lending and Social Advancement in the <i>Torquemada</i> Novels	60
Usury in Nineteenth-Century Spain	61
The Usurer in <i>Costumbrista</i> Literature	63

Torquemada and the Making of a Modern Usurer	65
Torquemada as a Modern Inquisitor	71
The Edifying Influence of Good Society: Torquemada Gets an Education	73
Speculation, Corruption and the Role of the State in Torquemada's Ascent	77
The Profitable Business of Lending to the Ruined Aristocracy	80
New Money and the Impoverished Aristocracy: A Marriage of Convenience	83
The Evil of Disentailment: Rafael's Nostalgia for the Old Regime	85
A New Elite: The Merging of Aristocracy and Bourgeoisie	90
Torquemada as Grandee: The Power of Money	95
Life in Gravelinas and the Fading of Torquemada	101
Conclusion	107
3 Revolution and the Politics of Religion in <i>Ángel Guerra</i>	108
<i>Desamortización</i> in Contemporary Public Debate	109
The Toledan Origin of the Guerra's Fortune	114
Ángel Guerra and Political Revolution	116
Rebellion and Guilt: A Son's Search for Emancipation	121
Léré and the Fascination of Religion	128
The Revolutionary Power of Religion	136

Ángel's <i>Dominismo</i> and the Philosophy of Comte	142
Creating Himself Anew: Ángel Guerra's Mystic Family	145
Finding Solace: Religion as a Balm	150
The Toledan Church: Good Old Days and <i>Desamortización</i>	152
The Church Strikes Back: Leré and the Modern Nuns of Liberal Society	157
Conclusion	161
4 The <i>questión social</i> in <i>Misericordia</i>	163
The Changing Face of Poverty	164
The <i>questión social</i> in Galdós's Journalism	168
The Church of San Sebastián: A Borderline Between Classes	171
The Beggars of <i>Misericordia</i> as a Mirror Image of Middle-Class Society	176
The Deserving and the Undeserving Poor in Contemporary Debate	179
Charity and the Preservation of Social Order	183
Charity and Punishment: <i>Beneficencia</i> in <i>Misericordia</i>	191
Keeping Up Appearances: The Impoverished Middle Class	198
Maid and Mistress: The Dynamics of Social Dignity	202
Savings, <i>Sisas</i> and Gifts in Benina's Finances	210
The Compensatory Power of Dreams	214
An Alternative Economy for the Poor	218
Conclusion	219

Final Concluding Remarks	221
Bibliography	224
Works by Galdós	224
Works by Other Contemporary Authors	226
Secondary Sources	229

Introduction

This thesis analyses Galdós's critical engagement with the socio-economic changes which shaped the liberal society of his time through a close study of seven key *Novelas contemporáneas* from the 1880s and 1890s: *Lo prohibido* (1884-1885), the four *Torquemada* novels (1889-1895), *Ángel Guerra* (1891) and *Misericordia* (1897). My study highlights Galdós's historical approach to his portrayal of Restoration society in these novels, particularly his perception that this society, one still in transition, was the result of the fundamental transformations which had taken place throughout the nineteenth century.

In order to establish the context, this introduction will begin by examining the ways in which recent social historians and literary critics have approached the subjects of Spain's transition from Old Regime to modern nation state and of the role of the realist novel in this transition. The related questions of the extent to which Spanish society was reshaped by liberalism, and of the degree to which it succeeded in its process of modernisation, have attracted much attention from scholars of nineteenth-century social history to date. As has often been pointed out, the socio-economic and political processes generally associated with modernity tend to be defined in relation to British and French liberal models, and as a result, the modernising dynamics of countries such as Spain have been underestimated. This question is complicated by the fact that, as Millán and Romero note, there is a diversity of socio-economic circumstances which can be included in the broad notion of liberalism. As they also observe, it is important to acknowledge that the historical process must be understood as a continuum, and that it is compounded of contradictory and simultaneous elements (Millán and Romero 2004: 285). In their view, nonetheless, it is evident that Spain experienced profound changes throughout the century, such as the centralization of political power, the elimination of legal privilege, and a reordering of social hierarchies which enabled a degree of social mobility (Millán and Romero 2004: 288).

These socio-economic transformations went hand in hand with cultural movements which were also associated with the notion of modernity in Western

societies. As Harvey argues, the condition of modernity, from an intellectual perspective, has been linked to an idea of ephemerality and change since the middle of the nineteenth century (Harvey 1989: 10). In his view, the transition to a modern mind-set is related to the questioning of the fixity of Enlightenment thought, as well as to the loss of faith in the inevitability of progress. Historically, Harvey believes that this transition is marked by the economic and social turbulence of the period of the 1848 revolutions in Europe, a period which neatly coincided with the publication of *The Communist Manifesto*. Marx's and Engels's thesis shattered the classical belief in the benevolence, or at least in the inevitability, of capitalism, and, as the century progressed, so did a perception that social inequalities were intrinsic to the capitalist system (Harvey 1989: 25; 27-29).

In the case of Spain, Labanyi argues that the years following the 1868 Revolution were decisive in Spain's process of modernisation, which she defines as the process of nation formation which, in Europe, went hand in hand with the development of a liberal economy and with the expansion of central state control (Labanyi 2000: 2-3). As Carr points out, the period 1864-68 in Spain saw a credit and confidence crisis caused by the burst of the railway-boom bubble and by the cotton shortage during the American Civil War (Carr 1966: 300). In Harrison's view, the resulting economic slump represented the first crisis of Spanish capitalism (Harrison 1978: 64). As well as the political and economic impact of the years leading up to the 1868 Revolution, Carr stresses the cultural legacy of this period:

It would be an exaggeration to talk of a spiritual crisis accompanying this loss of economic confidence. Nevertheless, it is to these years that we must date a radical challenge to those accepted values in the realm of thought which the monarchy seemed to symbolize. It was to the fifties that Giner traced the intellectual and moral origins of modern Spain and it is against the members of the 'generation of '68' rather than against the regenerationists of 1898 that the strictures of Catholic conservatives are most correctly directed. (Carr 1966: 301)

Galdós, of course, is one of the most prominent members of this generation of intellectuals to whose work Carr traces the origins of modern Spanish thought. In this context Labanyi stresses the modernising role of the Spanish realist novel which

began to develop in the years after the 1868 Revolution. As she argues, the realist novel contributed to the modern process of nation formation because it formed part of the public-sphere debate which, according to Habermas, is central to civil society (Labanyi 2000: 4-5). In Labanyi's view, the novel's ability to invent stories which address specific concerns makes it an ideal mechanism for airing collective anxieties, as well as for forming common identities:

Characters [...] acquire unprecedented density in the realist novel, allowing positive and negative identifications through which readers construct their own sense of what is proper and improper. This density results from the characters' enmeshing in the social fabric in such a way that their behaviour raises social issues; their problems are the nation's problems. (Labanyi 2000: 5).

Labanyi's analysis of the development of the Spanish realist novel in relation to a period of deep social transformations is in line with studies regarding the origins of realism in other Western societies. Thus Lawson traces the American realist novel to the feeling of instability and precariousness which resulted from the financial crisis of the late 1830s. Following Williams's concept of the 'structure of feeling' (that is, of the common set of perceptions and values shared by a social group in a particular time and place), Lawson argues that the American realist novel emerged as an intrinsic part of the structure of feeling developed in response to the destabilising effects of market revolution during the period of transition to capitalism (Lawson 2012: 7-8).

As Labanyi observes, the novels of Galdós from the 1880s onwards often raise questions concerning social change and the blurring in modern society of social categories which were previously distinct (Labanyi 1993a: 35). From this perspective, it is significant that literary representation at a time of social uncertainty was the central theme of Galdós's inaugural address upon being elected to the Spanish Royal Academy in 1897. In this speech he describes in near apocalyptic terms the dissolution of the traditional social forces which had led to a sense of social cohesion in the past. Galdós now views Spanish society as being in a state of transition from the old system of social organization to a new one which cannot yet be fathomed. As he states:

Las grandes y potentes energías de cohesión social no son ya lo que fueron; ni es fácil prever qué fuerzas sustituirán a las perdidas en la dirección y gobierno de la familia humana [...] Podría decirse que la sociedad llega a un punto en que se ve rodeada de ingentes rocas que le cierran el paso [...] y los más sabios de entre nosotros se enredan en interminables controversias sobre cuál pueda o deba ser la hendidura o pasadizo por el cual podremos salir de este hoyo pantanoso en que nos revolvemos y asfixiamos. ('La sociedad presente como materia novelable': 3)

In particular, Galdós argues that this social uncertainty is manifest in a disintegration of the historical social classes due to the levelling effects of modernisation. In his view, the advances in education on the one hand, and the dispersal of aristocratic wealth on the other, have had the effect of blurring the distinguishing characteristics of the populace and the aristocracy respectively. The middle classes, for their part, have become a shapeless mass, the product of the falling apart of the lower and upper classes, the former on its way up, the latter on its way down. Under these circumstances, the depiction of well-defined social types is rendered impossible, and the novelist must concentrate on unveiling the complexities of individual characters. Galdós concludes positively, however, arguing that the uncertainties and anxieties of modern society in fact provide fertile territory for developing the novel in Spain.

As Labanyi argues, the late development of the realist novel in Spain meant that Spanish novelists began to write at a time when bourgeois values were being questioned throughout Europe. As a result, the Spanish novel displays a particular awareness of the coexistence of contradictory points of view, often expressed through irony (Labanyi 1993b: viii). Nonetheless, it is also possible that conflicting attitudes emerge from a novel without the author's being aware of it. To apply here what Lukács famously observed about Balzac, an author's ideological conflicts and the split between his or her consciously held beliefs and unconscious mental attitudes both help to create novels with a deep social vision. In relation to this French novelist's misgivings about capitalism, Lukács observes that Balzac could both present the 'torments which the transition to the capitalist system of production inflicted on every section of the people' and at the same time accept that this transition was inevitable and progressive (cited by Hale 2006: 350). A similar ambivalence towards capitalism appears in Galdós's *Novelas contemporáneas*, while

the search for alternative social values is particularly noticeable in the novels written during the 1890s.

Critics such as Davies and Varela Olea have linked Galdós's work to the concept of *regeneración*. As Davies points out, debates around the notion of national regeneration in both conservative and left-wing circles can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, and the term became increasingly fashionable as the century progressed (Davies 2000: 89-90). For Varela Olea, Galdós's work must be viewed as participating in the diverse currents of critical thought – Catholic, Krausist, socialist or republican – which from the mid-nineteenth century onwards questioned the theoretical basis of the Spanish liberal system (Varela Olea 2001: 145-146).

This thesis analyses the seven aforementioned novels from this perspective of Galdós's critique of the liberal society of his time. Chapter 1 explores Galdós's representation of the high bourgeoisie of Restoration Spain in *Lo prohibido* (1884-1885). Studies of this novel have often concentrated on the themes of consumerism and unproductivity, which are indeed central to the narrative, but they have overlooked Galdós's engagement in this novel with the historical origins of the financial elite of the Restoration period. The first-person narrator José María provides exact accounts of the origins of his and other characters' wealth, as well as of the reckless spending in which many of them engage. These fortunes are often traceable to the economic boom of the 1850s and early 1860s, and are mostly speculative and morally dubious in character. Chapter 2 discusses the four *Torquemada* novels (1889-1895) from a similarly socio-historical perspective. The usurer Torquemada's fortune can be traced back to the speculative climate which resulted from Mendizábal's 1830s *desamortización*, the foremost policy of Spanish liberalism. Torquemada's social ascent from sordid small-scale usurer to *marqués* and prominent member of the financial Restoration elite may be read as an ironic account of the development of capitalism in Spain. Chapter 3 analyses *Ángel Guerra* (1891), in which the theme of *desamortización*, as the event which paved the way for the ascent of the bourgeoisie, acquires particular centrality. Here the focus is placed on questions concerning the adverse social effects of this liberal policy, as well as on the idea of charity as a form of middle-class retribution. These are also topics which Galdós explores in the last of the *Torquemada* novels, *Torquemada y San Pedro* (1895). Chapter 4 offers an analysis of Galdós's engagement in *Misericordia* (1897)

with contemporary debates on the *cuestión social*. In this striking novel, Galdós brings into focus the poverty of the people left behind by the economic development of liberal society. As critics have often pointed out, Galdós explores questions concerning the spiritual values of modern society through this novel's messianic protagonist Benina, a servant and beggar. I focus on Galdós's engagement here with the idea of social justice, as well as on his exploration of the complexities of class relations, in order to highlight aspects of *Misericordia* which have been previously overlooked.

The socio-economic analysis which I thus provide of the *Torquemada* series, *Ángel Guerra* and *Misericordia*, in no way contradicts the philosophical or spiritual readings which critics have often made of these novels. Rather, it is my aim to show that Galdós's spiritual concerns are inextricable from his social preoccupations. As argued by Fuentes Peris, Galdós does not present the spiritual as the opposite of the material, but rather as an 'ethical use of the material' (Fuentes Peris 2003: 142). Socio-economic readings of these novels, such as those of Fuentes Peris herself, have tended to concentrate on contemporary bourgeois discourses on social issues from a Foucauldian perspective of social control. By contrast, my thesis highlights the variety of ideological perspectives from which the pressing social issues of the time were discussed throughout the nineteenth century, including that of thinkers driven by a genuine desire for greater social justice. As Valis argues, the striving for social harmony which is manifest in these writers' work reflects the 'inadequacy of both traditional religious and political structures to address the economic problem of social misery in times of upheaval' (Valis 2010: 114). As a result, as she also points out, the religious correlation between charity and justice was increasingly questioned as the century progressed, both in Spain and in other Western societies. In this respect, Valis contrasts the view of the Catholic social reformers Concepción Arenal and Pere Monlau, who equate charity with justice, with that of the American sociologist Frederik Howard Wines, for whom social justice should be based not on charity but on a fair distribution of wealth (Valis 2010: 114-115). As Wines states in an essay from 1998:

Charity is a fine thing, no doubt; but justice is a finer. Justice is fundamental, charity supplemental. Charity steps in to relieve the situation where justice has partially failed. How to avoid the necessity for charity by securing a

larger equality of opportunity and greater equity in the distribution of earnings, is both an economic and a philanthropic problem. (Wines 1898: 55).

This emphasis on redistribution also appears in the some of the most progressive contemporary Spanish writers. Indeed, a degree of social welfare was beginning to be generally accepted in Spain by the turn of the century, both on the basis of the need to control the potentially disruptive working classes and on the basis of social justice.

There is a degree of social mobility, both upwards and downwards, in all the novels analysed in this thesis. As we have seen, social indeterminacy is one of the characteristics which Galdós ascribes to modern Spanish society. The concept of class which emerges from his *Novelas contemporáneas* is one which fits well with Thompson's view that class is defined by its own self-conception as much as by economic experience. As such, class is a fluid concept which eludes fixed categorizations. Thompson distinguishes between class experience, which is determined by economic circumstances, and class consciousness, which is the way in which individuals handle this experience in cultural terms through traditions, value-systems and institutions. Whereas economic circumstances are determinable, class consciousness is not (Thompson 1963 in Joyce 1995: 131). Thompson's definition of class consciousness is akin to Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus', that is, those structures of behaviour and thought which form the internally assimilated lifestyle of a particular social group. Cruz points out that these deeply rooted structures which constitute habitus change more slowly than economic conditions, so that 'even where historians have perceived revolutionary changes, habitus is barely altered' (Cruz 1996: 13). This tension between new economic structures and old attitudes is one that Galdós exposes in the *Novelas contemporáneas* analysed in this thesis.

In view of the complexities of class categorization, it is worth addressing the question of terminology. In the context of nineteenth-century Spain, Cruz defines the middle classes as a conglomerate situated between the old nobility and the working classes, one ranging from wealthy capitalists, some of whom had acquired aristocratic titles, to families of limited income but pretentious lifestyles. He considers 'bourgeoisie' and 'middle class' to be equivalent terms, following the

recent trend in revisionist historiography which has recovered the nineteenth-century usage of the term ‘bourgeoisie’ by stripping it of its Marxist connotations (Cruz 2011: 10). This broad view of the middle class coincides with that of Galdós in his Academy speech of 1897. However, there is a wide variation in income and lifestyle within this group. In *Lo prohibido*, for example, it is clear that José María’s yearly income of around 650,000 *reales* allows for a way of life very different to that of a middle-ranging civil servant, whose salary Whiston puts at roughly 10,000 *reales* (*Lo prohibido*: 102; 156). The Barrio de Salamanca financiers who constitute José María’s milieu are part of what Carr refers to as the ruling oligarchy, which he estimates to be around five hundred families, and which were composed of an amalgam of ‘speculators, industrialists, landowners, together with the prosperous lawyers and ennobled generals’ (Carr 1966: 284). He sees this group as characterised by a cosmopolitan lifestyle and cultural imitation of the French *haute bourgeoisie* (Carr 1966: 284). As will be seen, one characteristic which the members of the wide middle classes share in Galdós’s *Novelas contemporáneas* is their aspirational and imitative lifestyles, which are often financed through credit.

My thesis usually avoids the term ‘working classes’, preferring the more generic expression *clases populares* or ‘populace’, within which it is possible to include the world of pauperism and mendicity represented in *Misericordia*. Among this group, servants deserve a particular mention because of their relevance both to Galdós’s work and to Madrid society. According to Shubert, they amounted to around 34% of the Madrid population in 1857, and it is interesting to note the traveller George Borrow’s comment in the 1830s that ‘perhaps there is no place in the world where servants more abound than at Madrid’ (cited by Shubert 1990: 113).

The novels analysed in this thesis have been chosen because they best illustrate Galdós’s historical engagement with the liberal policies and developing market economy which shaped the society of Restoration Spain. In these novels in particular, Galdós reflects either upon the ascent of the bourgeoisie with its newly acquired wealth, or upon the poverty of those left behind by the economic development of liberal Spain, or upon both. As mentioned previously, Galdós traces the origins of his Restoration society to the decades from 1830 to 1860. I have therefore included in my study the work of *costumbrista* writers as well as that of

social commentators from this period.¹ As Ginger points out, the perception of rapid change in liberal society lies at the heart of the work of *costumbrista* authors such as Mesonero Romanos and Antonio Flores (Ginger 2005: 2-3). As we shall see, many of the themes explored by Galdós in the seven novels studied here had already been brought into focus by these earlier writers. For this reason I consider the work of these authors to be particularly relevant here, for they cast light on Galdós's own contribution, at the end of the century, to the Spanish literary tradition of social critique.

¹¹ Where contemporary editions of mid-nineteenth century works are used, the original accentuation pattern will be kept.

Chapter 1

Changing Fortunes and the Financial World in Galdós's *Lo prohibido*

The themes of wealth, credit and speculation are central to *Lo prohibido* (1884-1885), a novel whose narrative covering the period from 1880 to 1884, is strictly contemporary. Blanco, in her analysis of this novel, focuses on Galdós's treatment therein of the socio-economic changes which resulted from the nineteenth-century capitalist expansion in Spain. In particular, she stresses Galdós's portrayal of the bourgeoisie as the new but already well-established dominant class of Restoration society. In her view, Galdós offers in *Lo prohibido* a synchronic study of this financial elite, without analysing how it came about. In the *Torquemada* novels, by contrast, the perspective is diachronic, one which looks at the development of this class from its rise to its zenith (Blanco 1983: 61- 62). Nonetheless, it is important to note that the narrator in *Lo prohibido* gives extensive details about the origins of the great fortunes which populate this novel, and which often go back to the 1850s and 1860s. Moreover, the picture that emerges from *Lo prohibido* is not that of a well-established and well-defined bourgeois class, but of a hybrid and unstable one, in which social mobility goes up as well as down. This chapter aims to contribute further to a socio-economic reading of *Lo prohibido* by analysing Galdós's depiction of the 1880s money elite as representative of the unbalanced and fragile capitalist system which developed in Spain from the 1830s onwards.

As Whiston points out, the early 1880s, the years in which *Lo prohibido* is set, were particularly active for the economic sector in Madrid. There was a significant increase in the number of building licenses granted, and also a consistent rise in the value of stock-market shares. This upwards trend in stock-market securities allowed bondholders to double their money in a very short period of time. The boom lasted until the summer of 1883, the year before Galdós started to write *Lo prohibido*, when a sharp price-fall caused many investors to suffer great losses (*Lo prohibido*, 95-96). As Tuñón de Lara notes, the first decade of the Restoration also saw a great increase in the circulation of fiduciary money, particularly during the

years 1881 and 1882 (Tuñón de Lara 1960, II: 41-42). Tortella relates this increase in the amount of circulating currency to the government's decision in 1874 to grant the monopoly of note issue to the Banco de España. The Banco was also given the right to print twice the quantity of notes allowed before, a right which it used extensively. According to Tortella, these measures were taken in order to facilitate indefinite loans to the government, which, not uncharacteristically, was in desperate need of funds. Through these measures, the Banco de España was monetizing the national debt; that is, it was purchasing government debt indirectly by increasing the supply of banknotes. By using the created banknotes, the public was in effect buying public debt. Thus the increase in economic activity in the 1880s was ultimately connected to the ever-present problem of budget deficit (Tortella, 165-166).

Whiston argues that it was during the first decade of the Restoration that Madrid became fully aware of the possibilities of money as a commodity independent from production (*Lo prohibido*: 96). Although it seems plausible to argue that the early 1880s were a particularly fertile ground for speculative financial activities, Whiston's assertion may be questioned in view of the long speculative tradition of the Madrid financial world, as we will see. As Bahamonde and Martínez point out, the money elite of the 1870s and 1880s may be traced back both to the sale of disentailed property following Mendizábal's and Madoz's *desamortizaciones* and to the economic boom of the decade 1856-66. The financial activities to which this new elite owed its wealth were mostly speculative, and involved state loans, the stock market, government concessions, the railway business, private lending and investment in property (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 458). These are also the activities through which the fortunes of *Lo prohibido* are created. In order to gain a better understanding of the financial world presented in the novel, it is important to have a closer look at the economic conditions from which the Restoration bourgeoisie emerged.

Continuity and Change in the Economy of Spain

The second half of the nineteenth century saw many fundamental changes in the Spanish financial sector which went hand in hand with the development of a liberal economy. Bahamonde and Martínez stress that the legislation passed during the

1854-1856 Bienio Progresista government on transport and banking played an important role in the modernization of the Spanish economy. As we will see, it opened the national market to European capitalism and created the basis for a new financial system. The centre of the developing financial sector was Madrid, which, as the political and administrative capital of Spain, attracted a substantial part of the great fortunes of the second half of the nineteenth century (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 21, 314-315). Notwithstanding these financial developments, as Rueda Laffond points out, the Madrid elites tended to favour low-risk financial activities such as stock-market transactions with public bonds and investment in state-owned companies or in real estate (Rueda Laffond 2006: 2-3).

Both Nadal and Tortella blame the high interest rates, as well as the strong guarantees which loans to the state commanded, for deflecting the market of capital towards speculative rather than productive investment. Industry and agriculture could not attract the attention of financiers and bankers while investment in public debt was both profitable and secure (Nadal 1975: 28; Tortella 2000: 177-178). The Madrid Stock Exchange was created in 1831, mainly for the purpose of attending to the financial needs of the government through the issuing of public debt. In this way, as Cuevas points out, there was a strong link between the problems of budget deficit and the stock market, which from its very beginnings, right to the mid-twentieth century, was overwhelmingly concentrated on the trading of public bonds. By contrast, the local stock markets of Barcelona and Bilbao showed more diversity, in that they traded in industrial securities, and particularly in railway, mining and electrical, as well as public bonds (Cuevas 2012: 3).

The chronic budget deficit, that is, the imbalance between expenses and revenues, was indeed one of the main factors guiding fiscal policy during the nineteenth century. There was also a persistent trade deficit, which caused an outflow of Spanish currency into foreign markets. Vicens Vives observes that, from 1850 to 1900, only eleven years presented a favourable trade balance (Vicens Vives 1965: 631). Tortella refers to a vicious circle in which the burden of debt caused a deficit which, in turn, had to be financed by incurring new debts. He estimates that in the period 1850-1890, on average, 27% of the budget went into the payment of the public debt. This was a great burden on the shoulders of taxpayers who were footing the bill. Following Comín, Tortella stresses that the old-fashioned taxation system

contributed to the persistence of the deficit. Through the second half of the nineteenth century the tax assessment system remained inadequate, and the lack of an accurate property register meant that fraudulent concealment of wealth was widespread. This proved a difficult problem to tackle, due to the political influence which wealthy property owners were able to exercise in Madrid and in other city councils. Tortella shows how, in the period 1850-1890, the contributions of the landowners through the land tax were extremely low. These amounted to only a fifth of the total revenue, despite the fact that the major part of the country's wealth was concentrated in the hands of the landowners, and that agriculture constituted more than half of the national income. Tortella also points out how land tax income grew very little in this period, notwithstanding the increase in cultivated land which resulted from the Church and public land disentailments. The contributions from industry and trade were also around half of what they should have been. In this way, Tortella estimates that the top sectors of the economy raised only around 25% of the total tax revenue. Most of the rest of the revenue came from indirect taxes, which were regressive in nature in that they weighed on the poor much more heavily than on the rich. In particular, 40% of the total income was raised from taxes on consumer products.

The Lottery was another important source of revenue, and Tortella provides the surprising information that, according to the *Estadística de los Presupuestos*, the revenue raised from the disentailments in the period 1850-1890 was less than the income generated by the Lottery. Even taking into account that land sales began to fall from 1875 onwards, this anomaly suggests both that the statistics did not include all the land sold and that there was much defaulting on payment for the land (Tortella 2000: 173-183). As we shall see in the fourth chapter, the Lottery is presented in both *Ángel Guerra* and *Misericordia* as an unfair system of taxing the poor. As regards the role of the stock market in the financing of the government, Cuevas observes that the modernization of the tax system in Spain would have allowed the government to be financed more rationally, freeing savings for more productive investment (Cuevas 2012: 5-6).

As Tortella points out, in order to address the deficit problem and boost development, the Progressive Government tried to attract both Spanish and foreign investment with the 1855 Ley General de Ferrocarriles and the 1856 Ley de Bancos

de Emisión and Ley de Sociedades de Crédito. The Ley de Ferrocarriles offered government subsidies to the railway companies, guaranteed investors against risk and allowed the tariff-free importation of building material. The Ley de Bancos and Ley de Sociedades, for their part, facilitated the creation of a banking system with which to finance the construction of the railway network (Tortella 2000: 121). Tortella points out that in the ten years following the Ley de Bancos and Ley de Sociedades, the issuing banks expanded from three to 20 and as many as 35 credit societies were created, modelled on the French *Crédit Mobilier*, which had no note-issuing powers, but which could engage freely in business activities. He sees it as inevitable that this ‘improvised banking system’ should concentrate investment on the government-backed railways (Tortella 2000: 164). Harrison draws attention to the fact that the building of the railway during the ‘railway mania’ period of 1856-1864 took over 90% of the available investment funds. In this way the Progressives’ legislation of 1856 failed in its objective of stimulating wider public wealth, due to the concentration of investment in one area only (Harrison 1978: 50). Moreover, as Tortella shows, in the highly speculative atmosphere of the years following the 1856 Ley General de Ferrocarriles, companies financed their activities with high-interest loans and securities which would later inevitably affect their profitability. This, together with the fact that the costs incurred in guaranteeing the construction companies’ profits were ultimately passed on to the operators, resulted in the great losses suffered by the operating railway companies (Tortella 2000: 129). The inability on the part of the railway companies to match profit expectations was one of the main causes of the financial crash of 1866.

Among the most prominent foreign investors to be lured by the opportunities opened up by the new legislation were the French brothers *Émile* and *Isaac Péreire* and the *Rothschild* family. They invested in the profitable railway business but also in other productive sectors such as mining and gas, as well as in the inevitable public debt. In 1856, the *Péreire* brothers created the Spanish branch of their *Crédit Mobilier*, the *Crédito Mobiliario Español*, in order to invest in the construction of the railways from Madrid to France (Cobos Arteaga and Martínez Vara 2012: 4). However, as Tortella points out, the *Crédit Mobilier* model was undermined by a mixture of aggressiveness and inexperience, apparent in its tendency to invest in large-scale operations with very little capital (Tortella 2000: 171). This high-risk

business model was adopted by the Madrid financiers of the 1850s and 1860s, who, in Carr's words, were 'intoxicated by the productive possibilities of credit [...] revealed by the activities of *Crédit Mobilier* in France' (Carr 1966: 271). He contrasts the recklessness of the Madrid financiers such as José de Salamanca (1811-1883), who presided over the spectacular growth of the 1850s and 1860s, with the prudence of the conservative bankers of Barcelona and Bilbao (Carr 1966: 270).

Salamanca and the Emergence of a Bourgeoisie

As Carr points out, Salamanca was the most prominent representative of the new money aristocracy which shaped the world of Madrid's finances during the central years of the nineteenth century. It is interesting that he refers to the figure of Salamanca as an inspiration for Galdós: 'It was in the full-blooded Balzacian speculative genius of Salamanca that the novelist Galdós was to find the fitting symbol of the age' (Carr 1966: 281). There are indeed many references to Salamanca both in the *Episodios nacionales* and in the *Novelas contemporáneas*, including *Lo prohibido*. In *La estafeta romántica*, set in 1837, the aristocrat Pilar describes him as 'uno de los hombres más admirablemente dotados para la vida social', and foretells that 'Salamanca será una gran personalidad del siglo, salga por donde saliere, ya se le aplique a sumar voluntades, ya a multiplicar dinero' (*La estafeta romántica*: 155). It is worth looking into the mixture of political and financial operations behind Salamanca's spectacular ascent, as these are representative of both the economic possibilities and risks associated with the development of capitalism in Spain.

José de Salamanca, the son of a well-to-do middle-class surgeon from Málaga, became extraordinarily wealthy through a variety of enterprises including the stock market, the contract for the official monopoly on salt, the creation of the Banco de Isabel II, the railways, and the Madrid *Ensanche* project. His fortunes, however, suffered numerous ups and downs, and the origins of his wealth are obscure. His contemporary Roque Barcia wrote that Salamanca 'hizo con su fortuna lo que Dios con el Universo: la sacó de la nada' (cited by Torrente Fortuño 1969: 159). Torrente Fortuño believes that Salamanca started to amass his fortune in a combination of operations based on credit in the early 1840s, mainly by acquiring the contracts for the salt monopoly and the management of the restructuring of the

foreign debt (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 159-160). The latter activity consisted in addressing the problem of defaulting on payments to English and French sovereign bond holders. A sum of around 900 million *reales* was owed to France and England, both of which had resorted to diplomatic complaints. The problem was tackled through the conversion of the debt and the appearance of the *títulos del 3 por ciento* or *consolidado inglés*, ubiquitous in *Lo prohibido*. These were the type of bonds to which Salamanca dedicated most of his stock-market activities (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 49-50; 63-64).

Navascués Palacio argues that a fundamental factor in Salamanca's ascendancy was his marriage to Petronila Livermore Salas, the daughter of an English businessman established in Málaga. This marriage put Salamanca in contact with Málaga's business and political oligarchy, such as the Heredias and the Martín Larios (Navascués Palacio 1983: 5-6). Other important associations were with the banker José Buschenthal, who introduced Salamanca to the stock market, and with the financier Gaspar Remisa. These connections guaranteed Salamanca's access to credit early in his career, and they also introduced him to political circles. As most of Salamanca's businesses had government backing, political associations played an essential role in his ascent. In 1836 Salamanca moved to Madrid as a *diputado* for Málaga, and the climax of his political career came in 1847, when he was appointed Ministro de Hacienda as part of a *puritano* government which represented the financial interests of the Madrid bankers, stock-brokers and traders. Torrente Fortuño argues that Salamanca entered high politics in order to protect his financial interests, in particular his businesses at the Banco de Isabel II (Torrente Fortuño 1969, 120-121). His spell as minister ended six months after his appointment, as a result of the dissolution of the *puritano* government by Narváez, amid accusations against Salamanca of financial irregularities and corruption. The question of his performance as minister produced one of the worst political scandals of the time. A failed attempt by the *puritanos* to regain power through a military plot against Narváez in 1848 forced Salamanca into exile in France until 1849 (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 125-131).

Salamanca emerged from this episode in complete financial ruin, and Torrente Fortuño estimates that his debt by 1850 could have been as high as 80 million *reales* (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 163-164). And yet by 1856 Salamanca had not only recovered his fortune, but was also about to embark on the most successful

period of his business career, based on the railways, which lasted until the financial crisis of the mid-1860s. As Navascués Palacio points out, Salamanca's financial downfalls never seemed to affect his ability to obtain credit, and this was undoubtedly a major factor in his spectacular comeback (Navascués Palacio 1983: 15). By 1864 his fortune could have amounted to as much as 400 million *reales* (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 187). Salamanca's revival coincided with the *progresista* legislation of 1855 and 1856, which inaugurated a period of economic expansion filled with possibilities for a man with the business acumen and connections of Salamanca. During the 1860s he extended his railway interests to Europe and America. In 1861, after the completion of a section of the Great Western Railway in the United States, the name of Salamanca was given to an American town in his honour. This is also the period of his investment in the Madrid *Ensanche* project, with the purchase of large quantities of land around Recoletos and Castellana. His lifestyle also became more sumptuous, and in 1858 he inaugurated his luxurious family home at the Palacio de Recoletos, followed by his purchase in 1859 of the Palacio de Vista Alegre from the Duque de Montpensier.

As Ramos Frendo notes, Salamanca emulated the taste and way of life of the blood aristocracy in order to consolidate his social prestige, acting in this like many other members of the new money elite (Ramos Frendo 2012: 3-4). Thus he gathered an impressive collection of paintings and works of art, second only to that of the royal family, and chose Pascual y Colomer, the Arquitecto Mayor de Palacio for Isabel II, as architect for the Palacio de Recoletos (Ramos Frendo 2012: 4; Navascués Palacios 2007: 104). Salamanca's career also followed a long-established pattern in that his financial success was rewarded with the titles of Marqués de Salamanca in 1863 and of Conde de los Llanos in 1864. According to Bahamonde and Martínez, 400 new titles were created during the reign of Isabel II. As elsewhere in Europe, the new elites valued the acquisition of a title as the pinnacle of social success (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 452-453). Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that, as the new financial elite began to eclipse the old aristocracy in economic prominence, it also began to feel sufficiently confident to display the origins of its wealth. In this respect, Navascués Palacios observes that one of the ceiling paintings at the palace of one of Salamanca's friends, the banker Manuel de Gaviria, depicts the figure of Mercury, god of trade, surrounded by the allegorical representations of

industry and agriculture (Navascués Palacio 1983: 22). In this changing social climate, Salamanca himself became the object of social emulation, a role traditionally reserved for the old aristocracy. Thus the narrator in the *Episodio nacional O'Donnell* endows Salamanca with the greatest sign of social distinction, that of being a model of both economic power and good taste:

el vulgo señalaba como de Salamanca todo lo superior: las poderosas empresas mercantiles, los cuadros selectos y las estatuas, las mujeres hermosas, los libros raros y curiosos... Homenaje era éste que tributaba la opinión a uno de los españoles más grandes del siglo XIX. (*O'Donnell*: 229-230)

As Navascués Palacios points out, the area around Recoletos and Castellana, which Salamanca began to develop in the 1850s, attracted many key members of the financial set. Having made their fortunes in banking, the stock market and trade, they were now keen to advertise their social ascendancy. Appropriately, the area came to be known as the *barrio de los banqueros*, and Navascués Palacio suggests that two of its main buildings, Salamanca's Palacio and the Casa de la Moneda, may be seen as symbols of the emerging capitalism of Isabel II's reign (Navascués Palacio 1983: 2). Navascués Palacio also notes that a new building wave in the area from around 1880 prompted many members of the Restoration money elite to move in (Navascués Palacio 1983: 19; 29-31). It is thus fitting that many members of the financial bourgeoisie of *Lo prohibido* buy property around the Barrio de Salamanca. The narrator José María buys a newly-built house in Calle Zurbano as a safe investment (*Lo prohibido*: 299), and the stock-broker Torres is building a 'casa magnífica' in Ronda de Recoletos just as financial ruin strikes him (*Lo prohibido*: 437). The investor Cristóbal Medina, in turn, buys 'una de las [casas] fundadoras del barrio de Salamanca' from the banking institution Crédito Comercial, keeping for himself the first floor 'que era hermosísimo' (*Lo prohibido*: 444).

Salamanca died in 1883, a year before Galdós started to write *Lo prohibido*, leaving a debt of six million *reales*, despite having accumulated one of the largest fortunes in Spain during his lifetime. He never recovered from the losses which he incurred during the financial crisis of 1864-1866, even though, true to his business spirit, he never ceased to finance projects on the credit that was always made

available to him. In order to pay his debts, Salamanca was obliged to sell most of his art collection at two Paris auctions in 1867 and 1875. In 1876 he also sold his Palacio de Recoletos to the Banco Hipotecario. Torrente Fortuño notes that Salamanca's ups and downs coincided with wider economic cycles. In this way, his prosperity increased particularly during the years 1844-1846 and 1856-1863, two periods of strong economic development in Spain. On the other hand, his greater falls, in 1848 and 1865-1869, followed general downturns in the economy. For Torrente Fortuño this indicates Salamanca's lack of control over his own finances. The possibility of ruin always surrounded Salamanca's extraordinary success (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 230-233). Torrente Fortuño describes the precariousness of Salamanca's business life with a particularly apt image: 'Salamanca es como el bolsista siempre pendiente de fin de mes. Su vida toda es una operación a plazo, llena de incidencias, en prórroga constante y a interés usurario, que sólo se liquida con la muerte' (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 233). Salamanca's business practices were highly speculative and often corrupt. As López-Morell points out, his reckless use of credit endangered many business initiatives, and he showed no qualms about taking advantage of his government connections in order to secure favourable conditions for his enterprises or for the concession of profitable contracts. However, López-Morell also argues that the institutional and economic under-development of the second half of the nineteenth century did not encourage free and fair entrepreneurship, and that, as a businessman of genius, Salamanca simply exploited the system to his advantage (López-Morell: 22-23).

The Madrid Bourgeoisie in *Lo prohibido*

It is in this semi-developed capitalist system, highly speculative and conducive to corruption, that the members of the Madrid bourgeoisie of *Lo prohibido* seek to thrive. The first-person narrator, José María, recounts the chaotic course which his life takes when he decides to swap his productive business in Jerez for a *rentista* and unproductive Madrid retirement at the age of thirty-seven. In the capital, he encounters an atmosphere where, as Blanco points out, 'todas las relaciones aparecen como relaciones crematísticas' (Blanco 1983: 63). He is thrown into a whirlpool of extreme consumerism and waste on the one hand, and of financial speculation on the

other, all of which brings both his moral and financial ruin, and, ultimately, his death. It is ironic that, when José María arrives in Madrid in 1880, his impression of the city is very favourable. He believes that Madrid has progressed enormously since the last time he visited it in 1868. It now looks like a modern European city:

Causábanme asombro la hermosura y amplitud de las nuevas barriadas, los expeditivos medios de comunicación, la evidente mejora en el cariz de los edificios, de las calles y aún de las personas, [...] las variadas y aparatosas tiendas, no inferiores, por lo que desde la calle se ve, a las de París o Londres, [...] En una palabra, me daba en la nariz cierto tufillo de cultura europea, de bienestar y aún de riqueza y trabajo. (*Lo prohibido*: 132)

There is a note of caution, however. The positive changes observed by José María are ‘bruscos’ and ‘más parecidos a saltos caprichosos que al andar progresivo y firme de los que saben a dónde van’ (*Lo prohibido*: 132). Throughout the novel there lies beneath this surface of an apparent European sophistication in Madrid a lack of solidity and direction, one which reveals an only partial and imperfectly assimilated modernization.

José María gives an extremely detailed account of his economic situation at the beginning of the novel in 1880, as he considers it ‘un dato importante por todos conceptos y que debo exponer con la mayor claridad’ (*Lo prohibido*: 155). The bulk of his original fortune comes from the transfer of his father’s Andalusian wine business, the sale or renting of his land, and also from his father’s investment in the inevitable government securities. There are also some securities invested in the London and Paris market. All of this amounts to around nine million *reales*, which provides José María with an annual rent of in between 30,000 and 35,000 *duros*: that is, around 650,000 *reales* (*Lo prohibido*: 156). Following Bahamonde y Toro, Whiston puts this figure into perspective by pointing out that the average daily wage for a Madrid labourer in 1883 was eight *reales*, and that a medium State employee could expect to earn around 10,000 *reales* per year (*Lo prohibido*: 102). In *La de Bringas*, Francisco Bringas has an annual salary of 30,000 *reales* as ‘oficial primero de la Intendencia del Real Patrimonio’, a post with which he fulfils the ‘aspiraciones de toda su vida’ (*La de Bringas*: 18-19). Thus José María is very rich, but as he says, not in the same league as the Madrid Céspedes, Murgas and Urquijos, the Larios of

Málaga or the López of Barcelona (*Lo prohibido*: 155). These were great fortunes of bourgeois rather than of noble origins, whose patrimony was much larger. Isabel Chumillas points out that from 1860 onwards, more bourgeois fortunes began to match the average wealth of the traditional nobility, which she estimates to be around 50 million *reales* (Chumillas: 2002: 28). Salamanca's own fortune was of course much larger than that, with estimates for the early 1860s oscillating between 263 and 400 million *reales* (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 196-197). It is also worth noting that, as we shall see in the next chapter, Torquemada's capital at the time of his death is rumoured to amount to around 30 million *pesetas*, that is, 120 million *reales* (*TS*: 652). José María, on the other hand, is representative of the peripheral elites of Andalucía, Cantabria or Cataluña, whose wealth, in Bahamonde's and Martínez's view, rarely surpassed 10 million *reales* (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 457). The large fortunes of the Andalusian Larios and the Catalan López, mentioned by José María, were the exception.

José María's narration follows the progressive diminution of his patrimony during the four years which he spends in Madrid. His expenses and losses during this period amount to six million *reales*, that is, two thirds of his original wealth. Early on in the novel, José María stresses the centrality of money in the higher echelons of Madrid's social life, and the connection between his social success and his wealth:

No necesito encarecer lo bien recibido que fui en toda clase de círculos. Los que esto lean comprenderán al punto que teniendo yo lo que en claros números queda dicho, y suponiéndome el vulgo mucho más aún, no me habían de faltar relaciones. No necesitaba ciertamente buscarlas; ellas venían solas, me perseguían, me acosaban con descargas de saludos, invitaciones y cortesanía. [...] Las amistades formaron pronto en derredor mío espesa red, contribuyendo no poco a ello la familia de mi tío. (*Lo prohibido*: 157)

José María's suggestion here that he is the victim of self-interested social contacts cannot be taken at face value, in view of the cynical use which he makes of his inherited wealth. As Whiston points out, there is an economic link between José María and many of his acquaintances, whether through borrowing, business, or a sense of male competitiveness (*Lo prohibido*: 93). Moreover, as Terry observes, there is also a close connection between José María's economic expenses and his

sexual relationships (Terry 1970: 75). He seduces his cousin Eloísa with generous presents and tries to do the same, unsuccessfully, with her sister Camila. In the course of his affair with Eloísa, José María also showers the other members of the Bueno de Guzmán family with presents: ‘Era ésta en mí como una corruptela para comprar su tolerancia, o subvención otorgada a su silencio’ (*Lo prohibido*: 232). The presents which José María acquires for Eloísa are lavish, and include a 45,000 *reales* set of mirror, candle holders and clock and a 100,000 *reales* necklace which a social magazine describes as ‘constelación’ (*Lo prohibido*: 212; 255). In order to put these figures into perspective, it is worth noting that, in *La de Bringas*, the origin of Rosalía’s financial problems is the purchase of a shawl for 1,700 *reales*, a considerable sum for the Bringas’ middle-class household. As Terry argues, José María uses his wealth unrestrictedly in order to realize his sexual desires. In this respect, Sinnigen points out that the days which José María and Eloísa spend in Paris at the height of their passion are also a consumerist orgy (Sinnigen 1996: 105). After their return from Paris, José María realises that his spending for the year 1882 amounts to 90,000 *duros*, that is, 1.8 million *reales*, which represents 20% of his original fortune (*Lo prohibido*: 102-103). He spends the money unthinkingly, and it is significant that José María equates his passion with drunkenness:

yo tenía, durante las embriagueces de aquel año, vagas nociones de esta cifra negativa [...] Me parecía mentira que que tal suma hubiera sido espolvoreada por mí en diversas tiendas de París y Madrid [...] Lo hice sin darme cuenta de ello, ciego y alucinado, olvidando esa admirable función del espíritu que llamamos sumar, y atento sólo a los aguijonazos de la voluptuosidad y del amor propio. (*Lo prohibido*: 237)

In blaming his overspending on sexual desire and pride, José María is associating his self-esteem as a man with his ability to match Eloísa’s consumerist desires. On the other hand, as Terry notes, the cooling of José María’s passion for Eloísa goes hand in hand with his reluctance to spend money on her, and with a renewed interest in putting his financial affairs in order. He then considers a ‘rompimiento que resolviera de una vez para siempre todos los problemas del corazón y de la aritmética’ (*Lo prohibido*: 296-297). Following the work of Stephen Marcus on Victorian attitudes to sex, Terry considers that Galdós adopts in *Lo prohibido* the nineteenth-century literary convention which relates sex and the economy as

productive systems which are subject to the same laws of spending and conserving. Sexual promiscuity is in this analysis comparable to economic overspending and rash investments (Terry 1970: 75-76). There is indeed a connection between José María's increasingly tangled relationship with the three Guzmán sisters on one hand, and on the other, his squandering of his wealth in the first part of the novel and his disastrous stock-market operations in the second.

Mystic Money: The *Bolsa*

José María does not show a natural inclination to stock-market investment or to high-risk speculation, and he is at first reluctant to get involved in the *Bolsa*, despite Eloísa's nudging and her claim that he lacks both initiative and ambition (*Lo prohibido*: 259). His intention when he arrives in Madrid is to live off his ample rents in moderate luxury: 'Soltero, rico y sin obligaciones, bien podía darme el gusto de engalanar suntuosamente mi vivienda, y ser, conforme lo exigía mi posición social, amparo de las artes y la industria' (*Lo prohibido*: 162). Here José María invokes the view that the spending of the wealthy classes is beneficial to society at large, in that it creates a trickle-down effect. His involvement in the *Bolsa* in the second part of the novel is mainly motivated by his concern about his diminishing wealth, and he only decides on it after rejecting other business possibilities, such as exporting wine, as too strenuous. By joining the *Bolsa*, José María has two objectives in mind: to restore his depleted wealth to its original level, and to 'evitar los males que causa la holganza' (*Lo prohibido*: 437). His expectations are therefore moderate. Moreover, his business style at the *Bolsa* is at first cautious, having resolved to 'andar con pies de plomo por terreno tan peligroso' (*Lo prohibido*: 442). The financial disaster which he suffers at the end of the novel, with losses of over three million *reales*, is to a great extent the result of the fragile physical and mental state – or as he calls it, the 'chochez prematura' (*Lo prohibido*: 574) – to which his obsessive and unrequited passion for Camila reduces him. Thus he makes business deals in the same semi-conscious way in which he had spent his money at the height of his love affair with Eloísa: 'Varias veces en la *Bolsa* pronunciaba los sacramentales *doy y tomo*, sin saber ni lo que daba ni lo que tomaba' (*Lo prohibido*: 566). He also abandons his previous sensible investment practices: 'habíame vuelto

temerario y despreocupado como los aventureros y agiotistas más audaces. Que perdía...¿y qué? (*Lo prohibido*: 567). It is in this distracted and careless state that José María makes the disastrous operation with the reckless investor Torres, which cost him a great part of his fortune.

In this way, the effects of the volatile Madrid high life on a weak nature such as José María's are disastrous. In the second part of the novel, José María avows that he lacks control over his own life: 'No domino yo las situaciones en que me ponen los sucesos y mi debilidad, no. Ellas me dominan a mí. [...] yo soy pasivo; [...] soy madera de naufragio que sobrenada en el mar de los acontecimientos' (*Lo prohibido*: 370). Yet assertions such as this by José María must be treated cautiously. As Whiston argues, José María's unreliability as a narrator provides the basis for the structural irony in *Lo prohibido* (*Lo prohibido*: 66-67). He often seems more apt to see other characters' faults than his own and, in the assessment of his own motivations, truth and self-deception are often combined. This statement is made after his abandonment of Eloísa, and as he plans his seduction of Camila. Although he accepts that his behaviour is deplorable, and even acknowledges that it is unfair to expect virtue from women while men do 'lo que [les] da la gana' (*Lo prohibido*: 368), he relinquishes responsibility:

No, yo no soy un héroe; producto de mi edad y de mi raza, y hallándome en fatal armonía con el medio en que vivo, tengo en mí los componentes que corresponden al origen y al espacio. En mí se hallarán los caracteres de la familia a que pertenezco y el aire que respiro. (*Lo prohibido*: 369-370)

Scanlon argues that when José María rationalizes his own immoral behaviour as the inevitable consequence of environment and heredity, Galdós is exploiting to ironic effect some of the clichés of Naturalism. This is not to say that José María's self-analysis must be rejected outright. As Scanlon also argues, he exemplifies the cynical ethos of the high bourgeoisie of early Restoration Spain, developed in a climate of economic euphoria. In her view, this ethos is in marked contrast with the idealistic revolutionary spirit of the 1868 Revolution, and incompatible with the literary heroism which some of Galdós's critics found lacking in many of his *novelas contemporáneas* from the 1880s onwards. Thus when José María explicitly denies having any of the qualities of the heroes and heroines of the 'antigua literatura

novelesca, y sobre todo, la literatura dramática' (*Lo prohibido*: 370), Galdós is playing a literary joke at the expense of his critics (Scanlon 1984: 835-837).

More than the reluctant speculator José María, it is the unscrupulous Torres who better represents the speculative spirit of Madrid's fragile financial world. As José María recounts, he became rich in just a few years with 'atrevidos agios' and, significantly, he is described as a 'tipo esencialmente madrileño' (*Lo prohibido*: 437). Torres's career is a mixture of legal and doubtful undertakings, and José María describes his life as an example of 'constancia y temeridad, de desvergüenza por una parte, de tesón por otra' (*Lo prohibido*: 438). The business trajectory of this minor character, from shop-assistant and sales representative to major player in the Madrid Stock Exchange, is explained by José María in great detail. His breakthrough came through usury, as a result of his association with the moneylender Torquemada during the 1860s:

Torres buscaba víctimas, y las descueraban entre los dos. Hacían pingües negocios *facilitando* dinero secretamente a las señoras que gastan más de lo que les dan sus maridos para trapos; y con la amenaza de escándalo, las ponían en el disparadero y las desplumaban. (*Lo prohibido*: 439)

This is the period described in *La de Bringas*, where Torres appears to Rosalía as 'un bonito verdugo que se le presentaba con la cuerda y la hopa' (*La de Bringas*, 91). In *Lo prohibido*, José María explains how, in association with shop-keepers, Torres also took up the business of ensuring the payment of debts that the shop-keepers had thought unredeemable, keeping 50% of each payment. With a butcher's shop seized from debtors through a series of 'trapisondas' and 'enredos' (*Lo prohibido*: 439), Torres and Torquemada were able to set up a business. The money started to pour in when the council awarded to Torquemada the concession contract for the supply of meat to the provincial hospital for the dying. As José María puts it: 'los moribundos les hicieron a ellos el caldo gordo' (*Lo prohibido*: 439). By 1873, he had saved enough money (120,000 *reales*) to start a career as a stockbroker, benefiting from the downturn occasioned by the Third Carlist War (1872-76). As Torres was already one of the main players in the Madrid Stock Exchange by 1880, his success as a stockbroker, based on high-risk operations, was spectacular. In this respect, José María comments that 'Torres operaba en grande con un desparpajo que me pasmaba,

comprando y vendiendo a fin de mes, por sí y ante sí sin ninguna seguridad legal, sumas fabulosas' (*Lo prohibido*: 438-442).

As a successful player, Torres is highly regarded at the Bolsa, and José María remarks that 'cuando se aparecía por allí, toda aquella gente de los corros le miraba con cierta veneración, y él se inflaba lo indecible' (*Lo prohibido*: 478-479). His social status is precarious, however. As he lacks any other source of social distinction, he is only as good as his ability to make money. At the Bolsa, Torres needs to advertise his wealth as a guarantee of solvency. Not entirely convincingly, he tells José María that, although he would prefer a simpler lifestyle, he must have the luxury of a carriage in order to be seen in it by 'esos burros de la Bolsa' (*Lo prohibido*: 441). His ostentation, however, smacks of social insecurity:

Torres no salía del local sin que le anunciara el coche un lacayo cargado de pieles. Daba compasión ver al pobrecito muchacho sudando cada gota como un puño. Pero el agiotista creía sin duda pregonar mayor su riqueza por medio de las zaleas que ahogaban a aquel infeliz mancebo. (*Lo prohibido*: 479)

By contrast, the high-ranking historical bankers Urquijo and Ortueta, whose reputations are solidly established, display an image of sobriety at the Bolsa. José María observes the way in which the two bankers 'hacían gala de retirarse siempre a pie' (*Lo prohibido*: 479), a habit which distances them from the brash new rich attitude of stock-brokers such as Torres.

Torres's social instability is also the result of his not being associated with the high echelons of society through marriage, which was a common practice for those with new money. Torres's wife, Paca, is rumoured to have been a domestic servant who had learned to read and write only 'después que la fortuna de su marido le dio títulos y fuero de persona decente' (*Lo prohibido*: 441). Paca is therefore devoid of the 'valor de cambio' which, as Blanco argues, upper-class women had by dint of their social position (Blanco 1983: 63). The snobbishness which María Juana, the oldest of the three Guzmán sisters, shows towards Torres and Paca illustrates the couple's ambivalent position. María Juana can associate with Paca as long as the difference in social status between them is maintained and recognized. As José María explains, the friendship between the two women does not preclude María Juana's treatment of Paca with 'increíble menosprecio' (*Lo prohibido*: 465). In

relation to Torres's acquisition of two of Eloísa's luxurious possessions after her financial ruin, a painting by Salas and the aforementioned mirror, María Juana complains that 'es un escándalo cómo sube esa gentuza, y cómo se va apoderando de lo que no les corresponde por su falta de educación (*Lo prohibido*: 465). The presence in the Torres household of Eloísa's tasteful objects, which Juana covets, undermines her sense of distinction. In reference to María Juana's snobbery, José María reflects ironically:

La mayor de las groserías es la improvisación de la fortuna, y poner las manos sucias, mojas aún con el agua de un fregadero, en los emblemas de la nobleza, pertenecientes por natural derecho a las personas bien nacidas.
(*Lo prohibido*: 465)

María Juana's dismissal of Paca as *ordinaria* is, however, ironic, as Eloísa in turn refers to María Juana as the 'ordinaria de Medina' (*Lo prohibido*: 146), an allusion to the lack of social refinement which Eloísa imputes to both her sister and her sister's husband.

Torres's enjoyment of the trappings of high society is short-lived, for his investment style proves unsustainable. At the end of the novel, he loses both money and social position when, unable to settle his securities, he goes into hiding in order to avoid prison. José María, who is Torres's creditor and had carried out his operation without any legal security, also suffers enormous losses as a result, as we have seen. In *Torquemada en la cruz* (1893) we learn that Torres later commits suicide in Monte Carlo (*TC*: 228). As Medina is another of Torres's creditors, Eloísa's mirror, whose presence in the Torres household offends María Juana's sense of entitlement, can now pass on to her: '¡Oh! – exclamó María sin poder evitar que una chispa de júbilo cruzara por su rostro –, lo que es ahora el espejo biselado irá *pian pianino* caminito de mi sala...' (*Lo prohibido*: 578).

Torres's trajectory highlights the social fluidity made possible by the centrality of money in an emerging capitalist society. In particular, the stock market appears in *Lo prohibido* as the ideal ground for the blurring of traditional social barriers, due to the speed with which fortunes can be both made and lost there. This same view emerges from Ramón de Castañeyra's *cuadro costumbrista* 'El agente de bolsa', written in the 1840s, over a decade after the foundation of the Madrid Bolsa.

In his *cuadro*, Castañeyra describes the social rise of the stockbroker through the financial operations which he carries out in an old convent's courtyard, where the Bolsa was then housed: 'sale del caos, se confunde entre la muchedumbre, despunta á los umbrales del arenisco patio de un ex-convento, y resplandece luego al lado de la aristocracia de sangre, á la que á veces humilla con el lujo de sus deslumbrantes equipajes' (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 325). Castañeyra also points to the seeming dissociation of the stock market from the real economy, as he stresses the contradiction inherent in speculating with debt:

La Bolsa, por una de esas contradicciones tan frecuentes en la especie humana, ha venido á ser una necesidad en Madrid, cuando no tenemos una peseta. Sin embargo, en ella llueve el maná de los israelitas, y en su cuadrilongo y desmantelado recinto se sacrifican diariamente victimas humanas al ídolo de la actualidad, EL INTERES. (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 324)

In a similar vein, Mesonero Romanos bemoans in his *cuadro* 'La bolsa' (1836-1842) the loss of the days when 'el honrado comerciante dirigia desde su bufete las mas grandiosas empresas' (*Escenas matritenses*: 361). He explains that, as the potential profits from stock-market speculation are so high, commerce has lost its appeal:

En el dia, tal clase de negocios solo queda para gentes apocadas de suyo y que carecen de la inteligencia y el valor necesario para lo que en el lenguaje técnico llamamos *meterse en la Bolsa*; y á la verdad, ¿cómo la perspectiva de un mezquino interés de diez ó doce por ciento al año podria lisonjear al atrevido especulador que lanzándose en el juego público sueña en el mismo espacio de tiempo cuadruplicar su capital? (*Escenas matritenses*: 361)

In the cautionary tale that follows this introduction, Mesonero Romanos tells the story of the differing ways in which two brothers from a provincial capital manage their share of their father's inheritance. The older brother is characterized as being 'metódico y reflexivo' and having the qualities of 'constancia y regularidad' (*Escenas matritenses*: 362). His sensible financial system does not yield spectacular profits, but 'al cabo de cada año resultaba de su *balance* un progreso cierto, al paso que su reputacion se aseguraba mas y mas' (*Escenas matritenses*: 362). The younger brother, by contrast, disdains common business and provincial life, and moves to

Madrid in search of ‘sabor europeo’ (*Escenas matritenses*: 362). There, with the thought of Rothschild always in mind, and attracted by the ‘inmensas fortunas realizadas en breves horas por especuladores atrevidos’ (*Escenas matritenses*: 362-363), he heads for the newly opened Bolsa. His success is immediate and, in a few months, he manages to accumulate a vast capital. However, as the younger brother’s fortune grows, so does his ambition, with the result that he is constantly consumed by ‘deseos superiores a la realidad’ (*Escenas matritenses*: 363). In the end, the younger brother’s luck runs out, as the result of both ‘imprudencia’ and ‘fatalidad’ (*Escenas matritenses*: 363), and, in order to hide his shame, he leaves his home and country.

It can be argued that Galdós draws from the *costumbrista* tradition of these earlier writers in denouncing in *Lo prohibido* the excesses and risks of an economy based on speculation. Both the 1840s and the 1880s were periods of increased financial speculation and stock-market activity, and in both cases this was the result of financial measures designed to ease the ever-present debt burden. Torrente Fortuño argues that the speculative trend of the 1840s was partly due to the amount of títulos *al 3 por 100* – worth 2,000 million *reales* – which came into the market as a result of the 1844 Debt Conversion plan (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 66-67). As seen previously, Salamanca played a crucial role in this scheme. A considerable amount of business attention was for this reason turned towards the Bolsa. In his 1931 biography of Salamanca, the Conde de Romanones asserts that ‘la gente madrileña, de ritmo de vida tranquilo, se entregó con pasión furiosa a las especulaciones bursátiles. Todo el mundo jugaba a la Bolsa [...] jugaban lo mismo el aristócrata que el burgués que el plebeyo’ (cited by Torrente Fortuño 1969: 67). Characteristically, Salamanca became the most formidable player at the Madrid stock market at the time of its consolidation and expansion in the 1840s. His investments were notorious. In 1844 he allegedly made around 30 million *reales* in one single operation, after having purposely sent the market into a panic by using privileged information about an imminent coup. Then, in a gesture fitting with his larger-than-life reputation, he is said to have written off many of the debts owed to him (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 66-67; 70-74). As Torrente Fortuño notes, the press of the time voiced the unease which many felt about the wild stock-market fluctuations caused by speculators. An article in *El Globo* from 1844 denounces the situation

thus: ‘No podemos menos de vituperar las continuas oscilaciones al alza y baja en la bolsa, que revelan una lucha encarnizada y perpetua entre los especuladores, con ciertos barruntos de inmoralidad’ (cited by Torrente Fortuño 1969: 78).

Women in Business: The *Salones* of Eloísa and María Juana

In contrast with the masculine world of the stock market, Whiston stresses the role of Eloísa and María Juana as passive consumers. In his view, the exception among the sisters is Camila, who engages in productive household chores (*Lo prohibido*: 99-100). In a similar vein, Blanco argues that the Guzmán sisters are traditional in that they do not actively participate in the economy (Blanco 1983: 63; 65). Nonetheless, we may note that both Eloísa and María Juana display considerable interest in the world of business and that they participate indirectly in it through their soirées. According to José María, Eloísa’s fascination with finances had been incited by the ‘fabulosos aumentos que ciertos hombres de pesquis dan a su capital en poco tiempo’ (*Lo prohibido*: 258). As he reports, she goes to the Marqués de Fúcar for economic advice, with questions such as ‘¿venderé las *Cubas* para comprar ese Amortizable que ha inventado Camacho?’ (*Lo prohibido*: 258). The Marqués, for his part, warns José María of Eloísa’s immoderate fondness for money matters: ‘La señora tiene los espíritus muy metalizados. Me ha preguntado lo que es *comprar a plazo, en voluntad* y en firme. He tenido que darle una lección de cosas de bolsa’ (*Lo prohibido*: 260).

Ironically, Eloísa expresses frustration with José María’s financial passivity, and encourages him to take advantage of the possibilities which Madrid offers to somebody with both money and contacts:

Quiero decir que aquí el que no dobla el capital en pocos años, es porque no quiere. [...] Yo siento en mí arrebatos de genio financiero. Me parece que sería un Pereire, un Salamanca si me dejaran... Vamos a ver, por qué tú, que tienes dinero y sabes manejarlo, no vas a la Bolsa a hacer *dobles*? Por qué no te haces amigo, muy amigo de los ministros, para ver si cae un empréstito de Cuba, ya que en la Península no se hacen ahora? [...] Eres diputado y no sabes sacar partido de tu posición. Por qué no te quedas con una línea de

ferrocarril, la construyes y después la traspasas a algún primo que cargue con la explotación? Te admiras de lo que sé. Qué quieres...me gustan estas cosas. Fúcar me habla de galanterías, y yo le digo que la mejor flor con que me puede obsequiar es contarme cositas de éstas y decirme cómo se hacen los negocios. (*Lo prohibido*: 306)

All the ventures which Eloísa proposes to José María are backed or granted by the government, and are also speculative rather than industrial or commercial in nature. She knows that participation in the profitable railway-building business is only possible through political connections, and that success in such a venture consists of passing on the losses to the operators as soon as the profit-guaranteed building is over. She also berates José María for not exploiting the position as *diputado* which his friends Severiano Rodríguez and Jacinto Villalonga had procured for him. In this respect, José María himself confesses that Severiano and Jacinto arrange all political matters on his behalf, and that his only role consists of ‘decir sí o no en el Congreso, según lo que ellos me indicaban’ (*Lo prohibido*: 173). Severiano and Jacinto, by contrast, use their alternating political positions as *diputado ministerial* and *diputado de oposición* of the same province in order to control its finances. As José María informs us, ‘para conseguir carreteras, repartir bien los destinos y hacer que no se examinara la gestión municipal, no había otros más pillines’ (*Lo prohibido*: 173).

In Blanco’s view, Eloísa and her husband Carrillo represent a pre-capitalistic and aristocratic conception of money. She contrasts their non-productive profligacy with the bourgeois values of thrift and productivity which guide Medina’s and María Juana’s household (Alda Blanco 1983: 65). However, whereas Carrillo’s extensive expenditure on public charity can indeed be seen as conforming to an aristocratic idea of generosity, Eloísa’s instinct for profitable and unscrupulous money operations makes her a natural member of the Madrid financial bourgeoisie. Her role models are the financiers Salamanca and the Péreire brothers, whose wealth and social prestige in fact surpassed that of many members of the old aristocracy. In this respect Eloísa is radically different from Isidora in *La desheredada*. Both characters share their desire for the possessions that confer social prestige. However, Eloísa’s love for the ‘vil metal’ (*Lo prohibido*: 513) is not shared by Isidora, who sticks to the generosity ideal of the aristocratic class to which she aspires. Thus, whereas Isidora constructs her personality around the idea of being the legitimate heir to the

Marquesa de Aransis, Eloísa seems completely indifferent to the possibility of inheriting the Marquesado de Cícero, to which Carrillo has a right. Instead, it is the material inheritance that interests her (*Lo prohibido*: 178). Her world is one in line with Galdós's reflection in his article of 1885 'Vida de sociedad' that 'hoy no hay más aristocracia que el dinero' (*Fisonomías sociales*: 121).

Eloísa's insight into Madrid's financial market is matched by María Juana's exact knowledge of her husband's financial affairs, and particularly of his stock-market operations. Thus María Juana gives investment advice to José María which is based on the privileged information she has access to: 'No vayas a la alza mañana. Vendrá de París una fuerte baja. Hay muy malas noticias. Torres se lo ha dicho a Cristóbal' (*Lo prohibido*: 460). It is also María Juana who informs José María of his financial debacle at the end of the novel (*Lo prohibido*: 577). This world of financial speculation to which Eloísa and María Juana belong by inclination is of course denied to them, as women, by social convention. In relation to Eloísa's financial interest, José María reflects on the 'gravedad que entrañaba aquel insano entusiasmo por cosas tan contrarias a la condición espiritual de la mujer' (*Lo prohibido*, 307). Nonetheless, both Eloísa and María Juana bring the world of high finances into their homes through their *salones*, their *jueves* and *lunes* respectively. Business contacts are created in these social events and, despite the fact that financial gossip takes place in 'corrillos de hombres solos' (*Lo prohibido*: 448), the two women play a central role as hosts. María Juana's *lunes*, in particular, with Torres and the stock-market agent Samaniego among the guests, are distinctly work-like. José María recalls that 'no se hablaba más que del estado de los cambios, de si se haría bien o mal la liquidación de fin de mes, y de otros particulares relacionados con la economía social' (*Lo prohibido*, 448). He also describes the atmosphere at María Juana's soirées as akin to that of a *bolsín* or unofficial stock-market meetings where operations are prepared:

Al cuarto de fumar lo llamábamos la *sala de contratación*, pues venía a ser en cierto modo nuestro Bolsín. Sobre la mesa estaba el Boletín con las cotizaciones del día, y entre chupada y chupada solíamos decir algo de que resultaba al siguiente una operación formal. 'Mañana – decía Torres –, tomaré a 90 todo lo que me quieran dar.' 'Doy a 95.' 'Guárdese usted...'

Otras veces, Torres se levantaba de su asiento y exclamaba: ‘Hechas.’ (*Lo prohibido*: 468)

Bolufer Peruga stresses the mixed private-public character of the *salón* gatherings which, following the French model, developed in Spain during the eighteenth century among the upper classes. The *salones* were usually hosted by a lady who assembled a small select group with connections to the wider public worlds of politics, literature or journalism. They acted as an instrument to establish a family’s or an individual’s social prestige through a display of wealth and good taste. In this way, they played a role in the diffusion of social manners and fashions, an area where the role of women was fundamental (Bolufer Peruga 2006: 125-132). In Aldaraca’s view, the privatization of public life which these nineteenth-century *salones* represented helped to create a class consciousness among the elite (Aldaraca 1991: 175-176). Cruz points to the importance of interior decoration in the ‘front stage’ room which, in the homes of the nineteenth-century high bourgeoisie, was designed to serve as an extension of the public world. In these front rooms, as Cruz puts it, ‘political decisions were made, profitable business transactions were arranged, and treacherous ruins and political downfalls were hatched’ (Cruz 2011:85). It is interesting to note that, as Torrente Fortuño indicates, Salamanca was introduced to the financier José de Buschenthal, whose influence was crucial in Salamanca’s stock-market career, in one of Buschenthal’s wife’s fashionable *salones*. For decades María Buschenthal gathered the best of Madrid’s society at her home. Torrente Fortuño notes that her *salones* were already famous by the end of the 1830s, and that, according to periodicals of the time, she was still entertaining ‘notabilidades de la política y las letras’ in her home in the 1870s (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 44).

The business-oriented *salón* is the topic of the 1853 *costumbrista* articles ‘Una comida de etiqueta sin etiqueta’ and ‘Placeres de sobremesa’ by Antonio Flores. In these two *cuadros*, Flores describes a social gathering at the house of Doña Eduvigis’s son-in-law, and some of the topics explored by Galdós in *Lo prohibido* are present in these satirical sketches. Like María Juana’s *jueves*, Eduvigis’s *lunes* and *viernes* are markedly centred on business. In a clear example of the encroachment of public into private life, the narrator explains how the three ladies of the house, Eduvigis, her daughter and her grand-daughter, are the only

women in a ‘salon lleno todo de hombres’ (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, V, II: 272). Whereas Eduvigis’s daughter stays within the assigned feminine role in her knowledge of fashionable manners and etiquette, and even in her flirting with an aristocratic guest, Eduvigis is more concerned with money-making possibilities and, to the narrator’s surprise, ‘estaba enterada de todo’ (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, V, II: 289).

In ‘Placeres de sobremesa’, the narrator describes the casual way in which Eduvigis’s son-in-law and his guest Palastro talk about complicated and nebulous money operations involving enormous sums:

Porque era tal la familiaridad que tenian el señor Palastro y el marido de Ruperta, con el dinero, y tan fácil era para ellos hacer millones, con la imposicion del capital, y los intereses, y la acumulacion de éstos y el interés compuesto, y otros cuantos trasiegos y enjuagues que hacian con el dinero, enjugándose la boca con centenares de millones de reales. (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, V, II: 288)

Eduvigis refers to the business possibilities which result from these gatherings when she advises the narrator that ‘como vd. se venga por acá los lunes y los viernes, que son los dias que tenemos comida, pronto se hará rico’ (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, V, II: 289). As he objects that he has no money to invest, Eduvigis assures him that money is not altogether necessary, as the capital involved is often ‘nominal, es decir, figurado’ (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, V, II: 289):

Y habrá usted hecho bien [...] en no ser tan tonto como mi difunto marido, que por mas que estuve erre que erre con él, murió sin una peseta. Y aunque yo le decia métete en negocios, compra bienes nacionales, ves á la Bolsa, él, nada, no sabia mas que contestar, con una pequeñez de alma que me pudria y me requemaba la sangre ¡pero si no tengo dinero! (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, V, II: 291)

In Eduvigis’s view, those who made a fortune either by buying disentailed ‘bienes nacionales’, becoming ‘contratista de suministros’, or acquiring ‘papel en la Bolsa’ (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, V, II: 292), did so without startup capital. She urges the narrator to be more like his son-in-law, who ‘no tenia mas capital que el dia y la noche, pero es de mi genio, emprendedor y de los que no se ahogan por nada, y ya ve

vd. con que lujo vive' (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, V, II: 292). The connection which is suggested throughout the *cuadro* between gambling and the business operations hatched in the house is clearly established at the end of the sketch. The narrator spends the end of the evening 'viendo rodar el oro por el tapete de la mesa de juego, como antes habian rodado los millones por los lábios del amo de la casa' (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, V, II: 296). By the end of the *cuadro* it also becomes apparent that the financial situation of the family is far from buoyant, and, despite the luxury which they display in their social occasions, rumours abound about the household's lack of solvency (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, V, II: 298).

Competitive Consumerism and the Quest for Distinction

Eloísa's *jueves* are grander social occasions than she can afford, and they are partly responsible for her and Carrillo's financial ruin. As with Eduvigis's son-in-law's *comidas*, Eloísa's own guests are aware of the unaffordability of her *jueves*. Thus her regular guest *Saca-mantecas* warns José María that 'estas juergas de los jueves cuestan mucho dinero [...] al paso que vamos, la *débâcle* no tardará' (*Lo prohibido*: 264). Eloísa starts her soirées after having spent a quarter of Carrillo's inheritance from the Marquesa de Cícero, of nearly two and a half million *reales*, in just one year. José María reports that 'en aquel otoño Eloísa montó la casa con más lujo, tomó más criados, hizo reformas en el edificio, anunciando que iba a dar comidas todos los jueves' (*Lo prohibido*, 238). Even after the reduction of their fortune by a quarter, Eloísa's and Carrillo's yearly annual rent of what José María dismisses as 'tristes siete mil *duros*' (*Lo prohibido*: 238), that is, 140,000 *reales*, makes them extremely wealthy compared to the great majority of the inhabitants of Madrid, as we have seen. Nevertheless, their inheritance is not enough to establish them as one of Madrid's *grandes casas*, as Eloísa wishes. When, a few months later, José María tries to put Carrillo's and Eloísa's financial affairs in order, he finds that Eloísa's expenses, together with the 'dispendios inagotables' of Carrillo's humanitarian work, have now consumed around half of their capital (*Lo prohibido*: 293-294). They are also besieged by a 'voraz langosta de prestamistas' (*Lo prohibido*: 297) among whom José María mentions 'un tal Torquemada, que prestaba a señoras ricas', and who charges 'brutales intereses' (*Lo prohibido*: 294). It is thus the disparity between

Eloísa's aspirations and her economic possibilities which José María disapproves of, and which, oblivious to his own financial mismanagement, he condemns as *cursi*:

¡[...] para vivir constantemente acechada, escarnecida, solicitada y requerida, se sacrificaba mi prima a una etiqueta que no vacilo en llamar *cursi*, pues era una mala imitación de la ceremoniosa, natural y no estudiada etiqueta de las pocas grandes casas que tenemos! ¡Y se gastaba tontamente su caudal, aparentando un bienestar que no poseía, ostentando un lujo prestado y mentiroso! ¡Y todo por tener una corte de aduladores y parásitos! (*Lo prohibido*: 262)

For José María, Eloísa's display of wealth is *cursi* in that it is imitative of a higher class, and therefore fake. The financially sensible Medina makes the same criticism when, in reference to Eloísa's *jueves*, he confides to José María that 'érale odiosísima aquella vida de lisonja y mentira [...] Siendo su sistema gastar siempre menos de lo que se tiene, le daba rabia la ceguera estúpida de los que hacen todo lo contrario' (*Lo prohibido*: 274). As Valis argues, the nineteenth-century Spanish middle class found a substitute for the blood-based distinction of the traditional aristocracy in the imitation of the 'artifacts, dress, and manners of the socially superior class'. However, the distinctiveness achieved in this way rested, like the titles of the new nobility 'on a rather shaky *faux marbre* pedestal of questionable authenticity' (Valis 2002: 50). Thus nineteenth-century *cursi* behaviour entailed a desire both to differentiate from those below and to approximate to those above, and it combined a feeling of social inferiority and inadequacy on one hand, and of aspiration on the other. Significantly, Valis relates the aspirational component of *cursilería* to both the speculative turn of the economy and the wide availability of credit during the second half of the nineteenth century. She argues that 'increased financial speculation in such things as railroads and government securities, abetted by proliferating credit societies and foreign capital, had created a climate of expectations, especially in Madrid' (Valis 2002: 140). Following the work of Pocock, Valis considers that speculation and credit fostered a mindset of imaginative projection into the future, and thus facilitated the expression of personal desires (Valis 2002: 140-141).

In a similar vein, and in accordance with the ideas developed by Thorstein Veblen in his 1899 book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Aldaraca points to the interrelated dynamics of consumption, social status and class mobility which guided middle-class behaviour in nineteenth-century Spain (Aldaraca 1991: 112). In Veblen's view, the boundaries between classes in modern communities grow increasingly vague and temporary, making the idea of class mobility seem more possible. As a result, the members of each social stratum seek to imitate the lifestyle of the stratum immediately above, and, in this way, upper-class models of life permeate the habits of the lower classes in a trickle-down effect (*Theory of Leisure Class*: 52). As Veblen also points out, this continuous social emulation makes the level of consumption which is required in order to achieve the desired lifestyle indefinitely expandable: 'the standard of expenditure which commonly guides our efforts is not the average, ordinary expenditure already achieved; it is an ideal of consumption that lies just beyond our reach, or to reach which requires some strain' (*Theory of the Leisure Class*: 64).

Expenditure on fashion, interior decoration, food and servants is essential for Eloísa, as these are all signs of the social status to which she aspires. In response to José María's insistence that she should live within her means, she replies: 'soy mujer enviciada ya en el lujo [...] Los placeres de la sociedad me son tan necesarios como el respirar' (*Lo prohibido*: 362). In Aldaraca's view, there is a connection between Eloísa's display of wealth and her search for social respectability (Aldaraca 1991: 203). In this regard, it is worth noting that, in Veblen's analysis, the accumulation of wealth is in modern societies the basis for both social repute and for 'that complacency which we call self-respect', which he sees as often being dependent on the esteem of others (*Theory of Leisure class*: 20). Particularly after the death of Carrillo, and when it becomes clear to Eloísa that José María has no intention of marrying her, her lifestyle acts as a safety-net to avoid the risk of social ostracism (Aldaraca 1991: 203-204). Thus Eloísa tells José María that she can only give up on luxury if he gives her a name, that is, if he marries her. Without her status guaranteed by either a good marriage or an ostentatious display of wealth, she fears a lower-middle-class and socially-obscure existence. As she protests: '¿qué me hago yo? ¿Qué es de mí, con cuatro trastos, un pañuelito de batista, y sin otro porvenir que el de convertirme en patrona de huéspedes?' (*Lo prohibido*: 362). What Eloísa regards

as *cursi* is precisely such a financially-limited lifestyle. Regarding her doubtful determination to change her spending habits, she tells José María: ‘¡Si digo que te has de asustar cuando me veas hecha una pobre *cursi*, defendiendo el ochavo y apartada de todas esas farándulas! (*Lo prohibido*: 301). Ironically, Eloísa needs a constant stream of lovers in order to maintain the level of luxury which ensures her social reputability. The bourgeois society of *Lo prohibido* is, however, indifferent to Eloísa’s sexual reputation, provided that she can maintain her high standard of living. José María recollects that his relationship with Eloísa was openly accepted by all even before Carrillo’s death: ‘nadie nos miraba mal, nadie extrañaba nuestra conducta, ni jamás oímos palabra o reticencia que nos acusase’ (*Lo prohibido*: 279). Later on in the novel, despite the fact that Eloísa is the lover of both Fúcar and José María, and that all sorts of ‘versiones infamantes’ concerning her are spreading around Madrid, José María observes that she still cultivates a public image of ‘señora distinguidísima’, and that she is still ‘saludada por lo más selecto de Madrid’ (*Lo prohibido*: 435-436). In this respect, and in line with the aforementioned argument by Scanlon regarding Galdós’s exploitation of the clichés of Naturalism (Scanlon 1984: 835-837), it is worth noting the ironic reference to Galdós’s own critics in Eloísa’s scandalized criticism of a play which she has just seen. The drama, which she describes as ‘muy inmoral’, caused the outrage of all the ‘personas decentes’ in the audience with its portrayal of high society prostitutes:

Figúrate que el autor ha sacado allí unas *tías* elegantes, caracteres enteramente nuevos en nuestro teatro... Es un escándalo, una desvergüenza; es cosa que da asco...Lo único bueno de la obra son los trajes preciosísimos que han sacado las tales!...¡Qué lujo, qué novedad de telas y qué cortes tan admirables! (*Lo prohibido*: 322)

For Aldaraca, Eloísa’s opulent lifestyle also represents a substitute for her ambition to participate in the ‘productive sphere’ (Aldaraca 1991: 203). As we have seen, the private and the public are intertwined in her soirées, and she is as interested in speculative business as she is in expensive possessions and fashion. As Aldaraca argues, for the middle-class Spanish woman of the nineteenth century, fashionable society represented the only means by which she could enter the world of the public space. It could also offer her the possibility of upward mobility, even though, due to the expense involved, this was a ‘precarious and at times dangerous [journey] for the

woman of limited means' (Aldaraca 1991: 112). Aldaraca also stresses that the predominantly feminine world of fashion overlapped with the public sphere on account of the interdependence between production and consumption (Aldaraca 1991: 111-112). On the other hand, as Anderson notes, female consumerism was also construed in the nineteenth century as a transgression of prescribed gender boundaries (Anderson 2012: 106).

As an indicator of social status, female fashion was also linked to the public space in that an elegantly dressed woman conferred social prestige on her husband and family. As Rosalía argues in *La de Bringas*, 'el secreto de las brillantes carreras de algunos hombres está en el talento de sus mujeres'. Thus a lady 'de finísimos modales, y que supiera honrar a su marido honrándose a sí propia, que supiera darle lucimiento luciéndose ella misma' can, in this way, further her husband's career prospects (*La de Bringas*: 88). José María himself reasons in a similar way when, rejecting the idea of abandoning the spendthrift Eloísa, he speculates rather misguidedly that her opulence may be the result of her desire to elevate his social status: '¡Abandonarla, cuando tal vez la causa de su ruina era agradarme, cuando su lujo no era quizás otra cosa que el afán de hacerme más envidiable a los demás, y de dorar y engalanar el trono en que me había puesto!' (*Lo prohibido*: 297). José María's uncle Rafael provides another example of the interconnection between female spending and male status. As José María reports, Rafael's lack of savings leaves him in a precarious financial position with which to face old age, despite a long and successful career as a civil servant and businessman (*Lo prohibido*: 133). In the conventional way, Rafael blames his economic mismanagement both on his wife Pilar's extravagance and on his own failure to control her feminine excesses. However, Rafael acknowledges that men invest in female fashion so that their wives and daughters can be deemed '*elegantes y distinguidas*' (*Lo prohibido*: 569). He also reveals to José María that his own desire to thrive in Madrid's fashionable society matched that of his wife:

Yo era entonces un *dandy*, y, te lo diré en confianza, uno de los más tontos de aquella hornada. Mi sueño era que a mi mujercita la citaran lo periódicos que hablan de bailes y recepciones, y que nos cayera mucho dinero por herencia o por negocios, para hacernos marqueses, dar bailes, té y meter bulla...[...]

afanes, quiero y no puedo, espíritu de imitación, y estirémonos mucho para llegar, sin llegar nunca... (*Lo prohibido*: 570)

According to Veblen, expenditure on dress is the most effective way of ‘putting one’s pecuniary standing in evidence’, as it offers an indication of status ‘to all observers at the first glance’ (*Theory of Leisure Class*: 103). From this perspective, the strong competitive element in Eloísa’s use of fashion can be attributed to her striving for social position. José María reports that, when shopping in Paris, Eloísa’s ‘amor propio pedíale no ser de las últimas en la introducción de las novedades, mejor dicho, la incitaba a ser la primera’ (*Lo prohibido*: 235). Her encounters with the Marquesa de San Salomó during their Paris shopping sprees creates in both women a desire to surpass each other: ‘Cada una quería hacer pinitos sobre la otra, anticipándose a llevar a Madrid lo mejor, lo más bonito y nuevo...’ (*Lo prohibido*: 235). José María also comments that Eloísa does not invite many ladies to her *jueves*, as ‘no gustaba mi prima de que a sus gracias hicieran sombra las gracias de otra mujer’ (*Lo prohibido*: 251).

The same competitive spirit guides Eloísa’s attitude towards interior decoration, which is also on display on her *jueves*. In reference to Eloísa’s house-reform project, which follows some of the style features of the aristocratic house of Fernán-Núñez, José María reflects that ‘la imitación de las grandes casas y el afán de rivalizar con ellas era la demencia de mi prima (*Lo prohibido*: 265). It is significant in this respect that Eloísa regards with contempt the luxurious but industrial objects which she possesses. Thus *Saca-mantecas* tells José María that Eloísa is ‘persona de gusto’, and reports her complaints that ‘todos sus muebles, sus porcelanas y bronces son industriales; de que se encuentran idénticos en todas las tiendas y en las casas de Fulano y Zutano; de que no posee cosas de verdadero mérito ni de verdadero *chic*’ (*Lo prohibido*: 384). For Eloísa, the fact that her possessions, however expensive, are widely available among her social milieu undermines their power to confer distinction. As Simmel argues in his 1900 book *The Philosophy of Money*, the money economy, by focusing on exchange value rather than intrinsic value, has a levelling effect which blurs differentiation and therefore renders the objects ‘common’ (*Philosophy of Money*: 427). This levelling effect is particularly evident in the mass production of ‘cheap trash’ which can be bought in the ‘fifty-cents bazaar’

(*Philosophy of Money*: 426-427), but also affects high-quality objects. As he observes:

The leveling effect of the money equivalent becomes quite evident as soon as one compares a beautiful and original but purchasable object with another equally significant one which is not purchasable. We feel from the outset that this latter object possesses a reserve, an independence [...] a distinction that the other object cannot attain. (*Philosophy of Money*: 425)

There is irony in José María's condemnation of Eloísa's competitive consumerism, since, as Scanlon points out, the nature of his desire for Eloísa does not differ greatly from her attitude towards fashion and sumptuous objects. In her view, Eloísa is a status symbol for José María, and he draws satisfaction from the idea that others are envious of his possession. In his relationship with her, José María is therefore guided by a strong element of male competition (Scanlon 1984: 838). José María himself admits that, despite his awareness that his affair with Eloísa should remain secret for the sake of decorum, his pride drives him to seek social recognition for his sexual conquest:

No quería yo el escándalo [...] pero con todo, mi ventura me ahogaba, hinchándose el pecho, sin duda por la parte que la vanidad tenía en ella. Érame forzoso mostrar a alguien mis bien ganados laureles; yo buscaba tal vez, sin darme cuenta de ello, un aplauso a la secreta aventura. (*Lo prohibido*: 230)

It is also noteworthy that, in the market-place atmosphere of Eloísa's *jueves*, Fúcar warns José María that he must compete financially with other potential bidders for her possession: 'Es preciso que se dedique usted a los negocios para tener contena a la señora. No se fie usted del amor puro [...] créame, aumente su capital, si puede, no sea que alguno le desbanque' (*Lo prohibido*: 260). On the other hand, the progressive devaluation of Eloísa in José María's estimation becomes apparent in the way in which he begins to refer to her, after their split, with derogative terms suggestive of prostitution such as 'la prójima' (*Lo prohibido*: 383; 430; 434).

For Scanlon, the competitiveness underlying José María's desire for Eloísa exemplifies what Girard refers to as triangular desire, that is, a desire triggered by a

third element or mediator. In her view, this third element is represented here both by the fact that Eloísa fulfils conventional expectations as regards the feminine ideal, and therefore represents what men supposedly desire; and by Carrillo, who rouses a strong sense of rivalry in José María (Scanlon 1984: 838). In this last respect, José María confesses his fixation with the mortifying idea that ‘Carrillo, amigo vendido, pariente vilipendiado, valía más que yo’ (*Lo prohibido*: 244). José María contrasts Carrillo’s vehement dedication to the ‘bien ajeno’ with his own selfishness. However, he is pleased with the appeasing thought that Carrillo’s ‘*otroísmo*’ is both virtue and defect, as his ‘desmedida atención en la humanidad y en la patria’ also meant that he ‘apartaba sus ojos de la familia y del gobierno de su casa’ (*Lo prohibido*: 247). The male competitiveness guiding José María’s sexual life is also clear in his relationship with María Juana. The focus of this affair is not so much María Juana, to whom José María is not attracted, as her husband, for whom José María admits to professing great aversion despite acknowledging his admirable qualities (*Lo prohibido*: 465). As well as the clear signs which Medina gives of his ‘recóndita inquina’ towards him, José María resents Medina’s financial smugness, or, as José María puts it, the ‘endiosamiento del arreglo, la devoción de la solidez económica’ (*Lo prohibido*: 448). As he mockingly explains:

Porque [Medina] quería que por todo el orbe se divulgase que jamás de los jamases había tenido una deuda, y que en su casa todo se compraba con dinero en mano. Por esto vivían él y su señora tan tranquilos. ¿Podrían otros decir lo mismo? Seguramente que no. (*Lo prohibido*: 448)

Thus José María presents his seduction of María Juana in terms of revenge, for he resolves to ‘jugarle [a Medina] una mala pasada’ (*Lo prohibido*: 469), taking the opportunity presented by María Juana’s apparent attraction towards him: ‘Y no buscaba yo la mala pasada, sino que ella venía hacia mí, solicitándome para que la jugase; yo no tenía más que alargar la mano [...] aquel hombre íntegro y juicioso me pagaría juntas todas sus groserías’ (*Lo prohibido*: 469). José María’s revenge is a success, as not only does María Juana have an affair with him, but she also begins to give signs of rebellion against her husband’s prescribed economic order. José María reproduces her humorous comments with relish:

Muy santo y muy bueno [...] que se evitase por todos los medios que la casa se pareciese, ni aún remotamente, a otras donde con mucho bombo, mucho platillo y mucho de *high-life*, quejábanse los criados de que les mataban de hambre; muy santo y muy bueno todo esto; pero ella, la señora de la casa, se vestiría siempre a la última, y del modo más rico y elegante, viniera o no *de extranjis* la moda, y trajera o no entre sus pliegues el pecado de la farsa y de las *mariconadas* francesas. (*Lo prohibido*, 452)

With her newly-acquired interest in good taste and elegance, María Juana tries to redress the effects of Medina's 'teorías de *castellano viejo*' (*Lo prohibido*: 452), that is, the sobriety which many interpret as 'sordidez' (*Lo prohibido*: 146). She also tries to rectify what José María describes as Medina's 'gusto fiambre' (*Lo prohibido*: 443). It is important to note that Medina, who spends considerably less than his income allows him to, can actually afford some fashionable luxuries, and there is no implicit condemnation of María Juana's desire to indulge in them.

As Anderson points out, Eloísa's pattern of out-of control consumerism and spiralling debt is shared by two other of Galdós's notorious female spendthrifts, Isidora and Rosalía, the protagonists of *La desheredada* and *La de Bringas* respectively. Just as in *Lo prohibido*, there is, in these two novels, an underlying concern with Spain's, and particularly Madrid's, poor productivity and fiscal deficit. However, Anderson argues that the female consumers of these novels must not be understood primarily as representative of Spain's fiscal imbalance, for in her view Galdós's focus on deficit does not correspond with Spain's economic reality (Anderson 2012: 100-101). For her, these characters are rather allegories of Spain's wider decadence, the result of the country's inability to move away from Old Regime structures (Anderson 2012: 103-104). Anderson bases her "'invented" trade deficit' proposition on Ringrose's revisionist appraisal of the nineteenth-century Spanish economy, according to which there was consistent growth in real income per capita from 1860 to 1910 (Ringrose 1996: 65-66). Anderson's interpretation may be countered by pointing out that economic growth does not preclude the existence of debt and deficit, and that Ringrose himself does not question that trade deficit was often a serious problem during the nineteenth century (Ringrose 1996: 153). Moreover, by concentrating on trade deficit, Anderson fails to address the existence

of a crippling budget deficit, a problem which, as we have seen, had a major impact on fiscal policy. Nevertheless, her conclusion, that Galdós in these novels points to the need for Spain's *regeneración*, is valid (Anderson2012: 102-103); and it is also in line with recent research which traces many of the concerns usually associated with post-1898 *regeneracionismo* to the mid-nineteenth century (Davies 2000; Varela Olea 2001).

Despite the critical focus on Eloísa's unproductive consumerism, it is important to stress that hardly any of the novel's male characters engage in productive work, and that profligacy and debt are rife among them. As has been discussed, there is an interconnection between José María's and Eloísa's spending habits: ultimately, they are both motivated by a need for social prestige. Many other characters of *Lo prohibido* also live beyond their means. As many of María Juana's *lunes* regulars are lenders and bankers with a professional knowledge of the 'intimidaciones pecuniarias de toda la gente que pasa por rica en Madrid' (*Lo prohibido*: 449), satirical accounts abound there about the 'lujo estúpido de muchos que no tienen sobre qué caerse muertos' (*Lo prohibido*: 449). There is much talk about the collapse of some aristocratic houses, such as that 'la casa de Trastamara estaba ya tambaleándose', that 'el duque de Armada-Invencible tenía un pasivo de veintitres millones', or that 'los de Casa-Bojío habían llegado a la extremidad de vivir con lo que les quería fiar el tendero de la esquina; y sin embargo, daban bailes' (*Lo prohibido*: 449). However, another rumour concerning uncollectable debts held by *Sobrino Hermanos*, the exclusive fashion shop where Rosalía buys her famous shawl in *La de Bringas*, stresses the link between immoderate consumerism, fashion and femininity:

Sobrinos Hermanos tenían una cartera de sesenta mil duros incobrables [...] Parecía mentira que el frenesí de los trapos ocasionara estos desequilibrios en la riqueza. Y lo peor es que han de seguir surtiendo a las que no les pagan, pues si les negaran el género, les desacreditarían sólo con decir que no trae más que cursilería. (*Lo prohibido*: 450)

In this respect, it is significant that some of Eloísa's unproductive and profligate male guests are associated with the feminine world of fashion. This is the case with *Saca-mantecas*, who lives in permanent debt despite his flair for milking the State

(*Lo prohibido*: 386). As José María reports: ‘era uno de los hombres más entrampados de la creación, y vivía perseguido sin tregua por diferentes espectros en forma de cobradores de tiendas. Oí contar que sólo en el ramo de la perfumería debía sumas fabulosas’ (*Lo prohibido*: 262). José María also derides *Saca-mantecas*’s excessive pride in his appearance:

Su galantería exquisita y refinada encantaba a las damas. Había tenido buena figura, y aún conservaba restos de ella, presuminedo de ojos vivaces, de un busto airoso y de pie pequeño. Sin duda daba mucha importancia a su bigote y mosca [...] Lo que más me cargaba en aquel hombre era que, al entrar en cualquier local, echaba miradas furtivas a los espejos para verse y admirarse. (*Lo prohibido*: 261-262)

Saca-mantecas is thus presented as the traditional literary type of the *elegante*, *dandy* or *fashionable*, which the *costumbrista* author Ramón el Navarrete describes in his mid-nineteenth-century *cuadro* ‘El elegante’. Here, the *elegante*’s feminine vanity is highlighted through his love of mirrors:

Lo primero que hace el *hombre de buen tono* (que también por esta castiza metáfora se le conoce) [...] es pedir un espejo. En él observa si sus bigotes se han desrizado, si el cabello está lácio y descompuesto, si algún pelo de su barba se atreve á sobresalir más que los otros. En seguida [...] se contempla delante de otra luna de cuerpo entero, que reproduzca el suyo en toda su esbeltez y donosura. (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 158)

As Haidt argues, the eighteenth-century Spanish *petit-maître* or *petimetre*, which Navarrete acknowledges as the forerunner of the *elegante* (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 157), represented a deviation from the masculine ideal. In contrast with the restraint which men should display as consumers, and the simplicity expected from their dress, the *petrimetre*’s ‘anxiety over dress [...] excessive spending and participation in the culture of luxury’ was perceived as unmasculine (Haidt 1998: 118). It is thus ironic that *Saca-mantecas* indulges in moralising clichés about the financial recklessness of women. On the subject of Eloísa’s expenses, he cynically declares: ‘Estas mujeres son el diablo con nervios. [...] ¡Qué Madrid este! Todo es una figuración [...] La mayoría de las casas en que dan fiestas están

devoradas por los prestamistas. En otras no se come más que el día en que hay convidados' (*Lo prohibido*: 384).

An Extractive Elite: Corruption in *Lo prohibido*

Saca-mantecas's mixture of exquisite manners and ill-intentioned gossip summarizes the atmosphere of Eloísa's *jueves*. As José María puts it, the principle governing them is that 'las buenas formas redimen los malos actos' (*Lo prohibido*: 255). All of Eloísa's guests are engaged in speculative activities, often markedly immoral, and few of the fortunes in *Lo prohibido* can be deemed to have an honest origin. In this respect, Terry argues that the novel's focal point is not so much wealth in itself as the way in which 'so many of the characters are seen to base their entire sense of values on the pursuit of unearned income' (Terry 1970: 74). Many of the financial opportunities of the Madrid bourgeoisie of *Lo prohibido* are found in Cuba's colonial market, and, as Surwillo argues, the 'wretched – albeit elegant and fabulously well-dressed – spendthrift society' which Galdós depicts, depends to a large extent on sugar and the slave trade (Surwillo 2014: 90). As Surwillo observes, José María refers in the course of his narration to two prominent historical *indianos*, Baltasar Mitjans (*Lo prohibido*: 236) and Antonio López (*Lo prohibido*: 155). Mitjans, a Catalan who opened a trading house in Paris after making his fortune in Cuba, appears in the novel as José María's banker in the French capital. As seen previously, José María cites López as one of the peninsular fortunes which are incomparably greater than his own. López, who acquired the title of Marqués de Comillas in 1878, made his fortune both through slave trafficking and his sugar and coffee plantations (Surwillo 2014: 149). In Surwillo's view, these historical references allow Galdós to set the novel's economic scene 'firmly within the parameters of colonial finance' (Surwillo 2014: 87). As Torrejón Chaves points out, the growth of the sugar trade in Cuba, particularly after the Haitian revolution put an end to slavery in Haiti in 1804, fostered the development of the slave-based plantation system. Despite international pressure, and, from 1865, the work of the Sociedad Abolicionista *Española*, slavery itself was not abolished in Cuba until 1880, when a law was passed which stipulated the progressive emancipation of slaves within a period of eight years (González and Matés 2006: 317-321). It is also

important to note that, as Surwillo points out, slave trafficking continued in Spain until the 1860s despite the Anglo-Spanish treaties of 1817 and 1820, which abolished the trade north and south of the equator respectively. An estimated six hundred thousand Africans were transported to the Spanish Antillean colonies between 1816 and 1867 (Surwillo 2014: 4). Bahamonde and Martínez note that many of the fortunes created in Spain during the second half of the nineteenth century had a colonial, and in particular Cuban, origin. Such was the case with Juan Manuel de Manzanedo, one of the top players in the Madrid financial world during the period 1845-1883, who made his immense fortune in the sugar and slave trade. Back in Madrid he concentrated in the usual businesses of State loans, tobacco concessions, railways and real estate, and, in the customary manner, he was granted the title of Marqués de Manzanedo in 1862 (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 461). Galdós expressed his concern about the plundering of Cuba by different colonial interests in some of his articles. In one of 1884, he reflects: ‘¡Pobre Cuba! Siempre explotada por amigos y enemigos! Has sido la gallina de los huevos de oro, la vaca gorda...Tierra de promisión, has sido esquilada por la codicia de unos y otros’ (*Cronicón*, I: 68).

Two of the unsavoury fortunes of *Lo prohibido*, those of the Marqués de Fúcar and Sánchez Botín, have a Cuban origin. Sánchez Botín is one of the major representatives of the corruption which permeates the novel. José María describes him as ‘un vicioso’ (*Lo prohibido*: 272), and reflects on the ‘desprecio y el asco que [Eloísa] sentía hacia un sujeto tan abominable por todos conceptos’ (*Lo prohibido*: 272). In spite of this, Botín continues to be a regular of the *jueves*. José María stresses both the plundering spirit which guides his Cuban businesses, and his cynical patriotism: ‘Tres veces había desempeñado en Cuba pingües destinos, y cada vez que volvía con media isla entre las uñas, repetía la sagrada fórmula “España derramará hasta la última gota de su sangre en defensa, etcétera...”’ (*Lo prohibido*: 272). Botín’s social rise is described in detail in *La desheredada* by Isidora’s lover Joaquín. His first job involves tampering with provincial electoral registers: ‘resucitaba muertos, enterraba vivos, fabricaba listas, encantaba urnas’ (*La desheredada*: 348). Through political connections he then gets into the railway construction business at the time of its expansion during the late 1850s and early 1860s. Here, the generous government subsidies and loans allow him to do the

construction without the need for upfront capital. In relation to Cuba, Botín's first business consists of buying for a reduced price the salary vouchers – which the government is unable to pay – of the soldiers returning from the Cuban War ‘que llegan aquí muertos de miseria, enfermos y con un papel en el bolsillo’ (*La desheredada*: 348). There are also government contracts, which Joaquín describes as ‘ricas tostadas’ (*La desheredada*: 348). As Joaquín summarizes, Botín is a ‘sultán que tiene las rentas públicas por serrallo’ (*La desheredada*: 349). Despite Eloísa's aversion to Botín, and the fact that she considers him to be ‘muy por bajo de todos los envilecimientos y de todas las prostituciones posibles’ (*Lo prohibido*: 553), she ends up selling herself to him for 120,000 *reales* in order to help José María avert financial ruin (*Lo prohibido*: 607-608). José María is unable to appreciate the self-sacrifice, and feels tainted both by Eloísa's prostitution and by the origin of Botín's money. When, in a display of insincere gratitude, he takes her hand, he feels repulsed by it: ‘olióme [...] a dinero amasado con sangre de negros esclavos, a infamia y grosería, a sordidez y a ojos de cordero agonizante’ (*Lo prohibido*: 610). In Surwillo's view, Eloísa's money makes José María aware of the appalling reality which underpins bourgeois society, and his part in it (Surwillo 2014: 97). As he reflects: ‘Parecíame que los tres, Eloísa, Botín y yo, éramos igualmente despreciables, odiosos y viles, y que formábamos una sociedad de envilecimiento comanditario para socorrernos por turno’ (*Lo prohibido*: 607).

The Marqués de Fúcar's fortune has similar origins to Botín's. In connection with Eloísa's relationship with the Marqués, María Juana confides to José María her inability to understand how her sister can ‘echarse a pechos [...] el carcamal asqueroso del marqués de Fúcar, sólo por estar forrado de oro: ‘¡Un adefesio que había sido negrero en Cuba y contrabandista por alto en España, y que, por añadidura, se teñía la barba!’ (*Lo prohibido*: 419). Like Botín, Fúcar is involved in the government concession business as well as in slavery, and José María reports his visit to the Marqués in Hamburg, where he had gone to arrange ‘contratas de tabacos’ (*Lo prohibido*: 176). The fortune of one of María Juana's *lunes* guests, the extremely rich Barragán, is also partly based on government contracts:

La fortuna de Barragán ha sido uno de los grandes misterios de Madrid. [...] Metióse en no sé qué contratas; hizo préstamos al Tesoro; empezó a crecer como la espuma. El 77 se le citaba como un gran tenedor de valores del

Estado. El 80 eclipsaba con su recargado lujo a muchos que siempre pasaron por muy ricos. El 83 no había ya quien le aguantara. Estaba en el apogeo de la presunción ridícula y de la suficiencia cargante. (*Lo prohibido*: 454-455).

It is worth remembering here that the source of Salamanca's fortune was his acquisition of the salt monopoly concession. However, the specific way in which this fortune was amassed almost overnight is, in Torrente Fortuño's words, 'la mayor incógnita de su vida' (Torrente Fortuño 1969: 159). Torrejón Chaves points out that the practice of *estanco* or state monopoly in the production or sale of certain goods such as salt or tobacco was open to much abuse. As well as the excessive pricing and taxation of the goods, the frequent corruption of the administrators was a major problem. The system was in this way highly oppressive for consumers. The salt monopoly was abolished in 1870. The tobacco monopoly was maintained, however, since, as a result of the budget deficit, the State could not afford the loss of revenue which its abrogation would have entailed (González and Matés 2006: 261; 272). The government granted many other profitable concessions. In this respect, it is noteworthy that, after seeing Fúcar in Hamburg, José María goes to London to meet his friend Villalonga, who has been charged by the government with the 'compra de algunas máquinas de agricultura y de caballos' (*Lo prohibido*: 176). Antonio Flores, in his *cuadro* 'Las fuentes de la riqueza pública', describes the economic possibilities offered by this system during the boom years of 1856-1866, which is also when when Botín, Fúcar and Barragán start to create their fortunes:

Los gobiernos, que tenían la obligación de velar por el bienestar de los pueblos, estaban aburridos porque no sabían cómo dar de fumar al paisano, de comer al militar y de vestir al presidiario [...] y todas estas atenciones, que se llaman servicios públicos, se adjudicaron en pública subasta. Tomó nuestro hombre de ellas las que pudo tomar; traspasó las unas, cedió las otras, interviniendo siempre en tratos alguna prima [...] y recibiendo con toda llaneza, a todas horas, las primas que se le presentaban, se hizo capitalista, y con su crédito y los capitales ajenos, fundó varias sociedades anónimas. (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, II, IV: 238)

Like Torres, Barragán exemplifies the social complexities of upwards mobility. José María is unforgiving of Barragán's uncouthness and self-importance:

Me atacaba los nervios aquel pedazo de bárbaro, que por el hecho de haberse enriquecido de la noche a la mañana, se lo quería saber todo, disputaba a gritos, quería imponer su opinión, se conceptuaba más rico que nadie, y más listo y más agudo y más caballero y rumboso, cuando en realidad era una baldosa con figura humana, grosero, ignorante y sin pizca de hidalguía ni delicadeza. (*Lo prohibido*: 454)

Despite being accepted in the highest financial and political circles by virtue of his money, Barragán's coarseness and linguistic gaffes give much occasion for condescending merriment among María Juana's guests. Galdós explores some of the same social contradictions in the *Torquemada* novels, as we shall see in the next chapter. Barragán's social rise continues in the next generation with the marriage, at the end of the novel, of his eldest daughter to José María's childhood friend Severiano. Despite being a *diputado*, and a man of good social standing, Severiano now faces financial ruin as a consequence of an affair with a lady of voracious appetite for luxury (*Lo prohibido*: 173; 583). Severiano, who has previously made much fun of Barragán's family, now accepts that 'el ser humano tiene el don de acomodarse a todo' (*Lo prohibido*: 616). Thus, unlike Torquemada, Barragán chooses in this merging of money and class a ruined member of the bourgeoisie, rather than one of the aristocracy.

Medina can be seen to exemplify the solid bourgeois virtues lacking in so many other characters. His policy of spending no more than a third of his yearly income stands out within the debt-ridden society of *Lo prohibido*. Despite his growing dislike for Medina, José María does not question his integrity. Thus he rejects rumours that Medina profits from usurious loans to the aristocracy:

Todos los préstamos que Medina había hecho con hipoteca eran con moderado interés. Además, el buen *ordinario* no sofocaba a sus acreedores; concedía plazos y respiros, les perdonaba picos, renunciando a algunas ganancias por no exponerles a la vergüenza pública. (*Lo prohibido*: 466)

José María also approves of Medina's policy, shared by both Salamanca and Rothschild, of only offering financial help to a person in need once, so that 'nadie le cogiese de primo' (*Lo prohibido*: 467).

However, the origins of Medina's fortune are also tainted with corruption. Like many other characters, Medina's father made his money abusing the *contratas* system, in this case the management of transport during the First Carlist War (1833-1840). By deceiving the government about the number of carriages and the quality of the mules, he was able to make millions of *reales*. The ingenuity of Medina's father's swindle, which Eloísa hears from Fúcar, fills her with enthusiasm for the economic possibilities of war. José María reports her comments thus: '¡Lástima que no hubiera Guerra civil! Pues si la hubiera, o te hacías contratista de víveres o perdíamos las amistades' (*Lo prohibido*, 307). It is also worth noting that, notwithstanding Medina's sensible approach to finances, his lending and stock-market activities place him firmly in the world of financial speculation.

The Moral Alternative: Camila as a New Version of the *ángel del hogar*

Blanco argues that Galdós offers a utopian alternative to the competitive and corrupt world of Madrid's high finances in the relationship between Camila and Constantino. In her view, the real passionate love that they feel for each other, and the fact that they can adapt their lifestyle to their limited budget – making do, for instance, with no domestic help when necessary – sets them apart from the other characters (Blanco 2006: 71-72). Aldaraca also stresses the moral high-ground which the couple occupy at the end of the novel, one which contrasts with the physical and emotional degeneration of José María. Camila, despite her unconventional wildness, becomes an incarnation of the *ángel del hogar* in her dedication to her family, whilst Constantino, with Camila's redemptive help, becomes a useful member of society (Aldaraca 1991: 222-223). Moreover, the couple's withdrawal into the intimacy of their family life also distinguishes them from the other characters. In contrast with Eloísa's and María Juana's social gatherings, where the public and the private spheres become undifferentiated, Camila's social evenings remain in the private world of intimate friendship. As José María recounts: 'Solían ir algunos amigos, y charlaban de mil tontadas, o jugaban a la brisca y a la lotería. ¡Cosa más necia no he visto en mi vida' (*Lo prohibido*: 372-373).

The clear moral contrasts which may be inferred from *Lo prohibido* preoccupied Galdós. In a letter to Clarín, he expressed his concern that *Lo prohibido*

suffered from an excessively clear moral message, or, as he put it: ‘una moralidad gruesa que salta a la vista hasta de los más ciegos’ (*Lo prohibido*: 72-73). Despite his own judgement, Galdós avoids this easy morality through complex characterisation and irony. At the end of the novel many of the members of José María’s financial circle rush to his help in order to avert his financial ruin. Among them is the highly cynical Severiano, who, as José María says, ‘se constituyó en guardián de mis intereses, y tomó muy a pecho todo lo concerniente a los negocios míos’ (*Lo prohibido*: 595). José María himself, unlike Torres, never contemplates defaulting on the payment of his debts. In relation to the money owed to his mother’s friends the Pastoras, he comments: ‘Me quedaré sin un real y en situación de pedir limosna como esos infelices lisiados que se arrastran por los caminos; pero las Pastoras cobrarán... ¡Pues no han de cobrar!...’ (*Lo prohibido*: 598). José María’s debts are finally paid, as Severiano says, ‘con la ayuda de todos los amigos’ (*Lo prohibido*: 603). Apart from Medina’s loan, which is offered to José María ‘en las mejores condiciones posibles’ (*Lo prohibido*: 601), the rest of the help is interest-free. His broke friends Severiano and Villalonga manage between them a sum of 160,000 *reales*. María Juana also chips in with the same sum, given without Medina’s knowledge. Eloísa gathers the remaining 200,000 *reales*, partly through her prostitution to Botín and partly by pawning some of her possessions. Her intention is to offer the money, not as a loan, but as ‘restitución’ (*Lo prohibido*: 603-608). José María, for his part, also pays back these loans as soon as his finances are settled (*Lo prohibido*: 619).

José María’s friends’ sense of loyalty to him stands out in the midst of the cynical world they inhabit. Camila’s and Constantino’s kind caring for José María during his final illness cannot in this way be considered unique. The couple are nonetheless rewarded with the inheritance of José María’s remaining fortune, a ‘capital limpio y sano de tres millones de reales’ (*Lo prohibido*: 619), with which they are promoted into Madrid’s money elite. However, as Scanlon points out, the exemplary way in which, on the one hand the Miquis’ virtue is rewarded, and on the other hand José María’s vice is harshly punished through his illness, smacks of parody of the pseudo-Romantic popular novel (Scanlon 1984: 844). This view is strengthened by the way in which José María himself, at the end of his narration and life, mocks the fake saintliness which he had found as a result of his debilitating (and

emasculating) condition. Ironically, he also mocks his own plans to write a moral story based on the lessons which he had learned after a life of vice:

Hasta me pasó por las mientes, en aquellos entusiasmos de mi virtud fiambre, que si recobraba la salud debía escribir una obra sobre los inmensos bienes de la templanza, haciendo ver los perjuicios que para el cuerpo y el alma acarrea la contravención de esta divina ley. (*Lo prohibido*: 612)

It is also worth noting the conspicuous absence of Eloísa's son Rafael from José María's will, which, in view of the numerous occasions in which he expresses a deep fatherly love for the boy (*Lo prohibido*: 335-336; 343; 365-366), casts some doubt over the fairness of his decision. By making Camila and Constantino his sole inheritors, José María is possibly condemning Rafael, who is in line to inherit the Marquesado de Cícero, to a future of titled poverty. A shade of doubt is also cast at the end of the novel over the apparently happy ending for the Miquis. Thus it is clear that they will not be able to live unaffected by the hostile public opinion which believes Camila to have been José María's lover: 'Eran sin duda menos felices, porque eran menos inocentes [...] Los antes descuidados y aturridos habían de vivir ahora precavidísimos, atentos al más leve rumor, súbditos del inmenso y despótico imperio de la opinión' (*Lo prohibido*: 566). In addition, although the Miquis are rewarded with the birth of healthy twins at the end of the novel, their first-born's fatal illness, which brings out an insatiable appetite in him, reflects the society which surrounds his parents. In view of the symbolic meaning which Galdós often attaches to children's illnesses and malformations, it may be inferred that the Miquis cannot completely avoid being affected by their social milieu.

Finally, the implicit denunciation in *Lo prohibido* of the immorality of Spain's economic and public life is in itself shrouded in irony. As José María comments, denouncing the Spanish way of life has become a conversational cliché, one in which María Juana indulges:

Pagaba su tributo a la sátira corriente, que se ha hecho amanerada de tanto pasar y repasar por labios españoles, quiero decir, que daba curso a esas resobadas frases que parecen un fenómeno atmosférico, porque las hallamos diluidas en el aire de nuestro aliento, y en las ondas sonoras que nos rodean: '¡Oh! si aquí se trabajara; si no hubiera tanto vago, tanto noble arruinado que

vive del juego, tanto abogadillo cesante o ambicioso que vive de las intrigas políticas'. (*Lo prohibido*: 146-147)

In a similar vein, José María's cousin Raimundo, a 'talento improductivo' who lives off his *sablazos* to José María and others (*Lo prohibido*: 142), explains the 'decaimiento nacional' and the 'degeneración de la raza' as a consequence of the Spanish 'desprecio de los intereses materiales': 'Tanto nos dijeron "no te cuides de las cosas terrenas" que llegamos a creerlo, y la ociosidad dio a nuestras manos una torpeza que ya no podemos vencer. Claro, sin el estímulo del oro, ¿qué aliciente tiene el trabajo?' (*Lo prohibido*: 268-270). Raimundo's theory is blatantly contradicted by the novel, for it is clear that the characters of *Lo prohibido* do not suffer from any lack of regard for material possessions. He is, however, following a trend which considered Spain's problems to be historical. Cánovas, for instance, ascribes Spain's long-term problems to a series of 'pecados nacionales' in his 1883 biography of his uncle, the author Serafín Estébane: 'nuestra en gran parte nativa pobreza, nuestra falta de espíritu de economía, nuestro desorden administrativo, así en lo público como en lo particular, nuestra prodigalidad viciosa' (cited in *La dinastía* 7-11-83: 501). Galdós's parody of clichés regarding Spanish decadence in *Lo prohibido* does not imply a rejection of concerns such as those expressed by Cánovas. As Davies points out in relation to the *Torquemada* novels, the depiction of Spain as a decadent state links the novels with the topic of *regeneración*, even if no specific references to this are made. In her view, Galdós's intention in these novels was to engage with this idea while at the same time avoiding the commonplaces connected to it (Davies 2007: 86-87). *Lo prohibido* can also be seen in this light, although here Galdós exposes explicitly these commonplaces as banal. As Davies also argues, Galdós encourages in this way a more reflective response from readers (Davies 2007: 99-100).

Conclusion

In his representation of the social ascendancy of the Restoration financial bourgeoisie, Galdós exposes in *Lo prohibido* some of the structural problems that beset the Spanish economic life, in particular, corruption, the excesses of an

economy based on speculation rather than on productive work, and the undermining effects of debt. In no other of Galdós's *Novelas contemporáneas* is the link between the private and the public spheres so clearly conveyed. Corruption is rife in the business world, just as hypocrisy and deceit are prevalent in private relations. The two worlds are often indistinguishable when the business world enters the home and the home becomes a social stage. The world of *Lo prohibido* is socially and economically mobile, but this mobility is fragile and goes downwards as well as upwards. As some fortunes are made in often corrupt ways, others are lost in speculative operations akin to gambling or in extravagant spending. The alternative provided by the Miquis is conservative in outlook. Their ideal family model based on real love and intimacy stands in marked contrast to the prevalent immorality of the society surrounding them. The Miquis, however, do not represent an alternative economic model, other than in their ability to live within their means. They come into their fortune in a socially conservative way, through an inheritance; and they will live off it just as José María intends when he moves to Madrid. The emphasis on rational budget management is, nonetheless, significant, in view of the fact that debt was one of the major problems facing the Spanish economy during the second half of the nineteenth century. Crucially, any overt moral message in *Lo prohibido* is undermined by the irony which permeates the novel, and even the idea of *regeneración* implicit in it is subjected to parody. *Lo prohibido* is a complex novel which encourages the reader to reflect not only on the socio-economic problems exposed in it, but also on the validity of the response to those problems.

Chapter 2

From Usurer to *Marqués*: Lending and Social Advancement in the *Torquemada* Novels

As we saw in the previous chapter, Galdós explores in *Lo prohibido* both the materialistic ethos of the Restoration bourgeoisie and the sources of its wealth, which can be traced to events such as the economic boom of the 1850s, the Cuban colonial trade and the first Carlist War (1833-1839). In the four novels of the *Torquemada* series – *Torquemada en la hoguera* (1889), *Torquemada en la cruz* (1893), *Torquemada en el purgatorio* (1894) and *Torquemada y San Pedro* (1895) – Galdós follows the social ascent of the usurer Torquemada, from his working-class roots to the top layer of the Madrid financial elite. As in the case of the characters whose financial histories are provided by José María in *Lo prohibido*, Torquemada's trajectory parallels the socio-economic transformations which took place in Spain as the Old Regime order gave way to the capitalist system of liberal society. In particular, Galdós highlights the role of Mendizábal's *desamortización* in the making of Spain's new elite, a theme which, as we will see in the next chapter, is also explored in *Ángel Guerra* (1891). The complexity of the *Torquemada* novels allows for multiple interpretations, and they have been studied from many different perspectives: social, psychological, philosophical and religious. Critics such as Scanlon (1976) and Folley (1978) consider that a dichotomy between material and spiritual values underpins the series' narrative, and point to Galdós's indictment in the novels of the inversion of moral values which, in his view, characterizes modern society. More recently, Fuentes Peris (2007) has focused on Galdós engagement in the *Torquemada* novels with contemporary social debates on political economy and public health, in particular, with notions of profit and utility versus waste. This chapter, which explores further socio-economic aspects of the novels, aims to offer a detailed study of the *Torquemada* series in the context of the shifting of power structures which took place in Spain from the 1830s onwards, and which constitute the backbone of the narrative of Torquemada's social ascent.

Usury in Nineteenth-Century Spain

In her study of credit and usury in Spain, Pérez Picazo refers to the second half of the nineteenth century as the 'siglo de la usura'. She argues that the number of usurers, already an established presence in local economies, increased dramatically during this period, as did the volume of their loans (Pérez Picazo 1987: 17). In the case of Madrid, Bahamonde and Toro claim that 'la usura a través de las casas de préstamos o empeños fue la tónica general en el Madrid del siglo XIX' (Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 137). Rueda Laffond, for his part, argues that the role played by personal lenders in the Spanish economy during the second half of the nineteenth century has often been underestimated by scholars, who tend to focus their attention on the more visible and centralized banking system. Tortella, for example, highlights the role of the Bank of Spain, which held around 75% of the country's current account deposits by the end of the century. In his view, modern and developed banking systems need to be varied and competitive, and this concentration points to an only partially modernized banking sector (Tortella 2000: 170-172). However, Rueda Laffond, following the work of Sánchez Albornoz, points out that parallel to the official banks and large credit societies, there were other private institutions, such as the *cajas de ahorro*, private bankers and other lenders, whose often shadowy operations are difficult to specify. These institutions and individuals represented the middle and lower layers of the stratified credit structure, specializing in small short-term loans for clients mostly of the middle and popular classes. As Rueda Laffond also notes, there is little documentation pertaining to these alternative businesses, a fact which can help to explain the tendency to underestimate their economic importance. Nonetheless, he considers that these private businesses, rather than being marginal to the economic development of Spain, were complementary to the official sector and offered services which covered the local, small-scale demand left unattended by the larger banking institutions (Rueda Laffond 2006: 4-5).

An important factor in the spread of private lending businesses during the second half of the nineteenth century was the liberalization of interest rates for private loans. This measure was decreed on 14 March 1856 as part of the Bienio Progresista's financial legislation which, as seen in the previous chapter, played an important role in the modernization of the Spanish economy. The decree put an end to earlier restrictions based on religious considerations about the immorality of

usury. In his presentation to the Cortes Constituyentes of the bill for this liberalization law, Figuerola defended the need to modernize the credit system and to counteract shadowy practices in order to encourage entrepreneurship within a legal frame, arguing that ‘la educación del crédito no está formada en nuestra Patria, pero todo el mundo presta’ (cited by Martínez Andaluz 1986: 492). Pérez Picazo, however, stresses how this modernizing legislation did not preclude the persistence of some old structures, creating a complex hybrid system of regulated and unregulated credit practices (Pérez Picazo 1987: 11). In this respect, Bahamonde and Toro draw attention to the fact that, in addition to the official *casas de préstamos y empeños*, there were other lending businesses which were not officially registered and which dealt mainly in small loans for the lower classes. They also stress the extortionate interest rates imposed on borrowers. An 1883 report from the *gremio de prestamistas* mentions an annual interest rate of sixty per cent. In the case of pawn shops, however, as lenders only paid 5% of the pawned object’s actual value, Bahamonde and Toro conclude that interest rates were truly astronomical. The persistence of these extortionate practices highlights the failure of the Monte de Piedad and the Caja de Ahorros to fulfil the charitable objectives for which they were originally created: to offer cheap pledge loans to those in need and to promote the habit of saving among the working classes. Bahamonde and Toro argue that by the 1870s both the Monte de Piedad and the Caja de Ahorros were operating as ordinary banking establishments aimed primarily at the middle classes. In this way, both institutions had succumbed to the speculative atmosphere of the time to the detriment of the lower classes (Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 137-139). The personal tragedies behind usurious practices are brought to attention by the writer José Siles in an 1877 article in *La Época*, where he describes an auction of unredeemed pledges:

La sección verdaderamente triste [...] es la que enumera los cientos de sábanas y camisas, mantas y colchas, cosas todas que hablan [...] de extrema miseria. Estos lienzos son como los telones, a cuya espalda se desarrollan escenas de sollozos, de caras empalidecidas, de fulguraciones siniestras, dentro de lugares sombríos, desalojados por la felicidad. (Cited by Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 139)

The extent of the increase in private lenders during the second half of the nineteenth century is difficult to quantify. Rueda Laffond notes that, according to the 1863 *Estadística de la Contribución Industrial y de Comercio*, there were 103 *casas de préstamo* in Madrid in that year. Taking into account other sources such as adverts published in the *Diario Oficial de Anuncios de Madrid*, he infers that the number of lenders and intermediaries in the capital during the period 1856-1873 would be well over a thousand (Rueda Laffond 2006: 8). Following the studies of Bahamonde and Martínez, Rueda Laffond also estimates that the total amount Madrid lenders dealt with was extremely large, and that, notwithstanding the spectacular borrowing of some members of the aristocracy, the bulk of the business was concentrated in middle-class loans (Rueda Laffond 1996: 307). Martínez Andaluz, for his part, stresses the comparative safety of investment in the lending business. As loans were ensured by law, default would result in the confiscation of the debtor's property, rather than in financial loss for the lender. In this way, lending could represent a more lucrative business option than being a landlord – even taking into account that extortion of poor tenants was common – or than investing in the volatile Bolsa (Martínez Andaluz 1986: 493).

The Usurer in *Costumbrista* Literature

During the mid-nineteenth century, the expansion of credit was already a concern for the *costumbrista* writers, who express their unease at some of the changes brought about by the development of a capitalist economy. In his *cuadro* 'La bolsa' (1836-1842), Mesonero Romanos satirizes the way in which the availability of credit is mistaken for wealth: 'si no tenemos dinero, tenemos libros y cátedras en que instruimos sobre la *teoría del crédito*, y podemos convencernos por ellos de que el pedir prestado es un signo favorable de riqueza (sobre todo cuando el que pide se propone no pagarlo nunca)' (*Escenas matritenses*: 360). In the same way, Juan de Capua, in his *cuadro* 'El usurero', included in the 1851 compilation *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*, comments on the apparent proliferation of both lenders and borrowers:

Dilatada se ha hecho en nuestras miserias la escala de la usura [...] y á pesar de que con las desdichas han crecido las logrerías, no es fácil determinar si

los logreros se aumentan en proporción a los desdichados, ó los desdichados en proporción de los logreros. Lo cierto es que ya no son contados ni señalados á dedillo estos últimos, porque como el oficio de prestar á logro causa tan poca fatiga, parece que media humanidad [...] se ha dedicado á proporcionar refrescos á la otra media. (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 332)

Juan de Capua then describes the usurer as ‘la misma avaricia personificada, la codicia hecha carne, la sordidez en forma humana’. He denounces the surreptitious way in which the usurer ensures a large profit for himself. In particular, he points to the usurer’s practice of combining capital and interest in the bill of debt in order to conceal the actual interest rate imposed on the borrowers, in such a way that the lender ‘parece que ha prestado sin interes’ and ‘no se le puede probar que abusa’ (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 333). This is the type of practice which contributes to the lack of documentary evidence for alternative lending businesses pointed out by Sánchez Albornoz. Another *costumbrista* writer, Eduardo de Inzal, establishes in his *cuadro* of 1873 ‘El usurero’ a comparison between ‘los usureros de antaño’ and ‘el usurero de hoy’, and expresses unease at the social rise of the previously marginalised usurers, who are now known as ‘hombres que hacen negocios’ (*Madrid por dentro y por fuera*: 185). Whereas both old and new usurers share their ability to ‘despojar al prójimo sin el más mínimo escrúpulo de conciencia’, the modern usurer is ‘más temible que el usurero de antaño, porque no se distingue, como este se distinguía, entre mil hombres honrados’ (*Madrid por dentro y por fuera*: 185; 190). Unlike his predecessors, the modern usurer is not to be found in the ‘miserable y hediondo tabuco donde escondía sus hipócritas harapos el usurero de nuestros abuelos’ (*Madrid por dentro y por fuera*: 185). Now he can be seen among the ‘sociedad más distinguida de la corte’, dressed ‘con lujo insolente, aunque sin elegancia’, and his hypocrisy allows him to ‘ocupar en la sociedad un puesto que, como todo lo que tiene, es usurpado’ (*Madrid por dentro y por fuera*: 186; 190). The implication here is that usury has been rendered acceptable by the developing capitalist society, and that, consequently, there is no longer a barrier to the social advancement of usurers. In the *Torquemada* novels, Galdós exploits to ironic effect this perception that the usurer of tradition has undergone a fundamental transformation in modern society.

Torquemada and the Making of a Modern Usurer

The preoccupation with credit and debt which, as seen in the previous chapter, underpins the narrative of *Lo prohibido*, is also apparent in many of Galdós's other *novelas contemporáneas*. Thus, in *El doctor Centeno* (1883), *La de Bringas* (1884) and *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1887), the corollary of the consumerist lifestyles which many of the characters lead is the figure of the usurious lender, as personified in Don Francisco Torquemada. The identifiable literary type of the usurer of these novels is developed in the four *Torquemada* novels, written between 1889 and 1895, into a full-blown and complex character. Following Suárez's comparative study of Balzac's *Gobseck* (1835) and Galdós's *Torquemada* novels, Fernández Cifuentes argues that the contrast between the two protagonists is defined by the difference in the historical and social circumstances in which the two novels were written. Whereas Balzac stresses and sublimates the generic qualities of *Gobseck*, Galdós, by contrast, focusses on the process of 'desnaturalización' which Torquemada undergoes, and which is at the root of the character's distinctiveness. In this way, Torquemada's departure in the eponymous novels from the long tradition of misers such as *Gobseck*, *Shylock* and *Scrooge* reflects the development of the capitalist society to which he belongs (Fernández Cifuentes 1982: 71-73). The connection between Balzac's usurer and Torquemada is made by Galdós in *El doctor Centeno* – the novel in which Torquemada makes his first appearance – when one of the characters, Arias Ortiz, refers to Torquemada as 'Gobseck' (*El doctor Centeno*: 278). However, in *Torquemada en la hoguera* the narrator states explicitly that Torquemada is a new type of usurer:

Torquemada no era de esos usureros que se pasan la vida multiplicando caudales por el gustazo platónico de poseerlos, que viven sórdidamente para no gastarlos y al morirse quisieran, o bien llevárselos consigo a la tierra, o esconderlos donde alma viviente no los pueda encontrar. No; don Francisco habría sido así en otra época; pero no pudo eximirse de la influencia de esta segunda mitad del siglo XIX, que casi ha hecho una religión de las materialidades decorosas de la existencia. Aquellos avaros de antiguo cuño, que afanaban riquezas y vivían como mendigos y se morían en un camastro

lleno de pulgas y de Billetes de Banco metidos entre la paja, eran los místicos o metafísicos de la usura. (TH: 14)

The suggestion here is that new historical circumstances have produced a new literary type. Yet the idea that there is a clear contrast between the figures of the old ‘avaro’ and the new usurer is contradicted by the irony in the narrator’s subsequent account of Torquemada’s social advancement, which points to a very slow progress out of the squalor which characterizes the usurer of literary tradition:

y si bien es cierto, como lo acredita la Historia, que desde el 51 al 68, su verdadera época de aprendizaje, andaba muy mal trajeado, y con afectación de pobreza, la cara y las manos sin lavar, rascándose a cada instante en brazos y piernas, cual si llevase miseria, el sombrero con grasa, la capa deshilachada; si bien consta también en las crónicas de la vecindad que en su casa se comía de vigilia casi todo el año [...], no es menos cierto que alrededor del 70 la casa estaba ya en otro pie; [...] que don Francisco se mudaba de camisa más de una vez por quincena; que en la comida había menos de carnero que vaca y los domingos se añadía al cocido un despojito de gallina. (TH: 15)

Torquemada’s miserly nature is indeed stressed from the beginning of the novel. The narrator recounts how, during Doña Silvia’s life, the couple were a model of ‘cuantas hormigas hay debajo de la tierra y encima de ella’: ‘Ella defendiendo el céntimo en casa para que no se fuera a la calle, y él barriendo para adentro a fin de traer todo lo que pasara, formaron un matrimonio sin desperdicio’ (TH: 12). Through Tía Roma, Torquemada’s old maid, we learn the extent to which he conformed to the old ‘avaro’ type during his first years in business:

Ahora que está rico no se acuerda de cuando empezaba a ganarlo. Yo sí me acuerdo y me paice que fue ayer cuando le contaba los garbanzos a la cuitada de Silvia y todo lo tenía bajo llave, y la pobre estaba descomida, trajinada y ladrando de hambre. (TH: 68)

Torquemada’s breaking out of the traditional usurer’s mould is not straightforward, and his attitude to change is ambivalent. His often reluctant acceptance of the

introduction of some middle-class refinement in his household is emphasized by the narrator's irony:

Torquemada representaba la idea conservadora; pero transigía, ¡pues no había de transigir!, doblegándose a la lógica de los tiempos. Apechugó con la camisa limpia cada media semana [...] y no tuvo nada que decir de las modestas galas de Rufina y de su hermanito [...] ni de otros muchos progresos que se fueron metiendo en casa a modo de contrabando. (TH: 16)

Moreover, as the narrator reports, Torquemada cannot easily discard the old usurer's habit of denying his wealth, and thus continues to indulge in the 'amaneramiento de decir siempre que los tiempos eran muy malos, pero muy malos; el lamentarse de la desproporción entre sus míseras ganancias y su mucho trabajar' (TH: 17). On the other hand, he is not immune to social pride, particularly as he realizes that his improved appearance helps to bring better business:

Y vio muy pronto don Francisco que aquellas novedades eran buenas y que su hija tenía mucho talento, porque..., vamos, parecía cosa del otro jueves...; echábase mi hombre a la calle y se sentía, con la buena ropa, más persona que antes; hasta le salían mejores negocios, más amigos útiles y explotables. Pisaba más fuerte, tosía más recio, hablaba más alto [...] notándose con bríos para sustentar una opinión cualquiera, cuando antes, por efecto, sin duda, del mal pelaje y de su rutinaria afectación de pobreza, siempre era de la opinión de los demás. (TH: 16)

Despite this social betterment and increased self-confidence, the narrator is careful to explain that 'en su carácter había algo resistente a las mudanzas de formas impuestas por la época', and that, apart from the improved quality of his clothes, 'Torquemada era el mismo que conocimos en casa de doña Lupe *la de los Pavos*; en su cara la propia confusión extraña de lo militar y lo eclesiástico, el color bilioso [...] y todo él craso, resbaladizo y repulsivo' (TH: 17). In other words, beneath the veneer of his improved appearance, the prototype persists. Torquemada's originality lies precisely in the tension between the characteristics of the traditional literary type of usurer and the demands placed on that type by the society in which he lives. As Fernández Cifuentes points out, Galdós's usurer is defined both by his efforts to transform the model to which he originally belongs, and also by his failure to carry out this

transformation successfully (Fernández Cifuentes 1982: 74). In the same vein, Hall emphasizes the incompleteness of what he calls, following Eoff, Torquemada's process of 'socialization'. Despite his susceptibility to social influences and the deep effect of these on his personality, Torquemada cannot fully 'emerge from 'the role of hardened usurer in which he is cast' (Hall 1970: 139-141; 152).

Whereas Torquemada finds it difficult to assimilate some of the social requirements of his incorporation into the middle class, his adjustment to the new economic circumstances of capitalism is smooth. Already in *Torquemada en la hoguera* he appears not only as a lender but also as a proud 'propietario y rentista' (*TH*: 17) and his financial success is owed to both activities. Torquemada's investment in real estate is in itself a departure from the traditional type of usurer. As Juan de Capua states in his aforementioned *cuadro*, the 'usurero propiamente dicho, ó que no conoce otro medio de subsistir que este amaño' is the one that 'una vez reunido un capitalito no lo emplea en nada' (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* 1851: 333). As is often the case in Galdós's novels, the origins of Torquemada's wealth are provided in great detail. Thus the narrator reports that, with the money amassed from the early 1850s through his lending activities Torquemada was in a position, by 1868, to invest in a *casa de corredor* in the outskirts of Madrid with 24 rooms for poor tenants. This property provides a monthly rent of 1300 *reales* (325 *pesetas*), which corresponds to around seven per cent of the invested capital (*TH*: 10). By 1874 Torquemada had doubled his 1868 capital and his finances were further boosted by the political system of *turnos*, as civil servants out of *cesantía*, who 'salían de la oscuridad famélicos', were always in need of loans in order to finance the trappings of their social upgrade: 'Al entrar en el gobierno, en 1881, los que tanto tiempo estuvieron sin catarlo, otra vez Torquemada en alza: préstamos de lo fino, adelantos de lo gordo y vamos viviendo' (*TH*: 11). He could now invest in another property, this time one 'de buena vecindad, casi nueva, bien acondicionada para inquilinos modestos, y que si no rentaba más que un tres y medio a todo tirar, en cambio su administración y cobranza no darían las jaquecas de la cansada finca dominguera' (*TH*: 11). In this way, renting to poor tenants renders Torquemada a much higher profit than renting to the lower middle classes, despite the 'insolvencias inevitables' to be expected from the lower social group (*TH*: 11). The implication is

that Torquemada can cram poorer tenants into smaller rooms, and does not need to keep their building in good repair.

According to Bahamonde and Toro, the situation for poor tenants in Madrid during the second half of the nineteenth century was aggravated by the increase in population caused mainly by migration from the provinces, which resulted in overcrowding in *casas de vecindad* (Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 102). An 1862 article in the *Diario de Avisos de Madrid* denounces that landlords not only benefit from the ‘alquiler subidísimo’ imposed on tenants but also from the interest they draw from the tenants’ one-month deposit: ‘De aquí resulta que los caseros son verdaderamente felices; los que llevan el muerto son los inquilinos’ (cited by Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 193). In her study of Madrid landlords during the Restoration period, Isabel Chumillas argues that the profit made annually by a landlord from one building of no great quality would, at the very least, equal the average Madrid annual salary per household, which she estimates at around 1300 *pesetas* (5200 *reales*) (Chumillas 2002: 20-21). From this perspective, Torquemada’s much higher annual profit of 3900 *pesetas* from his *casa corredor* suggests very unjust terms of tenancy, if not extortion. At least until he decides to be charitable in order to save his son Valentín, leniency, indeed, is not one of Torquemada’s qualities. As the narrator explains: ‘los pobres inquilinos que tenían la desgracia de no poder ser puntuales andaban desde el sábado por la tarde con el estómago descompuesto, porque la adusta cara, el carácter férreo del propietario no concordaban con la idea que tenemos del día de fiesta’ (TH: 10-11).

The poor, however, are not the only victims of Torquemada. His flat in Calle de San Blas is filled with luxury objects such as ‘muebles, tapices y otras preciosidades adquiridas en almonedas o compradas por un grano de *anís* a deudores apurados’ (TC: 113). As Juan de Capua observes in ‘El usurero’, usurers operate within the whole social spectrum, benefiting equally from both the poor and the wealthy:

sorben los haberes del pudiente y chupan los sudores del infeliz, porque al grande que ha agotado sus fuerzas luchando con la elevada atmósfera en que vive, le prestan auxilio [...] para que siga hasta derrumbarse en su eminencia, y al pequeño que surca desfallecido en la hondonada, le van adelantando su

mísero alimento hasta que se estrella en el primer escollo. [...] No es fácil averiguar de cuál de estas dos clases saca mas provecho el Usurero; porque si á la primera merma anticipos mas considerables, á la segunda, como mas dilatada, cercena mayor número de socorros. (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 332-333)

Torquemada's debtors are always his victims in that they contribute to the amassing of his fortune 'con su sangre y sus huesos' (*TH*: 10) but they are not free from blame. They are 'sujetos diversos que no aciertan a resolver el problema aritmético en que se funda la existencia social, y otros muy perdidos, muy faltos, muy destornillados de cabeza o rasos de moral, tramposos y embusteros' (*Torquemada en la hoguera*: 10). The social pretensions that Galdós explores in *La desheredada*, *Lo prohibido* or *La de Bringas* among other novels are at the root of Torquemada's financial success. Thus Isidora's unwillingness to live within her means, as it is related in *La desheredada*, places her at Torquemada's mercy in *Torquemada en la hoguera*. Don Juan, one of Torquemada's debtors in *Torquemada en la hoguera*, also contributes to the usurer's wealth with his inability to keep control of his finances. As the narrator explains: 'Las relaciones entre la víctima y el inquisidor databan de larga fecha, y las ganancias obtenidas por éste habían sido enormes, porque el otro era débil [...] y se dejaba desollar [...] como si hubiera nacido para eso'. Don Juan's large family, and the social aspirations of his wife, who has 'unos condenados *jueves* para reunir y agasajar a la mejor sociedad', are partly responsible for Don Juan's debt problems. As a result, his money runs 'como un acero [...] hacia el imán del maldecido prestamista' (*TH*: 49-50).

As has often been noted, Torquemada's half-hearted attempts at compassion towards his debtors are unsuccessful, as he continues to be unwittingly dominated by the avarice of his nature and his business sense. Characteristically, Torquemada's take on charity is business-like. He suspects Valentín's illness to be retribution for his past actions: 'He faltado a la Humanidad, y esa muy tal y cual me las cobra ahora con los réditos atrasados' (*TH*: 31). As a consequence, he believes that the boy's illness can be redressed by performing acts of charity as a way of balancing the account. He goes in search of beggars 'con paso de inglés tras su víctima' (*TH*: 41), although in this case he is not the creditor (or 'inglés') but the debtor, paying back with good deeds. However, his two attempts at charitable loans cannot be taken at

face value. Even though he offers his debtor Don Juan a loan at a progressively decreasing interest of twelve, five and zero per cent – which is nonetheless rejected – Torquemada takes note of the luxurious contents of his client’s house while waiting for him (*TH*: 51-52). It is clear that Torquemada will not take a loss. Likewise, the interest-free loan of 3000 *reales* to the impoverished Isidora, of which she only receives 2800, works patently in Torquemada’s favour, as the five paintings by Isidora’s lover Martín which Torquemada takes ‘como recuerdo’ are ostensibly worth much more than the loan (*TH*: 58-60).

Torquemada as a Modern Inquisitor

The image of Torquemada as an inquisitor – like his namesake the fifteenth-century Dominican friar and Grand Inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada – is suggested in the first paragraph of *Torquemada en la hoguera*, even before he is identified as the subject of the narration:

Voy a contar cómo fue al quemadero el inhumano que tantas vidas infelices consumió en llamas [...] cómo vino el fiero sayón a ser víctima; cómo los odios que provocó se le volvieron lástima, y las nubes de maldiciones arrojaron sobre él lluvia de piedad. (*TH*: 9)

The irony of Torquemada’s fate is also revealed in this first paragraph. Not only will Torquemada the torturer become a victim himself, but his fate will bring about the compassion of both victims and readers. As Davies points out, the inquisitor and the modern usurer are morally comparable in their ability to inflict suffering as representatives of the dominant power structures of their time, the Church and money respectively (Davies 2002: 53). Folley notes that the idea of the nineteenth century usurer as a modern kind of inquisitor appears already in Balzac’s previously mentioned *Gobseck*. Here the usurer himself explains to Derville how Paris usurers regularly attend a secret tribunal where financial information about members of society is shared, so that the usurers can efficiently judge potential clients. The power exercised by them is compared by Gobseck to that wielded in the past by the Holy Office (*Gobseck*: 14). As Folley argues, this analogy reflects the way in which money has replaced religion in nineteenth-century society. In this respect, he notes

the clerical appearance that both Gobseck and Torquemada share. Gobseck looks like a ‘vieux dominicain’ whereas Torquemada’s ecclesiastical appearance is often cited (Folley 1978: 41-42).

As literary tradition demands, Gobseck is of Jewish origin. In the case of Torquemada, although he is not explicitly referred to as being of Jewish descent, Schyfter argues that this idea is suggested throughout the four novels. Torquemada’s namesake, the inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada, was allegedly of *converso* origin, and Torquemada himself is referred to as ‘judío’, in reference to his miserly ways, by the narrator and other characters throughout the novel (*TH*: 49 and 63; *TP*: 341). In her view, Galdós often exploits the literary convention of the Jewish usurer to humorous effect, as, for example, in the use of porcine references (*TC*: 252; *TS*: 604). More generally, Schyfter argues that the image of the *converso* as an outsider trying to break into Spanish society fits well with that of the marginalised usurer. Despite Torquemada’s progress at social assimilation into a higher class, he remains ‘the eternal outsider and stranger in a world that he both desires and hates’ (Schyfter 1978: 61). Thus Schyfter’s analysis presents a different interpretation of Torquemada’s complex process of ‘socialization’ as seen by Eoff and Hall. For her, the social and psychological tensions which Torquemada experiences, and which are the result both of his ambiguous role in society and his own social insecurity, are reminiscent of those experienced in the past by Spain’s *conversos*’ (Schyfter 1978: 55-61).

Despite his social progress in *Torquemada en la hoguera*, Torquemada continues to conform to the traditional type of usurer in the discrepancy which still exists between his wealth and his social position. In the later three *Torquemada* novels Galdós explores the contradictions that arise in the usurer as both his wealth and his social status increase. The question of whether there is thematic continuity between *Torquemada en la hoguera* and the other novels in the series has attracted some critical attention. For scholars such as Casaldueiro, *Torquemada en la hoguera* is thematically different from the other three novels and must be seen as independent from them. Hall, however, argues that there is narrative unity in the account of the progression of Torquemada’s career as it is developed throughout the four novels (Hall 1970:137-138). It is clear that the narration of Torquemada’s social advancement, which culminates with his ennoblement in *Torquemada y San Pedro*,

begins in *Torquemada en la hoguera*, when the usurer's miserly living is slowly left behind and he begins to assimilate to the middle class. Moreover, the purpose stated by the narrator in the first paragraph of *Torquemada en la hoguera*, that of narrating the exemplary story of the torturer who turns into victim, is patently applicable to the other three novels. The death of Torquemada's beloved son Valentín in the first novel is followed by that of his second wife Fidela in *Torquemada y San Pedro*. He must also endure the progressive crushing of his nature as he succumbs to the social and economic pressures imposed on him by Fidela's sister Cruz. These pressures can be seen as contributing to his final illness. The titles of the novels, suggesting steps in Torquemada's personal Calvary, enforce the view of thematic unity.

The Edifying Influence of Good Society: Torquemada Gets an Education

Torquemada's complex transformation, from his still modest middle-class position at the end of *Torquemada en la hoguera* into a prominent member of the social and economic Madrid elite, is prompted by his contact with the aristocracy. In *Torquemada en la cruz*, Torquemada's encounter with the impoverished but aristocratic Cruz del Águila at Doña Lupe's wake spurs in him a desire to better himself. Cruz's aristocratic air produces in him a 'turbación infantil' and he becomes both self-conscious of his own social shortcomings and defensive of his dignity as a wealthy man. As the narrator explains:

Era hombre muy pagado de las buenas formas y admirador sincero de las cualidades que no poseía, entre las cuales contaba, en primer término, con leal modestia, la soltura de modales y el arte social de los cumplidos. Pensó que la tal doña Cruz habría bajado las escaleras riéndose de él a todo trapo [...] Francamente, él tenía su puntillo de amor propio, como cualquier hijo de vecino, y su dignidad y todos los perendengues de un sujeto merecedor de ocupar puesto honroso en la sociedad. Poseía fortuna suficiente (bien ganadita con su industria) para no hacer el monigote delante de nadie, y eso de ser él personaje de sainete no le entraba... ¡Cuidado! (*Torquemada en la cruz*: 90)

Thus Torquemada becomes aware of the need to learn social skills or ‘política’ in order to adjust his social position to his wealth: ‘Ánimo, Francisco, que a nuevas posiciones, nuevos modos, y el rico no es bien que haga malos papeles’ (*TC*: 91). One of Torquemada’s first resolutions is to improve his speech: ‘Hay que mirar lo que se parla, so pena de no poder meter el cuevo en cotarro de gente fina’ (*TC*: 91). In this respect, Hall points out that the evolution of Torquemada’s language throughout the last three of the novels is one of the main devices which Galdós uses as an indicator of his social development (Hall 1970: 142-143). As the narrator observes, Torquemada’s transformation is also marked by his ‘reformas en el vestir’ (*TC*: 138). On this subject, Folley highlights the way in which the narrator’s sarcastic descriptions of Torquemada’s attempts at middle-class elegance point to the superficial and deceptive nature of his social development (Folley 1972: 33-34). Nevertheless, and despite Torquemada’s resistance to many of the changes later imposed on him by Cruz, it is clear that he wishes to improve his social standing, and that he is receptive to a social education. His association with the Águila family and their friend Donoso immediately inflates Torquemada’s sense of his own social worth. After his first evening in their company, he feels that ‘todas las personas de su conocimiento que aquel día vio, parecióronle de una tosquedad intolerable. Algunas le daban asco’ (*TC*: 131). Torquemada’s daughter Rufinita, whose newly acquired refinement had previously impressed him, is now also a target of his contempt: ‘¡Pero qué facha traes! Hasta me parece que hueles mal. Eres muy ordinaria, y tu marido el cursi más grande que conozco’ (*TC*: 132).

Torquemada’s encounter with Cruz also makes him aware of the need to adapt his usurer’s ways to the higher social status he now desires. Hence, he feels inspired to have ‘un rasgo’ and make his loan to Cruz interest-free:

Ya era tiempo de tirar para caballero, con pulso y medida, ¡Cuidado!, y de presentarse ante el mundo, no ya como el prestamista sanguijuela, que no va más que a chupar, a chupar, sino como un señor de su posición que sabe ser generoso cuando le sale de las narices de serlo [...] Porque las circunstancias habían cambiado para él con el fabuloso aumento de riquezas; se sentía vagamente ascendido a una categoría social superior; llegaban a su nariz tufos de grandeza [...] Imposible afianzarse en aquel estado superior sin que sus costumbres variaran, y sin dar un poco de mano a todas aquellas artes

innobles de la tacañería. ¡Si hasta para el negocio le convenía una miaja de rumbo y liberalidad [...]!’ (TC: 110)

The Águilas’ loyal friend Donoso becomes Torquemada’s guide during the usurer’s period of ‘metamorfosis’ (TP: 314). Torquemada is fascinated by Donoso’s manners, language and elegant style and finds in him a suitable social role model and ‘director espiritual’ (TC: 130). As the narrator explains:

Dando mentalmente gracias a Dios por haberle deparado en el señor de Donoso el modelo social más de su gusto, don Francisco se proponía imitarle fielmente en aquella transformación de su personalidad que le pedían el cuerpo y el alma. (TC: 123)

It is Donoso who encourages Torquemada to set aside the affectation of poverty and start living according to his means: ‘A qué hacer un misterio de la riqueza bien ganada? [...] No; cada cual debe vivir en armonía con sus posibles, y así tiene derecho a exigirlo la sociedad. Viva el jornalero como jornalero, y el capitalista como capitalista’ (TC: 126-127). Donoso reasons that, as a representative of the ‘clase dirigente’, a wealthy man must contribute, with his prudent but class-appropriate spending, to the development of the nation’s trade and industry. Moreover, he has a duty to occupy a fitting place in the ‘cuadro social’ and, in this way, to help sustain social order ‘contra los embates del proletariado envidioso’ (TC: 127-128). As well as providing the ideological background for Torquemada’s social ascent, Donoso has a practical and crucial role on the development of Torquemada’s financial ideas. Before they meet, Torquemada already possesses enormous wealth, which is spread in a variety of conservative investments such as property and government bonds as well as in loans. As the narrator reports:

Poseía casas, tierras, valores del Estado, créditos mil, todos cobrables, dineros colocados con primera hipoteca, dineros prestados a militares y civiles con retención de paga, cuenta corriente en el Banco de España; tenía cuadros de gran mérito, tapices, sinfín de alhajas valiosísimas. (TC: 110)

It is Donoso, however, who introduces Torquemada to the world of high finances:

Donoso le había ensanchado las ideas respecto al préstamo [...] Aprendió nuevos modos de colocar el dinero en mayor escala, y fue iniciado en

operaciones lucrativas sin ningún riesgo. Próceres arruinados le confiaron su salvación, que era lo mismo que entregársele atados de pies y manos; sociedades en decadencia le cedían parte de las acciones a precio ínfimo, con tal de asegurar sus dividendos, y el Estado mismo le acogía con benignidad. Todo el mecanismo del Banco, que para él había sido un misterio, le fue revelado por Donoso, así como el manejo de la Bolsa, de cuyas ventajas y peligros se hizo cargo al instante con instinto seguro. (TC: 138)

It is worth noting that these businesses, like those of the bourgeoisie of *Lo prohibido*, are all based on debt and speculation. As seen in the first chapter, public debt represented a high proportion of stock-market investment (Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 25). As González and Matés point out, the financial operations involving the Banco de España were for the most part also closely connected to the management of the national debt through the creation of money, rather than to any investment in trade, industry or agriculture (González and Matés 2012:368). Thus, as the narrator observes, Torquemada's new financial activities represent an extension rather than a departure from his original lending business (TC: 138). Moreover, this expansion into the 'amplio terreno del negocio grande' does not prompt him to abandon the 'negocios oscuros, más bien subterráneos' associated with personal loans (TP: 335). As the narrator explains:

En su nueva vida dio de mano a varios chanchullos del género sucio y chalanesco, porque no era cosa de andar en tales tratos cuando se veía caballero y persona de circunstancias; pero otros los mantuvo religiosamente, porque no había de tirar por la ventana el hermoso líquido que arrojaban. (TP: 336)

In this way Torquemada keeps six authorised 'casas de préstamos', which make loans promptly at an annual interest of sixty per cent – this is, as noted before, the interest which Bahamonde finds in an 1883 report from the lenders' guild. Torquemada tries to keep these businesses hidden from the Águila sisters and Donoso 'como se oculta un defecto vergonzoso, o una deformidad repugnante' (TP: 336). Once Cruz finds out about these loan shops, and in order to get Torquemada to sell them, she appeals not to the immorality of usurious interest, but to the lack of

social propriety or ‘decoro’ (*TP*: 341). Cruz, in fact, condones usury as a way of getting on to the money ladder:

Respeto [...] los procederés viles para ganar dinero cuando de otra manera no era fácil ganarlo [...] pero hoy, señor don Francisco, hoy, que no necesita usted descender [...] a tan vil terreno, ¿por qué no traspasa esos ... establecimientos, dejándolos en las manos puercas que para andar en ellas han nacido?... Las de usted son bien limpias hoy, y usted mismo lo comprende así. (*TP*: 337-338)

The hypocrisy of Cruz’s disdain for small scale lending is emphasized by Torquemada’s argument that the business carried out in a ‘casa de préstamos’ is as honest as that performed by the ‘reverendísimo Banco de España’, the only difference being that ‘en los ventanales magníficos del Banco no se ven capas colgadas’ (*TP*: 341). As Folley points out, the typically Spanish cape came to be associated with moneylending due to the fact that it was frequently pawned during the summer months (Folley 1972: 36). Thus Torquemada himself points to the idea that, as Scanlon puts it, ‘the banker is only a glorified moneylender’ (Scanlon 1976: 269). From this perspective, the transformation of Torquemada from petty usurer to high financier is indeed one of scale rather than substance.

Speculation, Corruption and the Role of the State in Torquemada’s Ascent

Morality is certainly not a requirement for the world of high finances in the *Torquemada* series. Torquemada’s new associate Don Juan Gualberto Serrano represents the sleaze and hypocrisy of this world. As is the case with Torquemada, and with many of the members of the financial set in *Lo prohibido*, his fortune was amassed during the speculative boom of the 1850s and early 1860s, particularly through the abuse of government contracts. The narrator recounts how he enriched himself considerably during the five-year government of O’Donnell’s Unión Liberal (1858-1863), and then ‘la pícará revolución y la guerra carlista acabaron de cubrirle el riñón’ (*TP*: 334). Among other businesses, Serrano ‘se había entretenido [...] en calzar a los soldados con zapatos de suela de cartón, o en darles de comer alubias picadas y bacalao podrido’. His numerous connections in high places protect him

from the legal implications of his ‘travesuras’. He is, however, keen on the word ‘moralidad’, and while his associates ‘no se acordaban para nada de tal palabreja, don Juan Gualberto no la soltaba de sus labios’ (TP: 334-335).

Torquemada also takes part in the profitable and corrupt business of government concessions. As noted in the previous chapter, the *estanco* system resulted in onerous prices for consumers and was open to extensive abuse. In particular, the state monopoly on salt and tobacco, the two most profitable *estancos* for the government, were the object of both popular opposition and political debate throughout the nineteenth century. (González and Matés 2006: 261-273). As we have also seen in the first chapter, José María recounts in *Lo prohibido* how, in association with Torres, Torquemada had been able to secure huge profits by abusing his contract for the supply of meat to the provincial hospital for the dying during the 1860s. In *Torquemada en el purgatorio*, the narrator describes Torquemada’s involvement in the tobacco concession business. Ironically, it is Cruz who incites Donoso to introduce Torquemada into this infamous trade (TP: 326) and, in association with Serrano, the usurer is quick to exploit its financial possibilities. Despite the fact that their tobacco seemed ‘basura barrida de las calles de Madrid’ (TP: 394), Serrano’s and Torquemada’s connections in the Administración ensure that the product is accepted. These shady deals allow them to ‘meter el brazo hasta más arriba del codo’ in gain (TP: 352).

Another inevitable business for Torquemada which is, again, a common source of bourgeois wealth in *Lo prohibido*, is the railway. The investment here, suggested by Serrano, is also of a speculative nature. This ‘buena jugada’ consists of buying all the shares of the railway from Villafranca to Minas de Berrocal in Torquemada’s native El Bierzo, only to get rid of them immediately after ‘hacerlas subir, por las artes que a tales combinaciones se aplican, hasta las nubes’ (TP: 394). Torquemada’s success at the *Bolsa* is also spectacular, and his investments ‘eran la clave de casi todas las jugadas de importancia que allí se hacían’. Hence, Torquemada’s fortune ‘iba creciendo como la espuma, en progresión descomunal’ (TP: 395). Thus the activities in which Torquemada participates fit the pattern followed by the financial bourgeoisie of the second half of the nineteenth century, as seen in the first chapter. Torquemada is, in this way, a representative of what Bahamonde and Toro call Madrid’s ‘burguesía agiotista o especuladora’, which

began to develop during the 1840s and which reached its peak during the Restoration period (Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 21-22). An 1858 article in the *Gaceta de los caminos de hierro* denounces that capital in Spain is directed to either *rentismo* or speculation:

En España se considera el capital bajo un punto de vista completamente distinto que en otras naciones. Aquí el capital es sinónimo de ahorro inmobiliario, destinado exclusivamente a producir una renta [...]; si alguna vez se expone es para correr los riesgos de la usura o los albuces del juego; nunca para que se reproduzca por medio del progresivo y regular desarrollo de la industria. (Cited by Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 22)

In Hall's view, Donoso acts as a 'symbolic catalytic agent' for Torquemada's rapid social and economic ascent (Hall 1970: 150). The word 'symbolic' is particularly apt, as there is an ethereal quality about him. Donoso does not profit from any of the financial activities in which he instructs Torquemada to get involved: 'en la intervención de Donoso en los tratos torquemadescos resplandecía siempre el más puro desinterés. Habiéndole proporcionado dos o tres negocios de gran monta, no quiso cobrarle corretaje ni cosa que lo valiera (*TC*: 138). This is particularly surprising in view of the fact that Donoso's considerable annual pension of 36,000 *reales* (*TC*: 120) as a retired high-level and indispensable *funcionario de Hacienda*, cannot cover all his expenses. Thus his numerous financial responsibilities cause him to incur a debt, an anomalous situation which 'pugnaba con los hábitos de toda su vida' (*TC*: 168). As well as the expenses resulting from his wife's many maladies, Donoso helps to sustain the impoverished Águila family, and even dedicates three quarters of his income to help with the cost of their on-going lawsuit concerning some family property (*TC*: 151; 166-167). There is also an ironic discrepancy between Donoso's meticulous honesty and the corruption of the financial set in whose midst, nonetheless, he moves at his ease. His integrity is qualified by the narrator thus:

Era de intachable integridad, formulista, eso sí, y sectario rabioso de la ortodoxia administrativa, hasta el punto de que su honradez y escrupulosidad habían hecho no pocas víctimas. Él no se lucraba; pero por salvar los dineros del Fisco habría pegado fuego a media España. (*TP*: 333-334).

Teresa Fuentes sees in Donoso a ‘supreme representative of industrial capitalism’ (Fuentes 2007: 10). This view, however, seems difficult to defend since the businesses to which Donoso introduces Torquemada are essentially speculative. Rather, as a retired civil servant, Donoso serves as a link between the State and businessmen such as Torquemada. His connections in the Ministerio de Hacienda, where the minister and he treat each other ‘con familiaridad como antiguos colegas’, ensure that Torquemada is well received there (*TP*: 332). In this respect, Tortella points to the common practice among nineteenth-century Spanish businessmen of seeking state protection ‘in order to increase profits and shelter themselves from competition’ (Tortella 2000: 207). As seen previously, the system of government contracts in which Torquemada is involved is representative of this collusion between State and speculators. There is therefore a suggestion that, in a manner not dissimilar to that adopted by his beloved Administración, the scrupulous Donoso tolerates and thus condones the corruption taking place under his watch. It is also noteworthy that, while profitable connections between the Ministry and wealthy financiers are established, the minister is presented, like Donoso, as a man of unquestionable integrity but set on squeezing the tax-payer to the utmost. He is described as a ‘tacaño de la hacienda pública, recaudador a raja tabla y verdugo del contribuyente, en quien veía siempre al enemigo que hay que perseguir y reventar a todo trance’. He is a man, therefore, who ‘concordaba en ideas y carácter con nuestro tacaño’ (*TP*: 332). Galdós’s criticism of the role of the State in the elevation of a small speculative elite at the expense of the many is clearly conveyed here.

The Profitable Business of Lending to the Ruined Aristocracy

It is not only the middle and lower classes which fall victim to the speculative bent of the financial elite in the *Torquemada* novels. One crucial aspect of Torquemada’s financial operations consists of lending to members of the aristocracy and managing their debt. Torquemada’s relationship with the ruined Águila family starts with a loan. However, it is the case of the Duque de Gravelinas, which is referred to throughout the last three novels, that is particularly significant in this respect. It is, once again, Donoso who introduces Torquemada into this business, which consists of the ‘arreglo de la arruinada casa de Gravelinas con sus acreedores’ (*TC*: 140; *TP*:

354). Under Torquemada's arrangement, the Duque is dispossessed of his patrimony and ends up in Biarritz living off a small pension 'que le pasaba el sindicato de acreedores' (*TS*: 504). Torquemada's profit from this business is substantial, as Cruz reminds him: '¡si en el negocio con la casa del duque, comprendido el palacio y las fincas rústicas, has ganado el oro y el moro!' (*TP*: 458). Torquemada's dealings with the Duque culminate with his reluctant purchase, under Cruz's instruction, of the Palacio de Gravelinas, which is valued at ten million *reales*. In this way, the Gravelinas family's patrimony passes on to the new capitalist Torquemada. The theme of the enrichment of the new financial elite at the expense of the ruined nobility is already present in *Lo prohibido*. In connection with Cristóbal Medina's extensive knowledge of the financial situation of members of the aristocracy such as Pepito Trastamara, the stock-broker Torres comments:

Cristóbal tiene motivos para saber cómo andan las cajas de la grandeza. Las mermas de aquellas casas son los crecimientos de ésta. Figúrese usted que Cristóbal tiene una pajita en la boca, el otro extremo cae en la contaduría de Pepito Trastamara. (*Lo prohibido*: 451).

The same idea is expressed in *Torquemada y San Pedro* as regards Torquemada's gain from the financial ruin of the Duque de Gravelinas, whom the narrator describes as a 'desamortizador práctico' because of his immoderate spending habits:

Al fin y a la postre, hubo de sucumbir el buen caballero a la ley del siglo, por la cual la riqueza inmueble de las familias históricas va pasando a una segunda aristocracia, cuyos pergaminos se pierden en la oscuridad de una tienda o en los repliegues de la industria usuraria. (*TS*: 504)

As Bahamonde and Martínez point out, the abolition in 1836 of the *mayorazgo* system, which had ensured until then the perpetuation and expansion of the patrimonies of the nobility, meant that the often indebted aristocracy could now sell their land and property freely in order to restore their finances. Over time, this process resulted in the partial transfer of the nobility's patrimony into the hands of the emerging bourgeoisie (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 225-226). In his article 'Vida de sociedad', Galdós relates the dispersion of aristocratic patrimonies both to disentanglement and the abolition of *mayorazgo*: 'De las grandes casas nobles, apenas hay dos o tres que no se hayan desmembrado ya, las unas por las dilapidaciones, las

otras por el desgaste natural de las cosas humanas, todas ellas por la ley de los mayorazgos y la desvinculación' (*Fisonomías sociales*: 122). However, in Bahamonde's and Martínez's view, cases like those of the Duque de Osuna and the Conde de Altamira, where almost their whole patrimony passed on to lenders and businessmen were rare. They argue that the aristocracy often benefited from entering the market forces, as their loss of patrimony was compensated by a reduction in the volume of their debt. They were now also free to demand higher rents from property and land, to the detriment of the tenants (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 451).

In his article 'El coleccionista', published in *La Prensa* in 1893, Galdós addressed the subjects of aristocratic profligacy and bankruptcy in connection with the death of the 12th Duque de Osuna, Don Mariano Téllez de Girón, who died in 1882 in complete financial ruin. As Galdós comments, the Duke was famed for his extravagant living:

No se comprende que se pueda gastar tanto dinero sino arrojándolo a puñados a la calle. Y, sin embargo, desde hace cincuenta años, los Estados de Osuna venían gravándose con hipotecas y enredándose en empeños que al fin dieron al traste con tan valiosa propiedad. (*Fisonomías sociales*: 206)

Now, collectors were having a 'plato de gusto con la venta de las últimas riquezas de la casa de Osuna' (*Fisonomías sociales*: 206). Galdós concludes by reflecting on the dispersion of the Duque de Osuna's wealth and the transient nature of property and class in modern society: 'La riqueza subsiste. ¿Dónde está? Con sus restos dispersos se formarán, quizás, nuevos estados burgueses, que el tiempo deshará otra vez' (*Fisonomías sociales*: 208).

In accordance with this pattern, Torquemada's newly-acquired Palacio de Gravelinas is carefully decorated by Cruz with the spoils of ruined aristocracy, and, significantly, Rafael del Águila describes it as a 'rastros decente, donde se amontonan, hacinados por la basura, los despojos de la nobleza hereditaria' (*TP*: 472). As the Duque de Gravelinas did not own great works of art, Cruz acquires another ruined aristocrat's art collection, that of Cisneros. With this, she creates a well-endowed museum which is livened up by the 'jaleo de visitantes extranjeros y españoles que solicitaban permiso para admirar tantas maravillas' (*TS*: 505). As Gold argues, however, the collections amassed by many of Galdós's characters in the

novelas contemporáneas are unlike museums in that they are not permanent. As objects are often signs of social rank in Galdós's novels, the constant building up and dissolution of collections in the *novelas* – as in the case of Eloísa in *Lo prohibido* – point to social instability (Gold 1993: 135). As will be seen, Torquemada's own wealth faces dispersion at the end of *Torquemada y San Pedro*.

The transfer of both the Palacio de Gravelinas and Cisneros's art collection from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie is reflected in the way these possessions are perceived by their new owner. The symbolic power with which the aristocracy imbues its patrimony is replaced by a bourgeois interest in its market value. Thus Torquemada values his new acquisitions as objects of speculation rather than as a source of family pride. Despite his original misgivings, Torquemada soon realizes that the purchase of the palace constitutes good business, since 'como terreno valía un Potosí, y valdría más el día de mañana'. He also regards his art collection as 'acciones u obligaciones de poderosas y bien administradas sociedades, de fácil y ventajosa cotización en todos los mercados del orbe' (*TS*: 505-506). As Gold argues, in the shifting socio-economic structures of the nineteenth century, the work of art became 'a commodity like any other whose uniqueness carried with it a price-tag' (Gold 1993: 126).

New Money and the Impoverished Aristocracy: A Marriage of Convenience

It is ironic that Torquemada's profiting from the nobility's financial problems goes hand in hand with his pivotal role in the revival of the aristocratic Águila family through his newly-created wealth. Torquemada's marriage to Fidela in *Torquemada en la cruz* saves the family from their indigence and allows Cruz to embark on a project of social restitution. Donoso's role as intermediary between Torquemada and Cruz is crucial in this union between the aristocratic and the financial worlds. Torquemada initially resists the idea of marrying one of the Águila sisters, as first proposed to him by Doña Lupe and then by Donoso, as socially impracticable: 'hay una barrera..., eso de las clases. Pronto se dice que no hay clases; pero al decirlo, las dichas clases saltan a la vista' (*TC*: 149). And not even his wealth can overcome this class barrier. The narrator renders Torquemada's thoughts thus:

No; eran demasiado finas para que él pretendiese tal cosa, y aunque su pobreza las bajaba enormemente en la escala social, conservaban siempre el aquel aristocrático, barrera perfumada que no podía salvar con todo su dinero un hombre viejo, groserote y sin principios. (*TC*: 145)

Torquemada is swayed, however, by Donoso's reasoning that 'la diferencia de clases, de educación, los timbres nobiliarios...; todo eso es música en los tiempos que corren' (*TP*: 153). Thus, it is again Donoso who conveys the rationale for Torquemada's next step on the social ladder. As his self-confidence increases through Donoso's arguments, he begins to think of himself as a good match for the ruined Águilas:

¿El dinero, la posición, no suponen nada? ¿No se compensaba una cosa con otra, es decir, la democracia del origen con la aristocracia de las talegas? Pues ¿no habíamos convenido en que los santos cuartos son también aristocracia? ¿Y acaso, acaso, las señoritas del Águila venían en línea recta de algún archipámpano o del rey de Babilonia? Pues si venían, que vinieran. El cuento era que a la hora presente no tenían sobre qué caerse muertas. (*TC*: 155)

The Águila sisters, for their part, accept the idea of marriage to Torquemada as the only solution to their pecuniary problems, other than public charity or suicide. As Cruz argues: 'no se discute el madero flotante al cual se agarra el naufrago que ya se ha bebido la mitad del mar' (*TC*: 169). Moreover, Cruz is confident that she will be able to mould Torquemada at will: 'en cuanto a ese pobre hombre, respondo de que le afinaré [...] En su afán de encasillarse en lugar más alto del que tiene, se asimila todas las ideas que le voy echando, como se echa pan a los pececillos de un estanque' (*TC*: 179). She also reasons that the power of money will erase the social impropriety of the match: 'los mismos que nos critiquen le besarán la mano a él..., porque con esa mano firma el talonario...Le besarán, por si algo se les pega... ¡Qué risa!' (*TC*: 179).

Cruz's and Fidela's brother Rafael is however radically opposed to the marriage on principle. In order to overcome his stubborn opposition, Donoso stresses the centrality of money, irrespective of its origin, in modern society. He points to the way in which many who had acquired their new fortunes in unsavoury ways have

now reached the social categories of *marqueses* and *senadores* – ironically, Torquemada himself becomes both a *marqués* and a *senador* later on in the series:

meterse en indagar de dónde viene la riqueza..., es tontería mayúscula. Ven acá... ¿No andan por ahí muchos que son senadores vitalicios y hasta marqueses, con cada escudo que mete miedo? Y ¿quién se acuerda de que unos se redondearon vendiendo negros, otros absorbiendo con el chupón de la usura las fortunas desleídas? Tú no vives en la realidad. Si recobraras la vista, verías que el mundo ha marchado, y que te quedaste atrás, con las ideas de tu tiempo amojamadas en la mollera. (*TC*: 212).

The Evil of Disentailment: Rafael's Nostalgia for the Old Regime

Donoso's role as intermediary between the aristocracy and the new money elite goes beyond his match-making abilities. During his reminiscences of the last days of his family's good fortune, Rafael implies that speculative business, rather than extravagant spending, was at the root of his family's financial ruin. The world of business had entered the Águilas' home through gatherings which included Donoso, Don Manuel Pez and the stock-broker Torres, and where 'no se hablaba más que de combinaciones financieras' (*TC*: 228). It is clear that for Rafael, this connection with speculative business debases his family. He remembers, for example, how their luxurious carpet was 'profanada por los salivazos del agente de Bolsa, que al entrar y al salir parece que se trae y se lleva toda la riqueza fiduciaria del mundo' (*TC*: 228). Donoso in particular had been influential in introducing his father to this world. As he recounts:

Mucha influencia tenía sobre él Donoso, el amigo leal antes, y ahora el corruptor de la familia. Contaminóse mi padre del mal de la época, de la fiebre de los negocios, y no contento con su cuantioso patrimonio, aspiró a ganar colosales riquezas, como otros muchos...Comprometido en empresas peligrosas, su fortuna tan pronto crecía como mermaba. Ejemplos que nunca debió seguir le perdieron. Su hermano y mi tío había reunido un capitalazo comprando bienes nacionales. La maldición recayó sobre los que profanaban

la propiedad de la Iglesia, y en la maldición fue arrastrado mi padre... (TC: 226-227)

Thus Rafael relates the decadence of his aristocratic family to the speculative trend which started with Mendizábal's and Madoz's disentailment laws (1836-1837 and 1854-1856 respectively), and which saw much Church property transferred into the hands of the emerging bourgeoisie. Bahamonde and Toro stress the fact that the properties acquired as a result of the *desamortización* were now regarded by their new owners not only as a source of rent, as before, but also as a source of speculation. This was particularly true of Madrid, where, as seen before, the expanding immigrant population increased the demand for housing. Therefore, Church buildings were demolished in order to build profitable new houses where the growing population could be accommodated. This climate of speculation was boosted in 1842 by new legislation which allowed landlords to increase their rents without restrictions. The amount of land and properties open to the market increased with Madoz's 1855 *desamortización*, which included municipal civil land such as that belonging to hospitals and hospices. In this way, the mid-1850s saw the beginning of what, in Bahamonde and Toro's words, is the 'época de vacas gordas para la burguesía especuladora en lo referente al negocio del suelo urbano' (Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 29). As noted previously, Torquemada, who starts amassing his fortune during the 1850s and 1860s, buys his first property in 1868. Despite the fact that he does not seem to buy disentailed property, the suggestion is that Torquemada thrived in the speculative climate which resulted from the *desamortización*. The connection between the disentailment process and Torquemada's business career is made explicit by the narrator's comment that Torquemada's departure from the traditional 'usura metafísica' is the natural result of his belonging to 'una época que arranca de la desamortización' (TH: 14). Consequently he is one of Rafael's hated beneficiaries of disentailment.

For Bahamonde and Martínez, the *desamortización eclesiástica* must be seen as part of a more general process by which the formulation of property rights was redefined according to the principles of liberalism. The entailment of the Old Regime gave way to the mobilization of land and property, which were now seen as commodities in keeping with the tenets of the free-market ideology (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 218-219; 441-442). Ringrose also stresses the effect of the

disentailment laws on the liberalization of market forces but questions the laws' revolutionary character, arguing that they continued a natural process already started in the eighteenth century. In line with his continuity argument, Ringrose also draws attention to what he calls, following Arno Mayer, the persistence of the Old Regime: that is, the way in which some socio-economic groups resisted the changes brought about by the new liberal society (Ringrose 2000: 182-183).

Rafael illustrates this resistance to the changes brought about by liberal legislation and ideas. Involvement in the commercialization of Church property resulting from Mendizábal's laws represent for him a profanation of the Church, which carries with it a 'maldición', in this case, the financial ruin of the Águila family. In this way, the *desamortización*, with its suggestion of impiety and its connection to the emergence of the capitalist class which he loathes, becomes for Rafael the banner of his anti-liberal sentiment. His traditionalist views accord with what Carnero refers to as the 'romanticismo reaccionario español' (Carnero 1978), a movement which is represented by Juan Nicolás Böhl de Faber and his daughter the writer Fernán Caballero, and defined by its extreme clericalism, opposition to liberalism and a cult of 'la España Antigua' (Flitter 1992: 152-153; Aranguren 1970: 76). In her short story 'Callar en vida y perdonar en muerte' (1852), Cecilia Böhl de Faber attacks Mendizábal's speculative legacy as morally corrupting. The idyllic village of Valdepaz, which is untouched by the 'ilustración del siglo novador', represents Old Regime values with its 'no profanada iglesia' and its children who 'besan la mano del cura, y piden la bendición de sus padres' (*Callar en vida*: 11). When the liberal captain Don Andrés Peñalta marries the daughter of a local rich farmer, he sows discord in the family by taking the daughter away from the village and, against her brother's advice, by dividing the family's property. Moreover, Don Andrés gets involved in businesses such as 'derribar conventos, cuyos materiales, de gran valor, vendía baratos' (*Callar en vida*: 20). The narrator describes him as a perfect representative of the 'tipo de ciudadano moderno': 'arrogante antagonista de supersticiones, entre las que contaba la observancia de los domingos', 'preste de la diosa Razón' and 'arcipreste de San Positivo' (*Callar en vida*: 21). He is also contemptuous of his dutiful and honest wife. The extent of his perfidy is revealed at the end of the story, when he is identified as his mother-in-law's murderer. Thus Don Andrés, who embodies the ideas of liberalism in his contempt for the patrimony of

both Church and family, is presented as an evil which befalls the traditional farmer's family.

Rafael's values are those of the Old Regime aristocracy. His idea of status is defined both by birth and by his *rentista* economic outlook, with Church and army as the only honourable alternatives to land. In contrast with his father's and, later, his sisters' betrayal of the aristocratic ideal, Rafael's mother had shown in life stubborn opposition to the indignity of involvement in business and trade. As he recalls:

Mi madre no transigía con ninguna ignominia. Por eso murió. Ojalá me hubiera muerto yo también, para no asistir a la degradación de mis pobres hermanas. ¿Por qué no se murieron ellas entonces? [...] A mamá, bien lo recuerdo, le eran horriblemente antipáticos los negocios, aquel fundar y deshacer sociedades de crédito como castillos de naipes, aquel vértigo de la Bolsa, y entre mi padre y ella el desacuerdo saltaba a la vista. (TC: 226-227)

Thus Rafael identifies himself with his mother, and regards himself as the sole remaining repository of the family's aristocratic honour in a society 'envilecida por los negocios y el positivismo' (TC: 256).

el espíritu de mi madre se me ha transmitido; lo siento en mí. De ella es este culto idolátrico del honor y de los buenos principios [...] En los Torre-Auñón jamás hubo nadie que se dedicara a estos oscuros negocios de comprar y vender cosas..., mercaderías, valores, no sé qué. Todos fueron señores hidalgos que vivían del fruto de las tierras patrimoniales, o soldados pundonorosos que morían por la patria y el rey, o sacerdotes respetabilísimos. (TC: 217).

Rafael regards the bourgeoisie as usurpers of the role of the aristocracy in society. In his analysis, the bourgeoisie has dispossessed the Church and the aristocracy of both their wealth and their power, and now seeks social legitimation by marrying into the aristocracy. His futile dreams of revenge take the form of a war of classes where the aristocracy will follow up on the violence started by anarchist terrorism. He envisages the 'plebe' and the aristocracy as fighting on the same side against the new moneyed elite:

¿Qué pasa hoy? Que la plebe indigente, envidiosa de los ricos, los amenaza, los aterra y quiere destruirlos con bombas y diabólicos aparatos de muerte [...] En los tiempos que vienen, los aristócratas arruinados, desposeídos de su propiedad por los usureros y traficantes de la clase media, se sentirán impulsados a la venganza..., querrán destruir esa raza egoísta, esos burgueses groseros y viciosos, que después de absorber los bienes de la Iglesia, se han hecho dueños del Estado, monopolizan el poder, la riqueza, y quieren para sus arcas todo el dinero de pobres y ricos, y para sus tálamos las mujeres de la aristocracia... [...] nosotros los señoritos [...] arrojaremos máquinas explosivas contra toda esa turba de mercachifles soeces, irreligiosos, comidos de vicios, hartos de goces infames. (*TC*: 256)

In his opposition to the new economic order, Rafael hangs on to the values of a bygone society. As Cruz tells him, his blindness has not allowed him to see ‘la transformación del mundo y de los tiempos’ (*TC*: 193). Scanlon argues that Rafael, like other blind characters in Galdós’s novels, has the gift of insight and can therefore see the corruption of a society devoted to money (Scanlon 1976: 271). However, whereas it is true that he offers a critical voice against modern society’s obsession with wealth, luxury and vanity (*TP*: 283), his vision of a stratified stagnant society is obsolete, as Scanlon also notes (Scanlon 1976: 271). In line with Böhl de Faber’s romanticism, Rafael’s idealization of an old society imbued with ‘sentimientos puros y nobles’ (*TP*: 283), and his rants against the immorality of modern society, go hand in hand with an ultra-conservative point of view. The narrator stresses both his complete alienation from modern society and his stubborn refusal to let go of the past. Thus he seems ‘embalsamado [...] la vida como estancada, suspensa, semejando en cierto modo a la inmovilidad insana y verdosa de aguas sin corriente’ (*TC*: 107). In a similar vein, Cruz reflects that Rafael’s blindness preserves him as he was ‘en mejores tiempos’, and that he now lives ‘como encerrado en una redoma, en el recuerdo de un pasado bonito, que [...] no ha de volver’ (*TC*: 189). As Scanlon notes, the futility of Rafael’s nostalgia is suggested by the narrator’s likening of him to ‘out of date’ or *cursi* religious images (Scanlon 1976: 272):

con los santos de talla, mártires jóvenes o Cristos guapos en oración, tenía indudable parentesco de color y líneas. Completaban esta semejanza [...] la

inercia de sus miembros, la barbita de color castaño, rizada y suave, que parecía más oscura sobre el cutis blanquísimo de nítida cera; la belleza, más que afeminada, dolorida y mortuoria, de sus facciones. (TC: 103)

Moreover, like other men in the *novelas contemporáneas* whose social usefulness is called into question, Rafael has small and pretty feet. His sisters lavish attention on them, as the narrator reports: ‘La pequeñez bonita del pie de Rafael era otro de los orgullos de la raza y antes se quitaran ellas el pan de la boca, antes arrostrarían las privaciones más crueles que consentir en que se desluciera el pie de la familia’ (TC: 105).

A New Elite: The Merging of Aristocracy and Bourgeoisie

Rafael’s dreams of an aristocratic anti-bourgeois backlash run counter to the spirit of the society in which he lives. By contrast, his friend Morentín, who is described by the narrator as a ‘hombre muy de su época’, represents the modern blend of aristocracy and bourgeoisie characteristic of the top layer of society: he is ‘plebeyo por parte de padre, aristócrata por la materna, socialmente mestizo, como casi toda la generación que corre’ (TP: 293). Donoso also partakes in this modern amalgam and, as he explains to Rafael, his humble origins had not been an obstacle for his marriage into the ‘familia ilustre de los Pipaones de Treviño’ (TC: 211). Hall draws attention to the irony in the fact that the highly respectable Donoso, whose ‘conventional rhetoric’ inspires Torquemada’s social ascent, becomes in this way an apologist of ‘the revolutionary shifts of power and prestige taking place in Spanish society’ (Hall 1970: 150). Thus Torquemada regards Donoso as the ‘Mesías que había venido a volverlo todo patas arriba, y a fundar nueva sociedad sobre las ruinas de la vieja’ (TC: 130). It is however important to note that Donoso’s social doctrine is characteristic of his time, and, from this point of view, he represents, as the narrator notes, ‘ese nivel medio que constituye la fuerza de la opinión’ (TC: 124). In the same way, the socially mixed Morentín is described as a model of social convention, with his ‘docena y media de ideas corrientes, de esas que parecen venir de la fábrica, en paquetitos clasificados, sujetos con un elástico’ (TP: 293).

Unlike Rafael, Cruz embraces the modern synthesis of aristocratic and bourgeois values. She is able to overcome her ‘orgullo de raza’, which in the past had induced her to oppose a marriage between Rafael and a banker’s daughter as debasing (*TC*: 193), and accept the capitalist Torquemada into the family. Cruz illustrates what Bahamonde and Martínez view as the tendency among the aristocracy of the second half of the nineteenth century to adapt their finances to the new economic conditions. As they argue, the intermarriage between members of the aristocracy and of the bourgeoisie contributed to this financial modernization of the aristocracy, as a result of which ‘las ideas nobiliarias tradicionales vinculadas a la posesión de la tierra, el linaje y el modo de vivir señorial se funden con nuevos valores de rentabilidad y éxito capitalista que fundamentan la existencia en términos monetarios’ (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 451). The mixed nature of the new Spanish elite was clearly a subject of interest to Galdós. As he reflects in his aforementioned article ‘Vida de sociedad’:

Todos los días estamos viendo que tal o cual joven, cuyo apellido es de los que retumban en nuestra historia con ecos gloriosos, toma por esposa a tal o cual señorita rica, cuyos millones tienen por cuna una honrada carnicería o el comercio de vinos. Como es hoy tan fácil decorarse con un título nobiliario, que siempre suena bien, vemos constantemente marqueses y condes cuya riqueza es producto de los adoquinados de Madrid, del monopolio del petróleo o de las acémilas del ejército del norte en la primera y segunda guerra civil [...] Los individuos de la antigua nobleza se han convencido de que para nada les valen sus pergaminos sin dinero, y sólo piensan en procurarse éste, ya por medio de los negocios, ya por medio de sus alianzas. (*Fisonomías sociales*: 121-122)

As will be seen, the tensions between Torquemada and Cruz allow Galdós to explore the complex ideological make-up of the new elite. The question of the extent to which the Old Regime power structures survived throughout the nineteenth century, despite liberal legislation and socio-economic changes, has been of much interest to social historians. For Tuñón de Lara, the ascending bourgeoisie was both materially and ideologically assimilated into the old power structures through its fusion with the aristocracy, whether by a process of ennoblement, like the banker Urquijo, or through intermarriage. The resulting ‘bloque de poder’ was in this way backward-

looking and a force against progressive change (Tuñón de Lara 1960: 43-44). Cortázar also stresses the persistence of the social, political and economic hegemony of the aristocracy throughout the Restoration period. In his view, the aristocracy could adapt to the liberal regime because neither its property rights nor the principle of aristocratic authority itself were challenged. He agrees with Tuñón de Lara's analysis of a dominant class formed by a symbiosis between the old and new aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. However, Cortázar questions the suitability of Tuñón de Lara's expression 'bloque de poder', as this suggests a closed and inaccessible system. Rather, the nineteenth-century elites were characterized, in his view, by a mobility which is better explained by the metaphor of a bus, with passengers getting on and off along the way (Cortázar 1986: 559-560).

Bahamonde and Martínez, for their part, refer to the aristocracy's strategy of co-opting and integrating top members of the bourgeoisie as a mechanism for its survival. They point out that the liberal legislation which stripped the aristocracy of its Old Regime legal privileges, and which threw it into market forces, did not lead to its 'aburguesamiento'. Rather, the aristocracy offered passive resistance by passing on its values and symbolic capital to the new bourgeois elite (Bahamonde and Martínez 2011: 448; 452). In the wider European context, Mayer also argues that the nobility adapted to the new socio-economic circumstances by admitting members of the wealthy high bourgeoisie and 'capitalizing on the bourgeois element's craving for social status and advancement'. In his view, the aristocratization of the bourgeoisie was more pervasive than the 'bourgeoisification of the imperious nobility' (Mayer 1981: 80-85). These are questions with which Galdós engages, particularly, in *Torquemada en el purgatorio* and *Torquemada y San Pedro*; and it is of particular interest that Tuñón de Lara sees in these novels an illustration of his theory of class alliance (Tuñón de Lara 1970: 24).

As Fernández Cifuentes argues, there are some similarities between *Torquemada* and *Cruz*. They are both single-minded in the way they pursue their objectives, and, appropriately, the narrator compares *Torquemada* to an 'hormiga', and *Cruz* to an 'hormiga sublime' (*TH*: 12; *TC*: 165). Also, they both hold economic gain in high regard (Cifuentes 1982: 81). They represent, however, conflicting views on the value of money. For *Cruz*, money is valuable not in itself, but insofar as it buys back her family's lost social position through the acquisition of symbols of

status. There is irony in the fact that Torquemada represents both a social stigma for the Águilas and a means of recovering their aristocratic honour. The social ridicule of their debasing union with Torquemada can only be overcome by raising him, as new head of the family, to the top of the social scale ‘hasta erigir con él inmensa torre’ (*TC*: 347). The narrator renders Cruz’s reasoning thus:

Para sí misma, en realidad nada ambicionaba; pero la familia debía recobrar su rango, y si era posible, aspirar a posición más alta que la de otros tiempos, a fin de confundir a los envidiosos que comentaban con groseras burlas aquella resurrección social. Procedía Cruz en esto con orgullo de raza, como quien mira por la dignidad de los suyos y también con un sentimiento de alta venganza contra parientes aborrecidos, que después de haberles negado auxilio en la época de penuria, trataban de arrojar sobre ella y su hermana todo el ridículo del mundo por la boda con el prestamista. Enalteciendo a éste y haciéndole de hombre persona, y de persona personaje, y de personaje eminencia, iban ganado la partida, y los dardos de maledicencia se volvían contra los mismos que los lanzaban. (*TP*: 343-344)

Thus Cruz’s desire for money is also motivated by her wish to redress past social humiliations. Whereas Rafael reacts with despondency to his family’s aristocratic decadence, Cruz fights with a desire for revenge which is for her ‘justicia brutal’ and ‘sentimiento feudal’ (*TC*: 242), but which also forces her to assimilate modern capitalism. The expenses on which she embarks are all designed to elevate her family’s social status, and escalate along with Cruz’s social ambition. They culminate with the acquisition for Torquemada of the Marquesado de San Eloy, for which they must pay 360,000 *reales* despite the Águilas being legitimate heirs (*TP*: 383), and the purchase of the Palacio de Gravelinas for 10 million *reales*, plus armoury, art collection and an army of servants.

The value of these purchases is clear for Cruz, but they go against the grain for Torquemada. He resents spending money on a purely symbolic title: ‘¡Dieciocho mil duros! ¡Y por un rótulo, por una vanidad, por un engañoso!’ . He argues that a title can equally be purchased at a ‘memorialista de portal’, since ‘todo viene a ser lo mismo, pues ¿qué es el Estado más que un gran memorialista con casa abierta?’ (*TP*: 384). However, whereas Torquemada remains convinced that ‘es cosa triste que lo

ganado tan a pulso se emplee en marquesados' (TP: 398), he is moved by the idea of passing on a title to his still unborn second son: 'Cierto que por la Gloria de mi hijo haré yo cualquier cosa' (TP: 386). Torquemada is also half-persuaded by Donoso's argument that the enhancement of his 'representación social' through the Marquesado would eventually translate into 'beneficios *contantes*' (TP: 388). The same economic argument is used by Fidela in relation to other expenses imposed on Torquemada by Cruz:

Para tus mismos negocios te conviene respirar una atmósfera de esplendidez. Con franqueza, Tor: ¿habrías ganado lo que has ganado viviendo como un miserable en la calle de San Blas? ¡Si cada duro que te gasta mi hermana es para traerte luego veinte! (TP: 355)

According to Fidela's reasoning, social status and wealth are interrelated in a symbiotic way, and the appointment of Torquemada as *senador* seems to corroborate this view. This appointment is another of Cruz's achievements in her constant search for 'mayores alturas' (TP: 377). In this case, Torquemada is easily convinced by Serrano that 'esos cargos siempre dan' and that very little expense is required, involving just 'un almuercito a los compromisarios, una docena de telegramas...' (TP: 374). As confirmation of the accuracy of Serrano's advice, the narrator informs us that soon after Torquemada takes his seat in the Senado, his project for the Bierzo railway, which had been 'empantanado desde la anterior legislatura', is now approved (TP: 389). As seen previously, Serrano and Torquemada had planned to turn this project into a highly profitable speculative enterprise. The proximity to political power which the Senado offers also seems attractive to Torquemada, who thinks he can 'arreglar la Hacienda en dos semanas' with a set of stringent measures (TP: 374).

Moreover, as noted previously, Torquemada is susceptible to social vanity. His feelings about his appointment as *senador* fluctuate 'entre el remusguillo del amor propio satisfecho y el temor de que todas aquellas misas vendrían a parar en nuevos gravámenes' (TP: 390). In the Senado, Torquemada is treated with 'miramientos y cortesías que le halagaban', and Cruz notices in him 'efluvios de satisfacción' after his first day in 'aquel ambiente de vanidades' (TP: 389). As Cruz explains to the priest Gamborena, Torquemada is at ease in his new social position,

and it is only the expenses connected to it that vex him: ‘bien sabe ese bruto que sin mi gobierno no habría llegado a las alturas en que ahora está, y en las cuales, créame usted, se encuentra muy a gusto cuando no le tocan su avaricia’ (*TS*: 496).

Nevertheless, Torquemada remains torn between his desire to satisfy his social pride, or, as he puts it, ‘figurar conforme al propio mérito’ (*TP*: 392), and his resentment of both ‘grandezas que repugna, y dispendios que le fríen la sangre’ (*TS*: 496).

In this way, Torquemada’s financial development, his social education and the acquisition of the material trappings of social rank are all essential in Torquemada’s transformation from petty usurer to eminence. As the authors of such transformation, both Donoso and Cruz feel a sense of proprietorial pride in their creation. For Cruz, Torquemada is her ‘hechura’ and ‘obra maestra’ (*TP*: 324), and Donoso thinks of him as his ‘conquista’ (*TC*: 207). For Rafael, however, Torquemada’s social rise represents the defeat, by the power of money, of the divinely preordained order in which he believes, as the possibility of social betterment undermines Rafael’s static view of society. However, he remains adamant that the ‘prestigio’ and ‘autoridad’ with which Cruz has imbued Torquemada do not amount to real worth:

sostengo que en usted no puede haber nunca nobleza y que su éxitos y su valía ante el mundo son efectos de pura visualidad, como las decoraciones de teatro. Sólo es efectivo el dinero que usted sabe ganar. Pero siendo su encumbramiento de pura farsa, es un hecho que me confunde, porque lo tuve por imposible; reconozco la victoria de mi hermana, y me declaro el mayor de los mentecatos. (*TP*: 470)

Torquemada as Grandee: The Power of Money

Despite Torquemada’s spectacular social success, the process by which he is assimilated into Madrid’s high society is gradual. The wealthy usurer only receives grudging acceptance at first:

Reconocíanle todos por un hombre sin cultura, ordinario y a veces brutalmente egoísta; pero al propio tiempo veían en él un magistral golpe de vista para los negocios, un tino segurísimo que le daba incontestable

autoridad, de suerte que teniéndose todos por gente de más valía en la vida general, en aquella rama especialísima del *toma y daca* bajaban la cabeza ante el bárbaro, y le oían como un padre de la iglesia...crematística. (TP: 273)

The progressive social approval of Torquemada runs parallel to the motif of the blurring of the literary usurer's characteristics. In the first stage of his development, Torquemada himself is aware of the fact that he may incur social ridicule if he makes too rapid a social transformation. Thus he improves his clothes 'por medio de transiciones lentas, para que el cambiazo no saltara a la vista con crudezas de sainete (TC: 138). As Torquemada 'se va haciendo un hueco en la sociedad', those who had ridiculed him previously as an 'usurero de sainete' and as a 'ser grotesco y lúgubre, que bebía sangre y olía mal', now find that he is 'ni tan grotesco ni tan horrible como la leyenda le pintó' (TP: 345). Others, who had known him during the first phase of his evolution, do not believe him to be the same person (TP: 413). He is now respected as an 'hombre de excepcional cacumen para los negocios [...] y de tal modo fascinaba a ciertas personas el brillo del oro, que casi por hombre extraordinario le tenían, y conceptos que en otra boca habrían sido gansadas, en la suya eran lindezas y donaires' (TP: 413-414). Even his title now seems to fit him reasonably well:

El marquesado, si al principio se le despegaba un poco, como al Santo Cristo un par de pistolas, luego se le iba incrustando, por decirlo así, en la persona, en los modales, hasta en la ropa, y la costumbre hizo lo demás. Lo que aún faltaba para la completa adaptación del título a su catadura plebeya hízolo el criterio comparativo del público, pues éste fácilmente se explicaba que tal cabeza ciñese corona, toda vez que otras, tan villanas por dentro y por fuera, se la encasquetaban, por herencia o real merced, no más airosamente que el antiguo prestamista. (TP: 414)

Thus the distance between the 'usurero de sainete' and the *marqués* is shortened by the fact that social expectations about the aristocracy, whether it is 'de cuna' or newly appointed, are low. It is also noteworthy that the way in which Torquemada appears to internalize his *marquesado* seems to contradict the narrator's insistence that the changes in Torquemada are 'un barniz, con el cual las apariencias

desvirtuaban la realidad' (*TP*: 413). As Hall argues, despite the persistence of old characteristics, Torquemada experiences a fundamental change, one which cannot be reversed. The usurer and the modern titled financier can therefore coexist in what Hall calls 'a deep-seated duality which is never resolved' (Varey 1970:152).

With a title which later acquires the category of 'grandeza de España de primera clase' (*TP*: 404), a seat in the Senado and a palace, Torquemada becomes a prominent member of society. His estimated capital at the end of his life is 30 million *pesetas*, that is, 120 million *reales* (*TS*: 652), a sum which places Torquemada in the very top layer of Madrid's financial elite. As seen in the previous chapter, the average wealth of this elite was, according to Bahamonde and Martínez, 50 million *reales*, and by 1880 it was composed of both aristocratic and bourgeois patrimonies. As Bahamonde and Martínez point out, none of these great Madrid fortunes were based on industry. Their source of wealth was property and speculative financial activities and, in this way, their economic model was 'muy alejado del ideal de los capitales de empresa' (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 457). Not until the end of the century did some industrial fortunes from the periphery join the Spanish top money elite (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 456-457). The pattern outlined by Bahamonde and Martínez is one which clearly fits Torquemada, and it is interesting to note that, as previously indicated, Tuñón de Lara highlights Galdós engagement in the *Torquemada* novels with the socio-economic circumstances of Restoration Spain:

Torquemada deja de ser un vulgar usurero para convertirse en un hombre de negocios relativamente moderno y, sobre todo, para integrarse en la esfera del Poder; Torquemada, marqués y senador, no es sino una expresión novelística de tantos hechos reales como se produjeron en lo que se ha llamado hasta ahora Restauración. (Tuñón de Lara 1970: 24)

Rueda Laffond considers the economic and social rise of the banker Estanislao de Urquijo (1816-1889) as emblematic of the financial success stories of the second half of the nineteenth century. As Blanco Aguinaga points out, some aspects of Torquemada's financial rise coincide with that of Urquijo (Blanco Aguinaga 2000: 68). As seen in the first chapter, Urquijo is mentioned in *Lo prohibido* as one of the financial heroes of the stock-broker Torres, and one of the few men at the Bolsa who

merits the treatment of *usted* by him. The basis of Urquijo's financial success, like that of Torquemada's, was in the solid business of personal loans. Urquijo's origins were humble. He was born in the Basque Country, and like Torquemada, left for Madrid in search of opportunity. From his first position as a shop-assistant in the textile sector, where he acquired some basic knowledge of accountancy, he went on to work as a stock-broker at the newly created Bolsa de Madrid and as an employee of the Spanish branch of the Rothschild business. By 1850 he was in a position to open his own establishment specializing in mortgage secured personal loans. In Rueda Laffond's view, it was this aspect of his investment portfolio which made Urquijo resistant to the crisis of 1866-68, from which he in fact emerged strengthened. Many great names from the new financial bourgeoisie and the aristocracy took loans from him. Among them were the financier Salamanca and the aristocratic houses of Osuna and Alcañiles. Rueda Laffond estimates that between 1866 and 1873, the house of Osuna took from Urquijo a sum of around thirty million *reales* on loans at an annual interest of 12%. Of interest here is the fact that part of the financial trouble for José María at the end of *Lo prohibido* comes from his failure to get rid of his Osuna bonds before they become worthless (*Lo prohibido*: 579). The sum borrowed by Salamanca between 1869 and 1873 was of around twenty million *reales*. Before 1866, Urquijo had been financing Salamanca's expansion into the Ensanche property business and, therefore, became one of the major beneficiaries of Salamanca's collapse. As the conditions of the loans became harsher, default became inevitable, allowing Urquijo to acquire sixteen of Salamanca's properties. By the end of the 1880s he had accumulated a fortune of 194 million *reales*, most of which was invested in public debt securities. As Rueda Laffond stresses, Urquijo was never an entrepreneur. The social corollary of Urquijo's expanding wealth came, as it does with Torquemada, through his ennoblement as *marqués* in 1871 and his appointment as *senador* in 1886 (Rueda Laffond 1996: 297-298; 303-314).

Like Urquijo, Torquemada makes his way up to the top of the social scale from humble origins. The narrator links his talent for money to the experience acquired through continuous work: 'don Francisco poseía un talento de primer orden para los negocios, aptitud incubada en treinta años de aprendizaje usurario a la menuda, y desarrollada después en más amplio terreno en esfera vastísima' (*TP*: 272). Fuentes Peris highlights Galdós's ironical use in the *Torquemada* novels of the

concepts of self-help and the self-made man, which constituted the ideological backbone of the entrepreneur ideal of the Industrial Revolution. These ideas had been popularized by, among others, Samuel Smiles in his book *Self-Help* (1859), which also had considerable influence in Spain. Drawing on the utilitarian philosophy of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, Smiles extols the virtues of industry, individual initiative and thrift in opposition to the vices of idleness and dissipation. He also establishes a correlation between individual enterprise and the power and wealth of nations. As Fuentes Peris points out, at the banquet held in Torquemada's honour by the representatives of the Bierzo region in gratitude for his railway initiative, Torquemada presents himself as the personification of these ideas (Fuentes Peris 2007: 18-29). In his speech, the clichés associated with the self-made man are all there: poverty in early life, hard work, determination, self-reliance, moral conscience and success against all the odds for the benefit of the nation. In Hall's view, Torquemada's exposition is a 'fairly crude but by no means falsified version of the commonplaces of bourgeois capitalist doctrine', which constitutes a 'common ground' between Torquemada and his audience (Varey 1970: 155). From this point of view, and notwithstanding his verbal blunders, Torquemada offers exactly what is expected from a wealthy man at such an occasion. Torquemada himself seems aware of the commonplace nature of his speech when he later admits to Rafael – not totally sincerely, according to Hall – that his *discurso* was just 'una serie no interrumpida de vaciedades, cuatro frases que recogí de los periódicos, alguna que otra expresioncilla que se me pegó en el Senado y otras tantas migajas del buen decir de nuestro amigo Donoso'. He also suspects that his money, rather than his oratory, may be the cause of the speech's success: 'Yo tengo para mí que aplaudían al hombre de dinero, no al *hablista*' (TP: 468).

As Fuentes Peris argues, in Torquemada's speech Galdós parodies both the usurer's deluded vision of himself and the flaws in the concept of self-help and the self-made man (Fuentes Peris 2007: 24). The satirical humour is patent both when Torquemada praises himself for virtues which he clearly does not have, such as selflessness and charity, and when he praises himself for qualities which he has in excess, such as thrift. It is, however, the speculative nature of Torquemada's celebrated railway project that clashes most blatantly with the ideal of the self-made man. In his study of the formation of the class system in English society, Perkin

argues that in nineteenth-century England, the capitalist represented the ideal citizen in a society which was based on capital and, supposedly, on fair competition. He stresses that what was understood by 'capitalist' was the 'active owner-manager of the Industrial Revolution, not the passive or remotely controlling financier of later corporate capitalism' (Perkin 1969: 221). The ideal was the entrepreneur with his active investment, in opposition to the passive capital of the *rentier*, whether a landowner or a fund holder (Perkin 1969: 221). In his *Life of Engineers*, Smiles hails the men responsible for the great feats of engineering of the Victorian era as industrial heroes and benefactors of humankind. In their role as both technical innovators and entrepreneurs, they represent for Smiles the ultimate model of the self-made man. However, Perkin maintains that, as an explanation of entrepreneurial success, Smiles's self-made man was a myth – albeit one based on a selection of real biographies – even during the Industrial Revolution. In his view, the number of industrialists who rose to the top without a starting capital or connections was minimal (Perkin 1969: 425-426).

It is clear that Torquemada, as a *propietario*, lender and investor in public securities, does not conform to the entrepreneurial ideal. As Bell stresses, Torquemada is neither an industrialist nor an innovator but instead a creator of 'bubble money' (Bell 2006: 102). For him, the only possible exception to Torquemada's speculative bent is his involvement in the railway. This is clearly not the case. As seen previously, Torquemada's railway project does not involve beneficial innovation, but profiting from the manipulation of share prices. Bell also argues that, in any case, Torquemada's railway line leads to a 'dead-end' (Bell 2006: 102). Whereas it seems unfair to describe the track from Villafranca del Bierzo to Minas de Berrocal as a dead-end, it is true that the appropriateness of the track itself is of no concern to Torquemada and Serrano, as they have no intention of managing the rail-line. As well as the 'ganancia fenomenal' which they expect from the selling of shares, it is the potentially useful loyalty of Torquemada's fellow *berzanos* that is of interest to them (*TP*: 394). Moreover, Torquemada's railway business is government-backed. It must be remembered that the Spanish railway was financed, to a large extent, by a combination of state subsidies, which amounted to 30% of the construction costs according to Shubert, and the issuing of bonds. As seen in the first chapter, these bonds absorbed most of the capital available for investment, depriving

other industrial sectors of much needed capital. As also discussed previously, the 1855 Ley General de Ferrocarriles stipulated that the losses suffered by the railway companies be guaranteed by the government. Consequently, a high profit for the constructors, whatever the usefulness or profitability of the line, was certain. On the other hand, these covered losses represented a drain on an already overburdened Treasury (Shubert 1990: 18).

This is hardly the context in which the self-reliant heroes of the Industrial Revolution operated, and it is noteworthy that in *Self-Help*, Smiles contrasts individual 'industry, energy and uprightness' against the 'negative and restrictive' function of the government (*Self-Help*: 2-4). As Tortella points out, the railway in England was built with almost no government involvement (Tortella 2000: 129). From this point of view, the image of Torquemada as the ideal self-made entrepreneur of liberal ideology becomes a satire of Spanish industry. At the banquet, Torquemada is hailed as a 'hombre extraordinario que ponía sus capitales y su inteligencia al servicio de los intereses públicos' (*TP*: 432). Torquemada himself speaks of his '*bello ideal el progreso*', and of his desire to 'emprender obras muy importantísimas, sin ambición ninguna de lucro privado'. His objective is to 'favorecer a mi patria natal llevando la locomotora *con su penacho de humo* a través de los campos' (*TP*: 451). In a similar way, an engineer described by the narrator as the 'iniciador de obras públicas tan grandiosas como impracticables', delivers a speech which is 'un lío espantoso de retóricas del orden industrial y constructivo, y todo era carbón para allí, calderas al rojo cereza por allá, las espirales de humo *que escribían sobre el azul del cielo el poema* de la fabricación' (*TP*: 443).

Life in Gravelinas and the Fading of Torquemada

Soon after being presented as a model of the self-made industrialist at the banquet, Torquemada's move to the Palacio de Gravelinas marks his full adoption of the old aristocratic lifestyle. Unlike Salamanca's and Gaviria's bourgeois palaces in Recoletos, which, as Bahamonde and Martínez point out, were inspired by the aristocratic style but were not a mimetic copy (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 466), Gravelinas conforms to the style of the traditional Madrid palace. Like the Palacio de

Aransis in *La desheredada*, it is a ‘caserón’ of severe exterior which was solidly built in the seventeenth century (TS: 503-504). In this way, it symbolizes the aristocracy of the Old Regime. The description of the palace’s armoury and archive, which opens *Torquemada y San Pedro*, conjures up an image of barren splendour:

En la cavidad espaciosa, de elevado techo, fría como un panteón y solitaria como templo de la sabiduría, rara vez entraba persona viviente, fuera del criado encargado de la limpieza, y de algún erudito escudriñador de rarezas bibliográficas. (TS: 480)

The contrast with the glorious past is marked with irony. A family of resident mice ‘se habían cenado en amor y compañía una de las más interesantes cartas del Gran Capitán al Rey Católico y parte de un curiosísimo *Inventario de alhajas y cuadros*, pertenecientes al virrey de Nápoles, don Pedro Téllez Girón, el *Grande de Osuna*’ (TS:480).

The desolation which reigns in Gravelinas pervades *Torquemada y San Pedro*, and the narrative is also marked by the tragedies of Fidela’s death, the heir Valentín II’s under-development and Torquemada’s illness. As the narrator observes, even for Cruz, who is the instigator of the purchase, the move to Gravelinas represents ‘una entrada en el reino sombrío del aburrimiento y la discordia’ (TS: 497). Thus her life there becomes ‘árida y triste’ (TS: 503). As the move takes place just after Rafael’s suicide, there is no social life in Gravelinas, despite it being well arranged ‘para la ostentación de las superficialidades aristocráticas’ (TS: 503). In this way, the primary function of the palace as display of social and economic power is lost. The vast servants’ quarter, which buzzes with ‘multitud de criados’ (TS: 481) provides a contrast with the melancholic atmosphere of the rest of the palace, and accentuates the futility of ‘aquellos lugares, tan espléndidos como solitarios’ (TS: 503). It is, in fact, this superabundance of servants which triggers the growing discord between Cruz and Torquemada. For Cruz, they are an essential mark of the aristocratic status which she craves and, consequently, she employs them ‘dejándose llevar por sus instintos de grandeza’ and ‘sin omitir nada de lo que corresponde a una familia de príncipes’ (TS: 507). For Torquemada, however, the servants are ‘un *fiel trasunto* de las oficinas del Estado, llenas de pasmarotes, que no van allí más que a holgazanear’ (TS: 507). Whereas some of Cruz’s other acquisitions become

acceptable to him in view of the ‘buen resultado que podrían traerle en día no lejano’ (*TS*: 507), the servants, with no conversion value, represent a wasted investment.

Torquemada’s fear is that Cruz, with her plans for social greatness, will turn him into a ‘duque de Osuna, un Salamanca o el emperador de China’ (*TP*: 463-464), in reference to the aristocrat Osuna’s and the financier Salamanca’s extravagant spending and final ruin. By contrast, as both modern capitalist and ‘avaro’, Torquemada’s financial ideal fluctuates between reinvestment and hoarding. Thus he refers to his *bello ideal* contradictorily as consisting both in ‘emplear de nuevo sus considerables ganancias, reservando sólo una parte mínima para el gasto diario’ (*TP*: 354) and in ‘amontonar sus ganancias para poder reunir un capital fabuloso’ (*TP*: 464). It is also noteworthy that, towards the end of his life, Torquemada hopes that his son Valentín II will turn into the full ‘avaro’ type: ‘esconderá el dinero en una olla para que no lo vea ni Dios ... ¡Oh, qué hijo tengo y qué gusto trabajar todavía unos cuantos años, muchos años, para llenarle bien la hucha!’ (*TS*: 657).

Torquemada’s financial woes are aggravated by his illness and the ‘impotencia mercantil’ (*TP*: 569) which his inability to work produces. As Fuentes Peris notes, the ailment which causes Torquemada to vomit the food he eats is in itself symbolic of the wastefulness which he fears will result from his imposed inactivity (Fuentes Peris 2007: 35). He is vexed by the idea that ‘no pudiendo trabajar, no sólo se estancaban sus capitales, sino que la inacción los destruía, hasta llevarlos a la nada, cual si fueran una masa líquida abandonada a la intemperie y a la evaporación’ (*TS*: 595-596). There is irony in the narrator’s comment that his friends try to ‘arrancarle idea tan absurda, pero ésta se aferraba a su mente con tal fuerza, que ni lógica, ni ejemplos claros, ni el razonamiento, ni la burla le curaban de aquel extraño mal de la imaginación’ (*TS*: 596). It is clear that Torquemada’s capitalist economic model, which, although speculative and corrupt, is based on work and investment, is at odds with the model represented by the family’s move to Gravelinas, and which is based on patrimony, rent and sumptuous spending. In *Torquemada y San Pedro*, Torquemada fights the lifestyle which Cruz imposes on him with acts of rebellion such as his escapade to the working class neighbourhood in which he had started his career. However, as Torquemada’s attempt to reconnect with his roots ends in the exacerbation of his illness as a result of his greasy feast at Matías Vallejo’s *figón*, it becomes clear that there is no way back for him. Cruz fails

to impose her aristocratic mentality fully on Torquemada, but as Hall points out, the episode at the *figón* shows that Torquemada's class consciousness has been irreversibly altered (Hall 1970:159).

In *Torquemada y San Pedro*, Church and nobility appear on the same ideological side against Torquemada's capitalist outlook. As the narrator explains, Cruz embraces religion once her class pride has been satisfied, and as a result of the abatement of her worldly aspirations following the death of her siblings (*TS*: 587). However, as Scanlon points out, her piety is still related to her aristocratic pride, and it is significant that she finds inspiration for her Christian ideal in the saint and princess Isabel de Hungría (Scanlon 1976: 274: *TS*: 588-589). Moreover, Cruz is attracted to mystical literature by the 'cierto empaque aristocrático' of its style (*TS*: 587), and the narrator comments that the discretion with which she practises her charitable work could serve as 'modelo a toda la cristiandad aristocrática' (*TS*: 588). As Carmona Pidal notes, charitable expenditure was as characteristic of the old aristocracy as expenditure on luxury and service, and the aristocratic lifestyle was one in which 'la generosidad (servicio y beneficencia) compite con la ostentación' (Carmona Pidal 1986: 510).

The affinity between Church and aristocracy is also reflected in the full endorsement that Cruz's aristocratic way of life receives from Gravelinas' chaplain Gamborena. Apart from a light reprimand for the despotism with which she imposes her will on Torquemada, the priest is clearly on Cruz's side in her dispute with Torquemada. As he tells the ex-usurer:

La causa de la aversión diabólica que usted profesa a su hermana es la superioridad de ella, la excelsitud de su inteligencia. En ella todo es grande, en usted todo es pequeño, y su habilidad para ganar dinero, arte secundario y de menudencias, se siente humillada ante la grandeza de los pensamientos de Cruz. Es usted [...] el simple obrero que ejecuta, ella la cabeza superior que concibe planes admirables. Sin Cruz no sería usted más que un desdichado prestamista, que se pasaría la vida amasando un menguado capital con la sangre del pobre. Con ella lo ha sido todo y se ha empingorotado a las alturas sociales. (*TS*: 575)

Thus Gamborena disdains Torquemada's money, but not the status which Cruz achieves for the family with it. He also condemns small-scale usury and its exploitation of the poor, but has nothing to say about corruption in high finance. His reference to Torquemada as 'jornalero del millón' (*TS*: 491) also suggests a contempt for Torquemada's capitalist mentality. Moreover, as Scanlon points out, in his address to Fidela and her friend Augusta, Gamborena shows a respect for rank when he advises the two women to act with a combination of 'simplicidad religiosa' and the 'boato que os impone vuestra posición social' (Scanlon 1976: 275-276; *TS*: 534). It is also clear that Gamborena resents the world of liberal politics and its destabilising influence on two of the pillars of the Old Regime, the Church and the aristocracy. In the same address to Fidela and Augusta, he bemoans the upper classes' loss of faith, the result of their being corrupted by a 'caterva de incrédulos, herejes y ateístas' (*TS*: 532). He also laments the fact that, as the wealthy do not have a 'papel glorioso que desempeñar en la sociedad presente', they have descended into the previously plebeian area of politics like a 'noble enfermo y melancólico que, no sabiendo qué hacer para distraerse, desciende a bromear con la servidumbre' (*TS*: 532).

The matter of the salvation of Torquemada's soul, which runs through *Torquemada y San Pedro*, is linked both to the moral question of the illegitimacy of Torquemada's accumulation of wealth and also to the political question of the pernicious effects of liberalism on the Church. Charity is proposed by both Gamborena and Cruz as a way of redressing the wrong done by Torquemada's greed, and in this way a thematic link is established between the first and the last of the *Torquemada* novels. Whereas in *Torquemada en la hoguera*, Torquemada fails in his charitable attempts (in particular, he fails to give his new cape to a beggar, as he tells Gamborena), the test for Torquemada in *Torquemada y San Pedro* is whether now, close to his death, he is willing to part with one third of his wealth and give it to the Church. That is the 'new cape' which Gamborena, with his business-like approach to spiritual matters, is now demanding as a requirement for Torquemada's salvation. For Cruz, who is now free from her desire for ostentation, excessive wealth goes against 'la ley divina y la equidad humana' and is a 'malísima carga para nuestro espíritu' (*TS*: 636). On a more political note, she also argues that Torquemada created his wealth unlawfully at the expense of the Church, as a result of the

speculative climate created by the *desamortización*, and that it must now be returned to it:

Esos cuantiosísimos bienes de la Iglesia han sido, y usted no hace más que devolverlos a su dueño. ¿No entiende? Oiga una palabrita. La llamada desamortización, que debiera llamarse despojo, arrancó su propiedad a la Iglesia, para entregarla a los particulares, a la burguesía, por medio de ventas que no eran sino verdaderos regalos. De esa riqueza distribuida en el estado llano, ha nacido todo este mundo de los negocios de las contratas, de las obras públicas, mundo en el cual se ha fragado usted. (TS: 637)

The theme of the effects of disentailment, which runs through the novels, is now clearly exposed. It is then highly ironic that Cruz's and Gamborena's proposal that Torquemada gives one third of his wealth to the Church is presented in parallel to Torquemada's final great business plan: the conversion of the *deuda exterior* to *deuda interior*. This nonsensical plan represents the ultimate speculative trick of the business class which began to develop as a result of Mendizábal's disentailment laws. Galdós humorously counteracts Cruz's and Gamborena's concern for the salvation of Torquemada's soul with the usurer's conviction that his project would meet with God's approval, as it will be 'beneficioso para la Humanidad, o, *sin ir tan lejos*, para nuestra querida España' (TS: 649). As Torquemada tells Donoso, financial matters must also be of interest to God: '¿Le parece a usted que Dios puede ver con indiferencia los males de esta pobre nación y que tengamos los cambios a veintitrés?' (TS: 649). Appropriately for a usurer, Torquemada's conversion plan involves debt. It is also worth noting that, as Bahamonde and Martínez argue, one of the objectives of the disentailment laws was to address the problem of the public debt (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 222). And debt was indeed at the centre of the financial operations which enriched the bourgeoisie of the second half of the nineteenth century. The usurer-turned-high-financier is therefore an apt symbol of Spain's economy. The clear criticism of the new money elite that emerges from the *Torquemada* novels does not, of course, imply any nostalgia for past times. In this respect, it is worth noting that contemporary opposition to Mendizábal's laws did not only come from the defenders of the Old Regime. Liberal politicians such as Flórez Estrada also opposed the *desamortización* on the basis that rather than result in a much needed agrarian reform, it would increase the wealth of a small elite

(Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 224). By the time Galdós wrote the *Torquemada* novels, it was clear that this had happened.

Conclusion

It is fitting that Torquemada's ambiguous last word 'conversión' leaves Gamborena, and the reader, uncertain as to whether he has repented and saved his soul, or whether he dies thinking of his great debt conversion project. Neither the humour that pervades the *Torquemada* series nor the complexity of the characters allow for a straightforward and unique interpretation of Galdós's message. The narration of the social tensions which the usurer Torquemada experiences as he is transformed into a respected capitalist allows Galdós to reflect on the nature and moral values of modern Spanish society. In these novels Galdós also tackles one of the fundamental questions of debate among present social historians: the degree of continuity and change in the social structure of nineteenth-century Spain. The outlook in the novels is ostensibly pessimistic. Just as the marriage between Torquemada and Fidela results in a severely handicapped child, the combination of the new market mentality and the old *rentista* aristocratic model results in a corrupt and unproductive system. Even the moral solution offered by charity, which is however suggestive of a return to pre-disentailment times, is undermined by irony. Any sense of negativity is dispelled, however, by the humour in the novels. Moreover, as Davies points out, the *Torquemada* novels must be seen in the perspective of Galdós's engagement with the idea of *regeneración*. From this point of view, the intellectual openness of the novels invites the reader to engage with the problems which are raised in them, and to reflect on them constructively (Davies 2007: 86-87; 99-100).

Chapter 3

Revolution and the Politics of Religion in *Ángel Guerra*

Ángel Guerra (1890-1891) has often been analysed in terms of the protagonists' individual journey in search of spiritual fulfilment. This has been the approach of critics such as Casaldueiro (1961), Correa (1962), Colin (1967) and Jagoe (1995), among others. From this perspective, these novels, together with *Nazarín* and *Misericordia*, are seen to reflect Galdós's increasing preoccupation during the 1890s with spiritual matters. Jagoe, who refers to *Ángel Guerra* as 'the most turbid and outlandish of the *Novelas contemporáneas*', argues that this is a transitional novel in which Galdós's focus begins to shift from the 'multifarious social milieux of his earlier novels to the spiritual struggles of particular individuals' (Jagoe 1995: 161). In the same vein, Sinnigen considers that the historical perspective which Galdós adopts in the *novelas contemporáneas* before *Ángel Guerra* is replaced by an effort to transcend history in the novels which follow it, particularly in *Nazarín*, *Halma* and *Misericordia* (Sinnigen, 1978: 233-235). This view has been challenged by critics such as Fuentes Peris, who argues that these novels participate fully in contemporary social debates, especially those about poverty and charity (Fuentes Peris, 2003). Ewald, for her part, sees a deep historical engagement in *Ángel Guerra*, particularly in relation to the social effects of the 1830s *desamortización* (Ewald, 2011). Sinnigen also acknowledges the centrality of the disentailment process in the narrative of *Ángel Guerra*, and argues that this is probably the novel where 'esa política económica liberal desempeña su papel más destacado' (Sinnigen 1996: 199). This chapter aims to contribute further to the socio-historical reading of *Ángel Guerra*. As seen in the previous chapter, the question of the role of Mendizábal's *desamortización* in the creation of the new moneyed classes runs through the *Torquemada* novels. The last of the series, *Torquemada y San Pedro*, introduces the theme of charity as a way of redressing the negative effects of the confiscation of Church property, to great ironic effect. The question of the *desamortización* also underpins the narrative in *Ángel Guerra*, a novel written before the last three of the *Torquemada* novels. Through this historical theme, Galdós raises issues concerning social inequalities in liberal society. Like *Halma* in the 1895 eponymous novel,

Ángel wishes to found a charitable institution based on what he believes to be the true principles of Christianity. His project, although doomed to failure, challenges the tenets of political economy and the liberal approach to beneficence and the poor. Questions of religion are, of course, paramount to this novel, but they do not only concern the spiritual. It is important to note that religion was inextricably intertwined with the socio-political conflicts of nineteenth-century Spain, and that, as Carr observes in relation to the Restoration period, it was ‘the prism through which all other conflict was refracted’ (Carr 1966: 464).

Desamortización in Contemporary Public Debate

Ewald argues that the representation in *Ángel Guerra* of the three social groups affected by the 1830s disentailment laws – the bourgeoisie, the Church and the poor – offers a historical narrative of ‘the new social space that accompanied Spain’s transition to modernity’ (Ewald 2011: 47). As she points out, the *desamortizaciones* which were carried out by Mendizábal in 1836-1837 and Madoz in 1855 established the foundations of the liberal State by replacing the Old Regime socio-economic structure with a capitalist one (Ewald 2011: 51). Mendizábal’s legislation was directed at Church property mostly. As Callahan observes, the appropriation of the land of both the regular and secular clergy, together with the abolition of the tithe, ‘undermined the twin pillars that had supported the finances of the Old Regime Church’ (Callahan 1984: 213). Madoz’s 1855 disentailment law affected land belonging to municipalities and charitable organizations as well as the Church (Shubert 1990: 58-59). His legislation was intended to finalize the dismantling of the Old Regime. As a report on the new bill states: ‘la ley propuesta es una revolución fundamental en la manera de ser de la nación española; es el golpe de muerte dado al antiguo y deplorable régimen; es, en fin, la fórmula y resumen de la regeneración política de nuestra patria’ (cited by Segura 1973: 301).

The objectives of the disentailment legislation were multiple and ambitious. As Segura indicates, Mendizábal hoped to reduce the national debt, to obtain sufficient funds with which to end the Carlist War and, by putting Church property in circulation, to create an extensive middle class which would identify with the liberal monarchy (Segura 1973: 84). However, Herr points out that the aim of

bringing solvency to the State was incompatible with that of creating an extensive body of small proprietors. As sales at auctions inevitably sought to obtain maximum profit for the treasury, only the richest bidders could succeed (Herr 1974: 85). Indeed, much of the contemporary criticism of Mendizábal's and Madoz's legislation focussed on its elitist nature.

Since the question of the social effects of the *desamortización* was intensely discussed during the second half of the nineteenth century, it is important to examine in closer detail some of the main ideological positions within this debate. For the liberal apologists of the *desamortización*, such as the *progresista* historian Carlos Rubio, the disentailment process was necessary as a means to dismantle the Old Regime system of land property, which he saw as the root of Spain's poverty problem. In consonance with the optimism of *laissez faire* liberalism, he believed that the disentailment legislation would make property accessible to all of those willing to work for it. As he writes in an 1857 article:

El desestancamiento de la propiedad, haciéndola entrar de nuevo en el comercio, la multiplica, la divide, aumenta el número de propietarios que la cuidan como cosa suya, en vez de descuidarla como cosa ajena, y devuelve al pobre la justa esperanza de adquirir por medio de su trabajo lo que le hace falta. (Rubio 1857 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, V: 40)

By contrast, critics of the *desamortización* from the left of the political spectrum regarded it as a lost opportunity to create a fairer society. While they agreed that the legal dismantling of the Old Regime was necessary, they objected to the way it was carried out. As seen in the previous chapter, Flórez Estrada was one of the most outspoken early critics. In his 1836 article 'Del uso que debe hacerse de los bienes nacionales', he considers that Mendizábal's reforms would be detrimental to all social classes except the speculators:

sólo ganan los especuladores en la degradación del género humano; sólo ganan los hombres habituados a enriquecerse escandalosamente en pocos días sin más trabajo que el de especular sobre la ignorancia y miseria de los pueblos; sobre la injusticia y desfachatez de los gobernantes. (Flórez Estrada 1836 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, V: 21)

Thus he opposes the sale of national property in favour of a system of leaseholds for the peasants. He argues that in this way it is possible to improve the lot of agrarian workers by redistributing the land, and also to improve the relations between the proprietors and the tenant farmers (Capellán de Miguel 2007, V: 20). Flórez Estrada's proposals were generally received with hostility in government circles. However, both his questioning of the most emblematic policies of Spanish economic liberalism and the connection he made between private property, *desamortización* and pauperism, opened a debate which would influence the understanding of the social problems affecting Spain throughout the century (Capellán de Miguel 2007, I: 64).

Thus, in an article of 1857, the democrat Pi y Margall argues that the *desamortización* had achieved 'la elevación gradual de la clase media' but that it had not benefited the 'clase proletaria'; it did not result in a more equal distribution of wealth, and it did not address the causes of poverty: 'desamortizar es poner en circulación una masa de valores, no repartirlos en virtud de ninguna ley distributiva, dictada por intereses sociales' (Pi y Margall 1857 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, V: 42). Despite these criticisms, Pi y Margall maintains that the disentailment legislation had been necessary as 'la circulación de la riqueza es [...] tan necesaria para la vida de los pueblos, como la sangre para el cuerpo de los individuos' (Pi y Margall 1857 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, V: 43). As Valle Calzado points out, Flórez Estrada's ideas also influenced contemporary authors such as Larra and Espronceda, later writers like Galdós, Valera and Blasco Ibáñez, and also *regeneracionista* intellectuals such as Joaquín Costa. Thus, in an article of 1882, Valera expresses his preference for the 'sabio economista' Flórez Estrada over the 'engreimiento de Mendizábal', whose *desamortización* went against the 'sentido moral de los hombres amantes de la causa de las reformas' (cited by Valle Calzado 1995: 6).

Flórez Estrada's analysis of the negative social consequences of Mendizábal's *desamortización* was shared both by writers on the left of the political spectrum and by conservative Catholic writers who resented the sale of Church property. In more general terms, what both groups shared was a lack of faith in the ability of economic liberalism to create a better and fairer society, as it is attested by their attacks on the principles of political economy. Among those denouncing the

effect of the *desamortización* from the conservative front, it is worth mentioning the influential *doctrinario* politician and journalist Andrés Borrego. As Suárez Cortina points out, the *doctrinarios*, which were a branch of the *moderado* party, aimed at reconciling the traditions of Old Regime Spain with the demands of a modern liberal State (Suárez Cortina 2008: 196-197). Borrego agrees with Flórez Estrada on the effects of the *desamortización*, despite the deep differences in their ideological perspectives. In his work *La cuestión social considerada en su relación con la historia* (1881), he argues that Mendizábal's laws had been detrimental to the public in general and to the 'clases jornaleras' in particular. Thus, the sale of Church property constituted an 'injusticia' and a 'usurpación de derechos', as it had not taken into account that 'en [los bienes del clero] tenían una parte tácita las clases menesterosas, a cuyas necesidades atendía aquél' (Borrego 1881 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, V: 45). Borrego considers that it is now the duty of the State to remedy the wrongs done to the popular classes by means of interventionist social policies:

Dentro de principios de justicia, de bien entendida solidaridad social, dentro del espíritu de fraternidad y amor al prójimo, inseparables del principio cristiano, corresponde buscar los medios [...] de balancear las desigualdades que han sido la inevitable consecuencia de las alteraciones que la sociedad moderna ha traído. (Borrego 1881 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, V: 46)

As well as the principle of social justice, Borrego stresses the need to dispel the danger to society inherent in 'ese ejército de descontentos que se suma por millones y están siendo motivo de alarma para los gobiernos más fuertemente constituidos' (Borrego 1881 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, V: 47).

The importance of the disentailment process in the religious, economic and social history of Spain has consistently been stressed by modern historians of nineteenth-century Spain. As Segura maintains:

El trasvase de miles de fincas rústicas y urbanas, la pérdida de gran parte del patrimonio de la Iglesia, la exclaustración de miles de religiosos, el abandono de los edificios que fueron conventos, la venta de bienes cuantiosos que desde hacía siglos pertenecían a instituciones civiles y la aparición de una burguesía compradora de todos los bienes desamortizados son elementos que

se suman para hacer de la desamortización ‘el gran fenómeno del siglo XIX’.
(Segura 1973: 51)

The great historical significance which Galdós himself attached to the *desamortización* is manifest in his article of 15 April 1885, ‘El primero de mayo’. Here he argues that, as a result of the disentailment process, the middle class and the bourgeoisie have emerged as the new dominant classes and thus turned themselves into the new social oppressors:

la tiranía subsiste, sólo que los tiranos somos ahora nosotros, los que antes éramos *víctimas* y *mártires*, la clase media, la burguesía, que antaño luchó con el clero y la aristocracia hasta destruir al uno y a la otra con la desamortización y la desvinculación [...] El pueblo se apodera de las riquezas acumuladas durante siglos por las clases privilegiadas. Con estas riquezas se crean los capitales burgueses [...] Y resulta que los desheredados de entonces se truecan en privilegiados. (*Política española*, II: 268-269)

In *Ángel Guerra*, Galdós engages deeply with the contemporary debate on the effects of the *desamortización* on Spanish society, and in so doing, he raises questions over the country’s new liberal values. As Ewald argues, Ángel Guerra’s journey from Madrid to Toledo, the two cities where the novel takes place, serves to survey the change in land ownership which resulted from the disentailment legislation (Ewald 2011: 55-56). Thus, whereas the first part of the novel presents the Guerra family in the context of the Madrid bourgeoisie, Parts II and III explore the provincial origins of the family’s wealth and Ángel’s – and his wealth’s – return to his family’s homeland. Ángel’s move from the capital into the Toledan province also goes in parallel with his own personal development, which sees him turning away from politics and towards religion. As Sinnigen observes, in *Ángel Guerra* the personal and the social converge. Ángel’s personal conflicts, which spring from the sense of rebelliousness which he feels in connection with his dominant mother, are intertwined with ‘una espinosa problemática socionacional, la búsqueda de un renovado futuro para España en medio de las ruinas arqueológicas del pasado’ (Sinnigen 1996: 203).

The Toledan Origin of the Guerras' Fortune

Early on in the novel, Ángel's family's money and status are explained as a product of the *desamortización*. In connection with Ángel's mother, Doña Sales, the narrator comments:

Pertenecía la tal señora a la renombrada familia de los Monegros de Toledo, en quien se cifraba, según ella, toda la honradez y respetabilidad del género humano. Sin pretensiones aristocráticas, doña Sales creía representar en su persona esa nobleza secundaria y modesta que ha sido el nervio de la sociedad desde la desamortización y la desvinculación. 'Mis abuelos fueron humildes – decía –, mis padres se enriquecieron con el trabajo y los negocios lícitos. Somos personas bien nacidas, cristianas, decentes, y tenemos para vivir, sin haber quitado nada a nadie'. (AG I: 88)

With the expressions 'según ella' and 'creía representar', the narrator emphasizes the fact that this is Doña Sales's vision of herself, thus suggesting the affectation of sobriety. The stilted acerbity of her character is symbolized by her permanent use of the 'férrea máquina del corsé', which the narrator presents as encapsulating the inflexibility of her social pride (AG I: 88). Details of the Monegros' and Guerras' economic ascent through the purchase of disentailed property in their ancestral Toledo are given in Part II of the novel by the Toledan priest Francisco Mancebo. On meeting Ángel, Mancebo reminisces about Ángel's paternal grandfather, who had worked as a mule driver. He also remembers that Doña Sales's father had acquired 'el solar de San Miguel de los Ángeles, cuando los vendieron como bienes nacionales, y el cigarral de Guadalupe, una de las donaciones de los Téllez de Meneses para dotar misas que los racioneros debíamos decir en la capilla del Sepulcro' (AG II: 300). Mancebo suggests that, as Ángel's maternal grandfather's wealth increased, so did his social snobbery. Thus, after a good marriage, Doña Sales's father 'se atiesó un poco...' (AG II: 300). Later on in the novel, we learn that Ángel's father had acquired the *finca* La Degollada, which had belonged to the Monasterio de Sisle (AG II: 389). The Guerra family's wealth and social position are in this way intrinsically linked to the formation of the liberal State through its banner economic policy, the *desamortización*. On the death of his mother, Ángel inherits a considerable fortune consisting of four houses in Madrid, numerous urban and rustic

fincas and a stockpile of government bonds (*AG I*: 159). Mancebo, who considers himself a victim of the expropriations of Church property, offers in Parts II and III of the novel a narrative of the Guerras's economic ascent which casts irony upon Doña Sales's pride in her family's financial propriety (*AG, I*: 89). He muses on the magnitude of Ángel's wealth thus:

Dios sacramentado, cuantísimo dinero! [...] este señor cuenta su caudal por millones... ¿Cómo será un millón? Quisiera yo verlo. Dehesas, casas, renta del Estado. Ya lo creo... no apandó poco su padre, y también su abuelo, comprando todito lo que era de la santa Iglesia. (*AG II*: 322).

Doña Sales is presented as an active member of Restoration bourgeois society. She is closely associated with some of the characters which populate earlier *novelas contemporáneas* such as Cristóbal Medina, el Marqués de Taramundi and Manuel Pez, whom Ángel describes as 'nulidades huecas, fariseos y escribas de este dogmatismo imbécil de las conveniencias sociales' (*AG I*: 124). Both Ángel's initial revolutionary phase and his later mysticism are symptoms of his class disaffection, and it is not coincidental that a desire to address social injustices by subverting the prevalent system lies at the root of both phases. When, after his political disenchantment, Ángel tries to explain his recent revolutionary past to his daughter's governess, Leré, he stresses the idealism which had been part of his character since childhood:

Desde niño [...] sentía yo en mí la exaltación humanitaria. [...] me impresionaban el dolor y la injusticia, compañía inseparable de la humanidad, y se me antojaba que el mal debía y podía remediarse. ¡Ensueños de chiquillo despierto y algo pedante! Ya hombre, persistió en mí la idea de que la sociedad no está bien como está, y que debemos reformarla. (*AG I*: 167)

Ángel did not expect the revolutionaries to bring 'el bien y la justicia' immediately. He believed, however, that the destruction of the old system would bring in a new and better beginning:

volcando la sociedad, poniendo patas arriba todos los organismos antiguos, dañados y caducos, preparaban el advenimiento de una sociedad nueva. [...] La anarquía produce en estos casos el bien inmenso de plantear el problema

humano en el terreno primitivo, y de resucitar las energías iniciales de la civilización, la energía del derecho, del bien y de la justicia. (AG I: 168)

These are the anarchist-inspired ideas which motivate Ángel's active participation in revolutionary politics.

Ángel Guerra and Political Revolution

As Troncoso points out, the failed republican *pronunciamiento* in which Ángel has just taken part at the beginning of the novel can be identified as the September 19 1886 military uprising led by General Villacampa, who appears as Campón in the novel. Since, as a child, Ángel had witnessed the shooting by firing squad of the San Gil sergeants in 1866 and he is thirty at the beginning of the novel (AG I: 15), it would have been easy for contemporary readers to identify the event (AG: XVIII-XIX). The choice is significant. As González Calleja notes, the Villacampada, which was to be the last *pronunciamiento* of the nineteenth century, was condemned both by the government press and the socialist one. Thus, in an address to foreign diplomatic representatives, the minister Segismundo Moret stressed the indifference and even hostility with which the people of Madrid had reacted to this late military uprising (González Calleja 1998: 133). For González Calleja, the rejection from socialist circles indicates the extent to which workers' movements felt distanced from these 'procedimientos revolucionarios utilizados por la pequeña burguesía republicana bajo la cobertura demagógica de la "voluntad popular"' (González Calleja 1998: 133). Even republican politicians distanced themselves from the *pronunciamiento*. Thus, in an article written in November 1886, Emilio Castelar declares that 'si la República nos fuese ofrecida como resultado de una insurrección militar, la rechazaríamos, porque sería la ruina de España' (cited by González Calleja 1998: 134-135). Galdós himself severely condemns the failed uprising, during which two high ranking officers were murdered, in the 25 September 1886 article 'Insurrecciones y motines. Villacampa':

Me repugnan tanto y me son tan odiosos los movimientos militares que quisiera ocuparme de ellos lo menos posible [...] La última hazaña del militarismo político [...] es tan repugnante, y está manchada con actos tan

feos, que bien quisiera borrarla de nuestros anales o hacerme la ilusión de que es un sueño nada más, un desvarío de la mente española sin valor ninguno en la realidad. (*Política española*, I: 213)

In accordance with Moret's comments, Galdós maintains that this 'criminal intentona' has been met with 'indignación' and 'desprecio' in the whole country and that public opinion has never before been as 'unánime como ahora en la reprobación de los trastornos militares' (*Política española*, I: 214; 216). In *Ángel Guerra*, Campón's failed uprising is also rejected by both press and people. Thus, Ángel informs his lover, Dulce, that the newspapers 'censuran el movimiento por descabellado' (*AG I*: 20), while Dulce, for her part, retells what is being said in the 'plazuela': 'que habéis sido unos tontos, y que no sabéis hacer revoluciones [...] que fracasasteis antes de empezar, y que no habéis hecho más que chapucerías' (*AG I*: 14).

In another article published on 29 September on the Villacampada, 'La voz de la clemencia', Galdós also airs rumours that the motivation behind this insurrection must be placed in the realm of stock-market speculation, rather than in that of political ideas (*Política Española*, I: 224-225). Indeed, in numerous articles of the 1880s and 1890s Galdós denounces the cynicism which underlies the revolutionary politics of the republican Manuel Ruíz Zorrilla, whom Galdós considers the main instigator of republican revolt. In an article of 18 January 1886, Galdós suggests that the 'motines zorrillistas no son verdaderas tentativas revolucionarias, sino maniobras realizadas en confabulación con ciertos jugadores de Bolsa' (*Cartas desconocidas*: 170). He concedes, however, that 'el fanatismo político, aunque extraviado, tiene algo de noble cuando se relaciona, aunque de un modo remoto, con las ideas' (*Cartas desconocidas*: 170).

In his aforementioned article of 25 September, Galdós also presents the revolutionary republicans as being out of step with society. Whereas he dolefully acknowledges that, in Spain 'todos los triunfos del principio liberal sobre la reacción han sido ganados por la fuerza' (*Política Española*, I: 216), Galdós maintains that public opinion is becoming increasingly hostile to the interference of the military in politics (*Política Española*, I: 217). In a similar vein, on 30 December 1886, just a few months after the Villacampada, he states that 'los revolucionarios furibundos

están de capa caída' (*Cartas desconocidas*: 211). Over a year later, in an article of 9 February 1888, Galdós optimistically affirms that the tendency in modern politics is towards 'pacificación' (*Política Española*, II: 99). In contrast with Zorrilla's 'pesadilla revolucionaria', Galdós praises the political possibilism of the republican Emilio Castelar: 'el gran orador es enemigo irreconciliable de las sediciones militares y de toda clase de revoluciones; prefiere la libertad dentro de la monarquía a una república desordenada y licenciosa, y apoya lealmente al partido liberal' (*Política Española*, II: 98). In *Ángel Guerra*, it is Simón Babel's wife, Doña Catalina, who conveys the idea that the time for political revolution has now passed. In connection with her husband's and her son's revolutionary pretensions, she argues that there is now more to gain from institutional stability:

Todo el pelo que se puede echar en España con las revoluciones, lo echaron los del 68, y ya no hay más pelo que echar por ese lado. Los tiempos han cambiado: yo os lo digo. Emplead vuestro talento en hacer la felicidad del país, afianzando las instituciones [...] y abrid la boca a ver si cogéis el higuí. (*AG I*: 58)

In this way, the association of Campón's failed *pronunciamiento* with the discredited historical Villacampada clearly establishes the futility of Ángel's revolutionary ideas. As Hafter points out, Ángel's dabbling in political revolution is already parodied in the novel's first scene, in which Ángel comes back to the small apartment which he shares with Dulce the morning after the failed insurgency. As he begins to recall the events of the previous night, Ángel becomes exasperated by the irritating buzzing of a bumblebee. The inflated militaristic vocabulary with which the narrator describes Dulce's attempts to capture and kill the insect serves to mock Ángel's revolutionary heroics (Hafter 1969: 39). In Ángel's febrile imagination, the bumblebee is also transformed into a powerful enemy, an 'animal monstruoso que llenaba todo el aposento con sus alas vibrantes' (*AG I*: 11). For Valis, this monstrous aggrandizement of the irritating insect is reminiscent of Goya's nightmarish depiction of his bird-like creatures in his etching *Capricho 43*, which carries the famous caption 'El sueño de la razón produce monstruos'. Valis sees this scene as encapsulating the way in which the imaginative and the monstrous appear closely intertwined throughout the novel (Valis 1993: 221; 224). O'Connor suggests that the

frequent use in *Ángel Guerra* of images which relate to the unnatural helps to create an atmosphere which reflects Ángel's fears and obsessions (O'Connor 1988: 74). From this perspective, it is significant that, in Ángel's febrile state of mind, he associates the dead bumblebee with an officer whom he and his comrades had killed during the uprising. It is thus apparent that a sense of guilt is driving his nightmarish visions. So, as Ángel instructs Dulce to get rid of the officer's corpse, which he believes to be lying on his bedroom floor, he protests: 'Yo no lo maté, ¡Caramba! Fuimos varios, muchos; y no es justo que siendo de todos la culpa, el cadáver se me meta en mi casa (AG I: 30.)'. Ángel is soon convinced that Dulce has indeed removed the corpse, but sees it immediately coming back in the form of the infuriating bumblebee, 'chocando en las paredes y dándose testarazos contra el techo' (AG I: 30). It is also noteworthy that, as O'Connor notes, the description of the dead bumblebee mirrors the depiction of Ángel's crushed body in what the narrator explains to be one of Ángel's recurrent nightmares (O'Connor 1988: 75-76). In the former image, as the insect lies dead on the floor, it seems to 'comerse sus propias patas y hundir la cabeza en la panza turgente' (AG I: 11). In his nightmare, Ángel sees himself falling from the top floor of a building in construction. As a result of the impact, Ángel's body turns in on itself: 'las piernas se le embutían dentro del cuerpo, sentía los fémures penetrando al través del estómago y pulmones y saliendo por los hombros como charreteras' (AG I: 93). Images of body distortion and death abound in the novel, and are also present in Ángel's second recurrent dream. Significantly, this dream makes an explicit reference to another failed nineteenth-century republican uprising, that of the San Gil sergeants in 1866. As mentioned previously, Ángel had witnessed the execution of the sergeants when he was a child. The image which haunts him in his dreams is that of a man who watched the execution near him, and whose expression like a 'máscara griega contraída por la mueca del espanto' (AG I: 96) conveyed to Ángel the full horror of the events. It is worth noting that Galdós himself witnessed the events of the San Gil rising, as he recounts in his 1915-1916 *Memorias de un desmemoriado*. In particular, Galdós recalls the sergeants as they walked to their execution, an episode which he describes as 'espectáculo tristísimo, el más trágico y siniestro que he visto en mi vida' (*Memorias de un desmemoriado*: 26).

In this way, the episode of Ángel's participation in the failed *pronunciamiento* establishes a link between the personal and the national which is sustained throughout the novel. The title of the first chapter, 'Desengañado', points to Ángel's political disillusionment and to the dampening of his revolutionary spirit in the aftermath of the failed uprising. As he relates to Dulce the events of the previous night, Ángel begins to disassociate himself from his recent revolutionary ideas: '¡Desengaño como éste...! Paréceme que despierto de un sueño de presunción, credulidad y tontería [...] En fin, el error duele, pero instruye' (AG I: 15). He now regards his political ideas as Quixotic: 'En la edad peligrosa, cogiome un vértigo político, enfermedad de fanatismo, ansia instintiva de mejorar la suerte de los pueblos, de aminorar el mal humano... resabio quijotesco que todos llevamos en la masa de la sangre' (AG I: 15). The narrator's comments also link Ángel's revolutionary ideas with youthful political naivety: 'El desengaño de las cosas políticas labraba profundo surco en su alma, que se sentía corregida de ilusiones falaces' (AG I: 35). The swiftness of Ángel's ideological turnaround over the days following the failed *pronunciamiento* humorously casts doubt upon the depth of his ideals. So, with his newly acquired political pragmatism, Ángel concludes now that, 'bien mirado, es tontería apurarse por esa entidad oscura y vaga que llamamos el país y que no se cuida de los que se sacrifican por él' (AG I: 35). The narrator also informs us that 'su fanatismo se había enfriado tanto, que apenas se inquietaba por la suerte de sus cómplices' (AG I: 35). However, when Ángel later learns of Campón's pardon, the narrator remarks: 'su alegría fue grande, y su fanatismo, por la acción antipirética de la alegría en la física revolucionaria, se enfrió hasta llegar a cero' (AG I: 39). The fading of Ángel's revolutionary spirit following defeat concords with Galdós's words in the previously mentioned article of 9 February 1888 concerning Zorrilla's revolutionary tactics: 'nada se apaga más pronto que el furor revolucionario, mayormente si el tiempo se encarga de enfriarlo con una serie de fracasos' (*Política española*, II: 98).

It is ironic that Ángel himself is shielded from the legal consequences of his involvement in the rising by virtue of the family associations which he professes to despise, particularly the connection with the Marqués de Taramundi, who sells him protection (AG I: 158). The hypocrisy of this preferential treatment is pinpointed by Taramundi himself, who advises Ángel to be discreet, lest rumours emerge that

‘mientras se persigue a otros infelices que no tienen sobre qué caerse muertos, a ti, por ser pudiente, te dejan libre y encima te dan confites’ (AG I: 158). Here, it is interesting to note that, in connection with the escape from prison of five sergeants involved in the failed 19 September rising, Galdós denounces in an article of 7 January 1887 the impunity which protects the insurgents:

Es que las relaciones personales, los miramientos, el temor a indisponerse con tales o cuales elementos juegan siempre un papel obstruccionista en la instrucción de las causas militares [...] Y por salvar a este o el otro amigo, prevalece la impunidad absoluta, y los criminales son amparados a granel. (*Cartas desconocidas*: 220)

Rebellion and Guilt: A Son’s Search for Emancipation

Another factor which contributes to the cooling of Ángel’s revolutionary ideals is the death of Doña Sales soon after the failed rising. The theme of guilt appears here again, as the narrator explains that Ángel ascribes her death to his rebelliousness and, more specifically, to his last and subdued argument with her: ‘su conciencia no se detenía en la responsabilidad moral, sino que iba más allá [...] y examinaba [...] los hechos de la última noche para deducir su culpabilidad material en la muerte de la infeliz señora’ (AG I: 135). It is crucial to consider that Ángel’s political dissent is presented as the natural expression of his ideological conflict with his mother, whom he describes to Leré as the ‘personificación del orden social’ (AG I: 169). As Sinnigen notes, the theme of filial disobedience is at the heart of the novel’s argument (Sinnigen 1996: 186), and significantly, the narrator refers to Ángel’s involvement in the failed military uprising as a ‘caso grave de emancipación’ (AG I: 39). It is noteworthy that, as the narrator informs us, Doña Sales takes pride in the fact that the Monegros and Guerras had always stayed within ‘términos medios’ in politics (AG I: 89). Moreover, she had moulded her husband ‘a su propia hechura’, turning him into a model of social moderation. As the narrator observes:

aquel buen señor fue toda su vida liberal tibio y pálido, persuadido de que lo decoroso para un hombre de bienes es *no meterse en politiquerías*; sujeto tan medido en todo [...] que jamás hizo cosa alguna que disonara en medio de la

afirmación social; tan enemigo de la tiranía como de las revoluciones;
religioso sin inquisición, liberal sin bullangas. (*AG I*: 89)

Ángel himself is aware of the personal motivation behind his revolutionary spirit. In the interior monologue which Ángel addresses to Doña Sales as she lies sick next to him, he makes her responsible for his social infractions: ‘soy revolucionario por el odio que tomé al medio en que me criaste, y a las infinitas trabas que poner querías a mi pensamiento’ (*AG I*: 125). In particular, he blames her for his disastrous marriage to the blatantly incompatible Pepita Pez, whom Ángel describes as the ‘trasunto fiel de la tontería remilgada de su papá’ (*AG I*: 124). In reference to the hatred which he felt towards his father-in-law, Manuel Pez, Ángel confesses to Leré that he had dreamed of getting involved in a mighty political riot so that he would be able to ‘colgar de un farol a ese tipo’ (*AG I*: 169). As he explains, the death of his wife marked the end of his filial submissiveness (*AG I*: 124). Ángel’s relationship with Dulce, a former prostitute, also constitutes an act of rebellion against his mother and the conventional society which she represents. Tellingly, he describes Dulce as the antithesis of his late wife (*AG I*: 124). Reflecting on his mother’s inflexible rejection of his lover, Ángel points at the bourgeois conventionalities which she has internalized:

¡Fuerte cosa que no pueda uno vivir con sus propios sentimientos, sino con los prestados, con los que quiere imponernos esta imbécil burguesía [...] que todo lo quiere gobernar, el Estado y la familia, la colectividad y las personas, y con su tutela insoportable no nos deja ni respirar...! No culpo a mi madre [...] culpo al antipático medio social en que ha vivido, y a la tiranía de clase, a la cual no ha podido ella sustraerse. (*AG I*: 84)

As Sinnigen notes, in Ángel ‘lo político se junta con lo sexual en un intento de lograr la liberación del represivo regazo materno’ (Sinnigen 1996: 187). Thus Braulio, the family’s administrator, explains to Ángel that the reasons for Doña Sales’s renewed anger with him are both his rumoured involvement in the murder of an officer during the insurgency and his continued association with Dulce (*AG I*: 82-83). After listening distractedly to Ángel’s muddled excuses for the political murder, Braulio stresses the ignominy of his sexual impropriety: ‘¿Y esto no es deshonra, querido?, y

este escándalo, ¿tiene alguna disculpa?, ¿te parece propio de una persona de tu posición y de tu nombre vivir de esa manera?’ (AG I: 83).

The night Ángel returns to his family home after a month’s absence to find his mother sick in bed, he imagines the long diatribe which she would direct at him when her health returned. In this imagined address, Ángel envisions Doña Sales sarcastically associating his political and sexual life and making disdainful references to Dulce and her swindler brothers:

todos esos ¡dogmas! Que quieres meternos en la cabeza con ayuda de los militronches, no tienen maldito chiste sin la salsa del amor libre [...] Claro, para regenerar la sociedad hay que empezar por lo de abajo, y buscar nuestra compañía en las barreduras sociales. Hay que enseñar el dogma [...] a la prostituta, al ladrón y al falsificador, y sacar de los presidios la sociedad que ha de ocupar los sitios donde hoy estamos las personas honradas. (AG I: 91).

Doña Sales’s own inner thoughts match the views which Ángel imputes to her in his reverie, as we learn in the interior monologue which she addresses to Ángel on her sick-bed – and which runs parallel both to Ángel’s interior address to his mother and to an external and conventionally unremarkable conversation between mother and son. Thus she silently remonstrates against her son’s choice of social associations:

Una persona como yo, que en su familia no ha visto nunca más que ejemplos de honradez, de cristiandad y de moderación, ¿ha de sufrir con calma que su hijo [...] se pase la vida entre la gente más desalmada [...] pretendiendo invertir la sociedad para traernos aquí la anarquía, y eso que Taramundi llama *el cuarto estado*, que yo entiendo es el populacho ignorante, vengativo y puerco? (AG I: 120)

For Doña Sales, Ángel’s socially unequal liaison with the ex-prostitute Dulce is commensurate with his dabbling in political revolution, as both entail a rearrangement of the social order which threatens her status. She reveals the extent of her social anxiety when she tells Ángel that she would rather see her grandchild Ción dead than under Dulce’s care (AG I: 128). However, the narrative emphasis on the recent origin of the Monegros’ and Guerras’ wealth and status casts irony upon Doña Sales’s unshakable belief in her rightful place at the top of society. In this

respect, it is also worth noting that Dulce's mother, Doña Catalina, comes from a social extraction comparable to that of Ángel's grandparents. Whereas she is not of royal lineage, as she deludedly believes, her parents were modestly prosperous Toledan farmers (*AG I*: 43-44; *AG II*: 380). Through Dulce's marriage at the end of the novel to her well-off cousin Casiano, who now owns her mother's family home, Doña Catalina sees a return to her family origins. Humorously on Galdós's part, she even inherits the ruins of a disentailed Orden de Calatrava castle from a second cousin, with which she becomes an incidental beneficiary of the *desamortización* (*AG II*: 380). It is also significant that, on his deathbed, Ángel bequeaths to Dulce the most personal and status-charged of his mother's possessions, her jewellery, a gesture of clear defiance toward Doña Sales's class values.

Fittingly, Ángel meets Dulce as a result of his involvement in radical politics, when he visits her father, Simón Babel, concerning some conspiratorial matter (*AG*: 49-50). By then Dulce has been prostituted by her parents, following a period of economic penury during which 'lo moral hubo de sucumbir ante lo físico' (*AG I*: 49). The association of Ángel's politics with those of the penniless and amoral Babel men highlights the disparity of their political motivations. As the narrator explains, Don Simón and his oldest son Arístides were 'muy metidos en la política rabiosa y desesperada, por no serles posible arrimarse a ninguna otra' (*AG I*: 50). In connection to Arístides, Ángel himself remarks that 'esa miseria desesperada y rabiosa [...] son muy de temer. En tales condiciones, un hombre de su temperamento y de sus hábitos me asusta como un animal venenoso' (*AG I*: 71). From this perspective, it is ironic that Ángel correlates his own political radicalism to the precariousness of his financial situation, which is the result of his mother's unwillingness to provide him with sufficient funds. As he explains to Leré: 'la escasez, encendiendo en mí la ira, el despecho y el furor de independencia, me impulsó a trabar amistades con gente de la peor condición posible' (*AG I*: 170). Another source of irony springs from the way in which Don Simón's crude clichés of social revolution counterpoint the rhetoric of Ángel's self-assessment as a naive idealist. Like Ángel, and in accordance with anarchist ideas, Don Simón prioritizes revolution over reform: 'Venga la revolución de cualquier manera, que es lo que importa. Tabla rasa y después veremos [...] En ocho días, España del revés, como se vuelve un calcetín' (*AG I*: 62). Also like Ángel, Don Simón does not expect the

revolution to moralize society ‘de golpe y como por ensalmo’, since, in a country as corrupt as Spain, ‘no es fácil limpiarlo todo en un día’ (AG I: 63). He also stipulates the demise of the ‘clases pasivas’ – to which Ángel’s *rentista* family belongs – and in relation to the Church, he is against the State funding of it: ‘las misas páguelas quien las oiga’ (AG I: 63). It is worth noting that Don Simón’s own revolutionary leanings fade later on in the novel after he succeeds in securing a post as *Inspector del Timbre* in Toledo. As Don Simón and his wife see a rise in their standing ‘bajo el punto de vista de la representación social’, they take to attending daily mass in order to ‘darse más lustre y apersonarse más’ (AG II: 485). Nonetheless, it is ironic that Ángel dismisses Don Simón’s revolutionary ideas as ‘republicanismo de cháchara’ (AG I: 71), just as the hollowness of his own political convictions becomes manifest.

Fausto, Don Simón’s counterfeiter younger son, also incorporates revolutionary discourses in his conversations with Ángel. He argues that revolution is inevitable in the face of growing social inequalities: ‘cada vez hay más pobres, y [...] los ricos son cada día más ricos. Consecuencias de esto: que el mundo va de peor en peor, y que las revoluciones amenazan’ (AG I: 218). However, it is clear that the inveterately cynical Fausto is driven by self-interest rather than social concern, and the narrator dismisses his revolutionary talk as ‘cháchara picaresca’ (AG I: 218). Humorously, Fausto makes use of Ángel’s own social justice rhetoric in order to justify his 1000 *reales* swindle to Ángel through his administrator Braulio (AG I: 137): ‘Las riquezas están mal repartidas; tú lo has dicho mil veces. Por ley de equidad, algo de lo que a ti te sobraba debía venir a nosotros, que no habíamos encendido lumbre en dos días’ (AG I: 217). Fausto also reasons that Ángel’s inherited wealth renders him unfit to pass moral judgement on the underprivileged: ‘Mientras no sepas lo que es el hambre, no hables una palabra de moral [...] ¿Qué razón hay para que nosotros nos muramos, y vivas tú y otros que no trabajan ni tienen ninguna habilidad?’ (AG I: 217).

Galdós’s use of irony in dealing with Ángel’s and the Babeles’ political opinions serves both to ridicule their use of revolutionary clichés and also highlight the genuine social conflicts which lie at the heart of their pretensions. Nonetheless, the deep hostility which Galdós felt towards anarchist tactics is clearly manifested in several of his articles. Thus, in one of 26 October 1893, he condemns the anarchists’

commitment to the idea of overturning particular social institutions and the social order in general, and suggests that reform can only be achieved in a measured and progressive way:

El programa es destruir, destruir, siempre, con todo el ruido posible, y sin reparar si caen los culpables o los inocentes. Difícil es, además, discernir a quién o a quiénes tienen ellos por culpable. Culpable es el orden social vigente, obra de los siglos, y que ellos quieren cambiar en quítame allá esas pajas; culpable es el principio de gobierno [...] culpable es el régimen moral y religioso, el derecho civil, cosas muy discutidas, pero no reformables a la ligera, por inquietudes de baja estofa, y apetitos desordenados. (*Cartas desconocidas*: 486)

It is significant that Ángel's love for Dulce begins to fade after his mother's death and in parallel with the waning of his revolutionary ideas. Ángel's new status as a wealthy proprietor by virtue of his inheritance underlies these changes in political ideas and romantic affections. Thus Dulce interprets Ángel's growing indifference towards her as a sign that his new position has palliated his 'furores igualitarios y democráticos de otros tiempos' (*AG I*: 195). Ángel himself reflects that 'mi fortuna y mi posición me infunden cierto escepticismo político, y mayor apego a la vida del que antes tenía, como si pasara de niño a hombre' (*AG*: 157). He also begins to feel more in tune with the bourgeois society which he had previously rejected: 'yo no soy el que era. La muerte de mi madre, la posesión de mi fortuna y de mi casa han hecho de mí otro hombre. Surgen a mi lado de improviso cosas y personas nuevas, y me siento amoldado a ellas aun antes de pensarlo' (*AG*: 156) Later in the novel, the priest Mancebo questions Ángel's reputation as a revolutionary on the basis of his wealth. Thus, as regards rumours that Ángel is 'más hereje que Calvino, de estos que quieren traernos más libertad, más pueblo soberano y más marsellesa', Mancebo rightly concludes that his inheritance must have had the effect of inclining him towards political and social conservatism: 'así pensaría don Ángel cuando su mamá no le daba a un sacre; pero ahora que es rico y dueño de todo...El hombre de capital mira mucho por el orden, hasta por la Iglesia' (*AG II*: 322).

Together with the 'satisfacción del novel propietario' (*AG I*: 139), comes a rejection of the social world which Dulce and her family represent. Thus, despite

being now the sole owner of the Guerra-Monegro's family home, Ángel cannot contemplate bringing Dulce to it, as her presence there would represent a 'grave injuria a la memoria de la finada, una especie de provocación póstuma' (*AG I*: 138). As he thinks of his lover from the comfort of his own house, Dulce's image appears soiled by association with the other members of the Babel family: 'Diríase que intentaba cogerla con un palito para no mancharse los dedos; pero cuando la tenía casi salvada, volvía a caer y a perderse entre la inmundicia' (*AG I*: 138). As a mode of justification for his ideological and sentimental turn, Ángel reflects on the determining impact of circumstances on the individual: 'Cierto es que no somos dueños de nosotros mismos sino en esfera muy limitada [...] El carácter, el temperamento existen por sí; pero la voluntad es la proyección de lo de fuera en lo de dentro' (*AG I*: 156-157). Thus Ángel sees himself as moulded by the social environment which surrounds him. In this respect, it is worth noting the similarity between Ángel's reflections and those of José María in *Lo prohibido*, who, as seen in the first chapter, compares himself to driftwood in a sea of events and circumstances (*Lo prohibido*: 370). Even though Ángel's reconciliation with Madrid's bourgeois society is short-lived, it is clear that his personal development throughout the novel cannot be seen as a detached spiritual journey but as one of engagement with and reaction to his social surroundings.

From this point of view, it is significant that the narrative of Ángel's psychological development in Parts II and III of the novel is entwined with lengthy descriptive passages of Toledo, a town which Galdós describes in an 1870 essay as 'una historia de España completa' (*Toledo*: 44). As Leopoldo Alas observes in his 1891 review of *Ángel Guerra*:

La *psicología* de Guerra no se estudia dentro de él, principalmente, sino en el mundo que le rodea. Por eso tienen tanta importancia en esta novela las calles y callejuelas de Toledo [...] las capillas de la catedral, las monjas y las desgracias y lacerías de los miserables. (Cited by Sotelo 1990: 158)

With this technique, the parallelism which the novel establishes between the personal and the socio-historical is emphasized. Thus, as Ángel explores Toledo, the narrator explains that 'el medio ambiente se proyectaba con irresistible energía dentro de él por la diafanidad de su complejidad mental' (*AG II*: 295). In particular, Ángel's

emerging mysticism is spurred by the town's religious art. He feels that 'el mundo antiguo, embellecido por el arte, le conquistaba', waking in him a desire to 'probar las dulzuras de la piedad' (*AG II*: 295). It is noteworthy that, in an article of 1884, Galdós conveys the same idea that there is a link between art and spirituality. Thus he describes the Cathedral of Toledo as the 'expresión más cabal de todo lo bueno, de lo hermoso y consolador que encierra la idea cristiana [...] el pasmo que tanta belleza produce, se convierte al instante en piedad' (*Cartas desconocidas* 1973: 91-92). Moreover, as Ángel becomes immersed in the streets and churches of the Ciudad Imperial, he detaches himself from the social and political life of Madrid, which he sees now as imbued with 'un modernismo que lustrea como el charol reciente' (*AG II*: 335).

Leré and the Fascination of Religion

It is apparent that Ángel's zealous and impressionable personality cannot easily be contained within the narrow margins of social conventionalities. From this perspective, it is natural that he feels ineluctably drawn towards Leré's extreme form of religiosity. As he tells her:

Las personas que hacen gala de proscribir todo lo espiritual me son odiosas [...] Lo mejor sería que hubiera en cada persona una medida o dosificación perfecta de lo material y lo espiritual; pero como esa ponderación no existe ni puede existir, prefiero los desequilibrados como tú, que son la idea neta, el sentimiento puro. (*AG I*: 141)

In this way, as has often been pointed out, Ángel's political fanaticism is replaced by a passion for Leré, which is in turn sublimated into religious fervour. However, as Elizalde notes, Ángel's sense of rebellion does not fade with his religious conversion. Rather, his revolutionary inclination finds a new medium in the socially radical Catholic evangelism inspired by Leré (Elizalde 1990: 385). In the same vein, Sinnigen maintains that Ángel's religious ideas, which he materializes in his charitable religious institution, represent 'una refundida versión del idealismo político de la primera parte, un nuevo acto de rebeldía contra la ley materna' (Sinnigen 1996: 195). There is irony in the fact that Ángel finds his way back to

subversive social ideas through his mother's trusted and devout house aide. In response to Leré's suggestion that Ángel should distribute his wealth among the poor, keeping only enough of it to cover his basic needs, he humorously remarks:

yo he sido un poco socialista; pero, francamente, eso me pasaba cuando no tenía dinero. El reparto de la riqueza me parecía muy bien cuando a mí nada podía sobrarme. Después he comprendido que una cosa es predicar y otra dar trigo [...] ¡Y ahora vienes tú predicándome el socialismo! ¿De manera que entonces, cuando yo era anarquista y revolucionario, tenía razón y ahora no la tengo? Perdona, hija, pero tu socialismo evangélico es un disparate. (AG I: 207)

Leré is unimpressed by Ángel's political 'terminachos'. Her social ideas are more an attitude to life than a philosophy, and come to her as the natural corollary of her faith: 'Lo que he dicho se llama caridad. No ponga usted motes a la ley divina' (AG I: 208). Leré's sense of charity is universal rather than selective. In response to Ángel's scepticism concerning the wisdom of giving money away indiscriminately, including to 'pillos y estafadores' such as the Babeles, Leré responds: 'Disminuya usted la necesidad y disminuirá los delitos' (AG I: 208). Thus she implies that crime is the natural result of social injustice. Humorously, this view puts her ideas in line with those which the cynical Fausto Babel expresses in his conversation with Ángel, as seen previously. The idea that delinquency is the corollary of need is also conveyed by Arístides as a justification for his misconduct. As he tells Ángel: 'si yo me viera algún día sin trampas, y pudiendo vivir con cierta holgura, cree que sería un buen hombre, incapaz de causar a nadie ningún perjuicio' (AG III: 715).

Later in the novel, Ángel develops Leré's life ideal into a doctrine called *dominismo* and, with his philanthropic foundation, he has the opportunity to put her concept of universal charity into practice. When Arístides Babel hears of this charitable project, he quips that he would make an ideal *asilado*: '¿Es cierto que fundas una gran casa para asilo de menesterosos y corrección de criminales? Si es verdad, oh varón santo, acuérdate de mí, que por los dos conceptos puedo pedirte plaza' (AG II: 496). Ángel does indeed welcome him and his brother Fausto into the institution, with disastrous consequences: the brothers, together with their cousin Policarpo, steal the few hundred *pesetas* which Ángel had allocated to the payment

of salaries, and they murder him. For Fuentes Peris, Galdós's handling of Leré's and Ángel's utopian ideas concerning charity must be seen in the context of contemporary debates on the poor and beneficence, specifically those focussed on the distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor (Fuentes Peris 2003: 109-111). In her view, as the Babeles exemplify the contemporary concept of undeserving poor, Ángel's fate at their hands would indicate Galdós's disavowal of Ángel's indiscriminate take on charity (Fuentes Peris 2003: 117-119).

As is frequently the case in the novel, a member of the Babel family provides a humorous counterpoint to Ángel's lofty ideals. Thus Don Simón's brother, the alcoholic ex-slaver Don Pito, who becomes himself an *asilado* in Ángel's tolerant and egalitarian institution, argues that 'el mundo está perdido con esta libertad que hay ahora y esta igualdad de pateta' (AG II: 431). Despite the fact that he enjoys the freedom of movement that Ángel stipulates for all his *asilados*, Don Pito defends a tough approach as regards the undeserving poor:

la sociedad debía tomar una determinación con tantísimo tunante y tantísimo holgazán. Debiera hacerse una leva de ellos cada poco tiempo, y colocarlos a trabajar [...] Llámelo usted esclavitud... ¿Y qué? [...] o llámelo usted el trabajo obligado de los que no quieren trabajar. (AG II: 432)

Ironically, Don Pito's ideas are somewhat in tune with the repressive system adopted by the Spanish liberal State, and which Galdós condemns in *Misericordia* (1897), as will be seen in the next chapter. In this respect, Fuentes Peris points out that Don Pito's state slavery system is particularly reminiscent of Charles Booth's proposed labour colonies, where the idle could be brought under control and made productive (Fuentes Peris 2003: 119).

As well as the principle of charity, Leré imparts to Ángel other ideas which determine his spiritual transformation. Chief among them are her dedication to the notion of poverty and suffering and of receiving 'sin queja todo el mal que quieran hacerme de palabra o de obra' (AG I: 204). Leré also rejects politics and violence in any form, and, as a result, she also shuns the notion of the nation state on the basis that it instigates wars (AG I: 209-210). As Colin notes, there is a correspondence between some of Leré's and Ángel's ideas and the religious philosophy which

Tolstoy expounds in *What I Believe* (1884). Such is the case with Tolstoy's central principles, of non-resistance to evil and complete condemnation of war, and also of notions of Christian suffering, universal and selfless love and the rejection of wealth. These ideas represent what Tolstoy believed to be the essential teachings of Christ as expressed in the Gospels, in particular, in Mathew's Sermon on the Mount. In his view, the Orthodox Church had relegated these basic Christian principles to a peripheral position. In *What I Believe*, Tolstoy maintains that the so-called Christian societies are founded in principles which do not comply with Christ's teaching, as he considers that coercion and violence are at the root of most social institutions (Colin 1967: 156-157; Colin 1970: 115-119). In line with Fuentes Peris's argument concerning the treatment of charity in *Ángel Guerra*, Colin argues that, with Ángel's death, Galdós shows the impracticality of the principle of passive resistance to evil (Colin 1970: 132). However, Colin does not ascribe all aspects of Ángel's *dominista* beliefs to Tolstoy. In her view, Ángel's doctrine is a mixture of 'purely Spanish Utopia and Tolstoyan ideas' (Colin 1970: 123). Thus, whereas Tolstoy rejects all form of institutionalized religion, Ángel is compelled by Leré to comply with the commands of the Catholic Church (Colin 1970: 123-124). In this respect, however, it is worth noting that his acceptance of the Church is never wholehearted, as the narrator informs us:

aunque por la influencia de Leré, Ángel había recobrado [...] las ideas primordiales del Dios único y misericordioso, y de la inmortalidad del alma, aunque la estética del catolicismo le cautivaba cada día más, y tenía la moral cristiana por irremplazable, encontraba en el organismo de la Iglesia formalidades que, a su parecer, exigían modificación. (*AG II*: 413).

It is also significant that, once Ángel accepts Leré's wish that he becomes a priest, he rejects the idea of joining an established order such as the Jesuits, on the grounds that such an order would curtail his freedom of thought and action. As he reflects:

Me quitarán mi individualidad; perderé en el seno de la orden toda iniciativa [...] quiero conservar dentro de las filas más libertad de acción de la que tiene el soldado raso [...] Yo no entro en la Iglesia docente como átomo que a la masa se agrega. (*AG III*: 550)

Ángel's seditious tendencies become apparent later on in the novel, as he predicts that the institutional Church will soon be absorbed by the '*dominismo* avasallador' (AG III: 739-740). He also envisages that the reformation of the Spanish Church through his *dominismo* will result in its emancipation from Rome and the establishment of a national papacy (AG III: 741).

As Fuentes Peris points out, one of Leré's most fundamental beliefs, her notion of the intrinsic virtue of poverty, is a traditional Christian idea according to which the poor are the object of God's predilection. In consonance with this view, the Church encouraged resignation among the poor on the grounds that their lot was providential and conducive to eternal happiness in the afterlife. This perception acted as an instrument of social stability, by helping to deflate social tensions. By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, it was common for liberal authors to censure the traditional religious exaltation of poverty (Fuentes Peris 2003: 138-141). Galdós himself, as Fuentes Peris notes, denounces the idea of 'la pobreza erigida en santidad sólo por ser tal pobreza' in an 14 April 1887 article. He argues that this 'espiritualismo mal entendido' is at the heart of Spain's economic lethargy (*Política Española*, I: 300; 302). In *Ángel Guerra*, it is the priest Mancebo, Leré's great uncle, who offers the modern rationalistic counterpoint to Leré's mystical religiosity. As he must provide with his meagre stipend for his niece Juliana, her quasi-disabled husband and their seven children, as well as for Leré's severely deformed brother, the 'monstruo', Mancebo is understandably unimpressed by his niece's glorification of poverty and self-sacrifice. His ambition is that Leré marries Ángel and helps the family out of its poverty, suggesting in this way that charity begins at home (AG II: 306-307). In connection with Leré's plan to enter the Orden del Socorro, Mancebo quips: '¿A que os dedicáis vosotras las del Socorro, a cuidar ancianos o criaturas? Dígolo porque en tu propia casa tendrías materia larga en emplear tu caridad' (AG II: 312). He opposes his niece's enthusiasm for poverty on the grounds that such an ideal cannot be maintained in modern materialistic society. As he explains to Ángel:

¡María Santísima, qué tesón de niña! [...] 'Pero hija –le digo yo–, los tiempos han cambiado. Los malditos pronunciamientos primero y el Concordato, que acabó de partirnos, ha trastornado el mundo. Ahora, hay que aplicarse a defender el materialismo de la existencia, porque los demás a eso van, y no es

cosa de quedarse uno en medio del arroyo mirando a las estrellas. Pobres somos todos, sí, pero tenemos que vivir, y cuidar de que los demás vivan. El Concordato le ha hecho a uno práctico, como dicen que son los ingleses, y nos ha enseñado a mirar por el triste maravedí. Antes, cuando había aquellas pingües rentas eclesiásticas, daba gusto morir de hambre dentro de un claustro, y disciplinarse y quedarse en los huesos, porque se lo agradecían a uno, y le canonizaban [...] Pero ahora... te mueres en olor de santidad, y nadie te dice nada, y a nadie se le ocurrirá poner canilla tuya o muela en un relicario, para que la besen las devotas'. (AG II: 305- 306)

It is important to note that, through the 1851 *Concordato*, the Vatican came to accept the disentailment process in exchange for concessions to the Church, thus sealing the demise of the Old Regime in Spain. Thus Mancebo identifies nineteenth-century liberal uprisings, such as those of 1808, 1820, 1854 and 1868, as well as the *desamortización* as the events which brought liberal capitalism to Spain and which, as a result, changed its social fabric. In this respect, it is significant that Ángel is associated with both of these key historical processes through his family wealth and his participation in revolutionary politics. Leré, however, is unmoved by her pragmatic uncle's argument in favour of accepting the new economic reality. As she tells Ángel:

Lo que pretenden es que yo abandone el camino por que me llama Dios, y tome otro que me repugna. ¿Para qué? Para evitar la pobreza de mis sobrinos, ¡la pobreza, el signo visible de pertenecer a Cristo! [...] y aunque usted me llame lo que quiera, digo y repito que no me importa nada que mis sobrinitos sean pobres. (AG II: 401)

As a stern devotee of what Galdós, in the aforementioned article of April 1887, calls the 'culto a la pobreza' (*Política Española*, I: 300), Leré is adamant that a virtuous life is one of absolute poverty. In keeping with this notion, she shuns the concept of private property: 'No poseo nada ni quiero nada poseer. La propiedad me quema las manos, y la idea de *mío* me la borro, me la suprimo de la mente, porque esa idea [...] suele ocupar mucho espacio, y no deja lugar a otras, que nos convienen más' (AG II: 402). In connection with the parallels between Leré's ideas and Tolstoy's philosophy, it is worth pointing out that, as Knowles indicates, one of Tolstoy's most

radical ideas was his rejection of private property on the basis that it is the source of all evils (Knowles 2004: 289). However, unlike Tolstoy, and despite the radicalism of her ideas, Leré does not oppose the status quo. As she tells Ángel: ‘Pero si yo no tengo nada que ver con la civilización, ni me importa, ni hablo contra ella. Ya sé que siempre ha de haber ricos, y convendrá quizás que los haya’ (AG II: 402). Later on in the novel, as Ángel shapes his *dominista* project with Leré’s enthusiastic support, she recommends caution in the implementation of his ambitious ideas, lest society reject them as subversive: ‘creo también que es llegado el momento de encargarle a la realidad obras más grandes que estas menudencias que se estilan ahora. Pero hay que dárselas poquito a poco, para que no se asuste’ (AG III: 733).

Leré also conforms to traditional Christian teaching in her acceptance of suffering as a blessing. As she explains to Mancebo: ‘Yo acepto con alegría todas las cruces que el Señor quiera echar sobre mí; y si mañana tuviera que pedir limosna por las calles, y me encontrara toda baldada, llena de úlceras o de lepra asquerosa, no estaría menos tranquila (AG II: 346). As Hart shows in the context of nineteenth-century England, sermons and religious pamphlets often advocated the acceptance of personal afflictions as well as of poverty and social inequalities. A common argument was based on the idea of sorrow as a source of spiritual purification. From this perspective, afflictions should be seen as proof of the love of God. Christians should therefore rejoice and be thankful when struck down by them (Hart 1977: 118-120). Like Nazarín in the eponymous 1895 novel, Leré takes this Christian ideal to extremes by actively seeking hardship. Thus she tells Ángel that ‘los trabajos, las penas y enfermedades, mírolas yo como pruebas de las cuales no debemos huir, porque ellas nos son enviadas para templar nuestra alma y hacerla resistente’ (AG II: 400). It is this glorification of suffering which prompts her to enter a religious congregation ‘de las más trabajosas, de estas que se dedican a recoger y cuidar ancianos, o a la asistencia de enfermos. Preferiré lo más rudo, lo más difícil, lo que exija más caridad, más abnegación y estómago más fuerte’ (AG I: 224).

Thus Leré’s concept of poverty and suffering is a fundamentally conservative one, as her claim that ‘el desamparo es un bien positivo’ (AG II: 346) negates the need to strive for a fairer society. Consequently, her notion of charity is primarily focussed on the spiritual purification which extreme charitable behaviour grants the

bestower through hardship and renunciation. As Bacon argues, vows of poverty and chastity, as well as the practice of exceptional acts of charity, such as caring for those with incurable and contagious diseases, confer what she defines as ‘saintly capital’. This is a concept which she derives from Bourdieu’s ‘symbolic capital’ and which refers to the acquisition of religious prestige (Bacon 2007: 1213). Hence, as Bacon points out in relation to Nazarín, Leré’s attitude identifies her as an aspiring saint (Bacon 2007: 3). Bacon also highlights one fundamental contradiction which arises from the acquisition of saintly capital: the humility which is expected from aspiring saints is compromised by the admiration generated by their performance of extreme acts of self-sacrifice. There is, in this way, a thin line dividing self-awareness, vanity and humility (Bacon 2007: 9; 45). Despite the fact that Leré’s saintliness is never presented in the novel as affected or hypocritical, Mancebo points at this quandary when he describes his niece as ‘tocada de la vanidad de la perfección’ (*AG II*: 324). There is also a suggestion of repressed ambition in Leré in connection with Ángel’s plan to found a new congregation where she would be prioress. When he first expounds his idea, Leré protests that she seeks ‘esclavitud’ rather than ‘autoridad’ (*AG II*: 342). However, as she listens to Ángel, the narrator reports that her eyes ‘relampagueaban. Nunca los vio Guerra más bailones’ (*AG II*: 343). Later on in the novel, when Ángel insists on the idea, the narrator comments: ‘Era humana y la oferta de presidir y gobernar una gran fundación hirió su mente soñadora, haciendo flaquear sus propósitos de perpetua servidumbre’ (*AG II*: 527).

In Ángel’s case, the paradoxical struggle between the pride which he takes in his spiritual progress, and the humility which he knows must underlie such accomplishment, is highlighted by the narrator’s ironic comments:

Vio en su existencia un destino grande, aunque subordinado a otro destino mayor, y comparándose con el hombre de antes no pudo menos de despreciar todo lo que fue, y de enorgullecerse por lo que era, vanagloria legítima sin duda, no incompatible con el propósito de anularse socialmente y de llegar a ser [...] tan humilde y poca cosa como don Pito y Tatabuquenque. (*AG II*: 414)

As Hafter notes, the narrator’s irony also serves to expose Ángel’s self-delusion concerning the extent of his virtuousness (Hafter 1969: 46). It is also worth pointing

to the way in which Leré's and Ángel's self-conscious altruism contrasts with the unassuming kind-heartedness of Gumersinda, the working-class woman who, free of charge, helps to look after Leré's patient María Antonia during her convalescence from a mastectomy. As the narrator explains, Ángel feels belittled by 'aquella mujer que practicaba la caridad sin ninguna petulancia, que se sacrificaba por sus semejantes sin dar importancia al sacrificio, que era buena sin decirlo y hasta sin saberlo' (AG III: 706). In *Misericordia*, Galdós explores this type of unselfconscious charity in the character of Benina, as will be seen in the next chapter.

It is again the practical Mancebo who questions the validity of Leré's saintly aspirations in a post-disentailment society. As with Leré's poverty fixation, Mancebo reasons that the times for great religious personalities, as well as for great military ones, ended with the *desamortización*. Thus he associates these two archetypal Spanish figures with the Old Regime: 'Los tiempos estos son de medianía, de transición y de acomodarse a lo que viene [...] y pensar que ahora ha de haber fundadores y conquistadores, es como si quisiéramos hacer pasar el Tajo por encima de la torre de la catedral' (AG II: 309-310). Mancebo's comments strengthen the identification of Leré and Ángel as Quixotic figures determined to live by the ideals of the past. Ángel himself is aware that the ambition of his religious project is at odds with ordinary bourgeois thinking. Thus, in response to the priest Casado's scepticism over the feasibility of Ángel's foundation, Ángel explains that 'la realidad hállase hoy como hastiada de su pedestre y vil trabajo, con tanta vulgaridad económica y mecánica, y anhela, ¡vive Dios!, remontarse a más altas esferas' (AG III: 728).

The Revolutionary Power of Religion

In the two chapters significantly entitled 'Caballería cristiana' and 'Ensueño dominista', Ángel unravels the idealistic *dominista* philosophy on which he intends to base his charitable foundation. As in the case of Tolstoy's doctrine, Ángel's philosophy is based on the notion of a need to return to the principles of primitive Christianity. As he explains to the priest Casado:

En lo esencial, quiero parecerme a los primitivos fundadores, y seguir fielmente la doctrina pura de Cristo. Amparar al desvalido, sea quien fuere; hacer bien a nuestros enemigos; emplear siempre el cariño y la persuasión, nunca la violencia; practicar las obras de misericordia en espíritu y en letra. (AG III: 643)

The connection between Ángel's ideas and the beliefs of the early Christian Church is corroborated by Casado. As regards the egalitarian ethos which Ángel envisages for his religious foundation, he remarks: 'eso es nuevo. Novísimo de puro viejo. Volvemos a los primitivos tiempos de la Iglesia, a la fraternidad pura' (AG III: 727). As Elizalde argues, Ángel's *dominismo* represents 'una especie de anarquismo religioso ideal que significaría la vuelta a la Edad de Oro del cristianismo' (Elizalde 1990: 387). It is worth noting that Ángel's assimilation of Leré's Christian beliefs as the core of his *dominista* doctrine involves his rejection of both bourgeois society and its politics. On this matter, the narrator renders Ángel's reflexions thus:

Ruptura completa con el organismo social y con la huera y presuntuosa burguesía que lo dirige [...] Proscripción completa de la política. Que la sociedad se arreglase como quisiera y como pudiera. Ya no tendría con ella más conexiones que las indispensables para recoger en su seno corrompido las miserias que reclaman socorro [...] Cualquier concreción que trajera el porvenir, ya fuese la democracia rabiosa o el absolutismo de látigo, le tenían sin cuidado. (AG II: 412-413)

However, Ángel does not desist from his vision of a reformed world. On the contrary, he explains to Casado that a return to the original notion of Christian charity will bring about 'una grande y verdadera revolución social' (AG III: 737):

La aplicación rigurosa de las leyes de caridad, que Cristo Nuestro Señor nos dio, [...] traerá de fijo la reforma completa de la sociedad, esa renovación benéfica que en vano buscan la política y la filosofía... Pues qué, ¿hay alguien que se atreva a declarar perfecto el estado social, ni aún en las naciones cristianas [...]? ¿No estamos viendo que todo ello es un edificio caduco y vacilante que amenaza caer y cubrir de ruinas la tierra? La propiedad y la familia, lo poderes públicos, la administración, la Iglesia, la

fuerza pública, todo, todo necesita ser deshecho y construido de nuevo. (AG III: 737)

In this way, notwithstanding his rejection of politics, Ángel integrates his previous anarchist-inspired ideas of destruction and regeneration into his new spiritual phase. As he says to Casado: ‘Yo jamás pondré mano en la política [...] Pero si no soy político, soy misionero, y arrojó una simiente [...] de la cual saldrá una planta cuyas raíces minarán toda la tierra’ (AG III: 737-738). He proposes a kind of spiritualism which is ‘encarnado en las materialidades de la existencia, pues si Dios se hizo hombre, su doctrina tiene que hacerse sociedad’ (AG III: 739). Ángel envisions a golden age when the State falls under the transforming force of *dominismo* and is relegated to a minor role in society:

Los pueblos se administrarán solos y repartirán libremente sus ingresos y sus gastos. La beneficencia, la enseñanza, la penitenciaría, las bellas artes, la agricultura, serán *doministas*. ¿Qué será el Estado? Nada más que un ligador [...] Fuera ejército. La constante práctica del *dominismo* ha demostrado su inutilidad. Fuera diplomacia, pues siendo universal el *dominismo*, él se basta y se sobra para mantener la concordia entre las grandes familias del universo. (AG III: 740)

On hearing of Ángel’s *dominista* ambitions, Casado wonders whether Ángel has indeed moved away from his revolutionary past: ‘si no creyera [...] que habla usted sin saber lo que dice [...] pensaría que con toda su vocación religiosa y su misticismo, no ha dejado de ser tan revolucionario como cuando se desvivía por alterar el orden público’ (AG III: 740).

Ángel’s belief that *dominismo* would render social institutions irrelevant parallels Tolstoy’s hopes for the effects of his own doctrine. As Bartlett points out, Tolstoy surmised that living a peaceful Tolstoyan Christian life would ‘eradicate the need for courts, police officers, personal property and any form of government’ (Bartlett 2010: 309-310). Conversely, Knowles notes that Tolstoy considered the abolition of governments to be a necessary condition for peace because of the coercive power they exercise. Thus, in his 1901 ‘Patriotism and Government’, Tolstoy declares that governments constitute an ‘unnecessary organization which we

have inherited from the past, an organization for the commission of violence and for its justification' (cited by Knowles 2004: 271). For Knowles, Tolstoy's dismissal of political power defines him as an anarchist despite his rejection of violent revolution. In his 1900 essay 'On Anarchy', Tolstoy himself declares:

The Anarchists are right in everything; in the negation of the existing order, and in the assertion that, without authority, there could not be worse violence than that of authority under existing conditions. They are mistaken only in thinking that Anarchy can be instituted by a revolution. (Cited by Knowles 2004: 271)

It is worth noting that, as Barrio Alonso points out in the context of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Spain, the anarchists' strong anti-statist stance stemmed from their unambiguous moral condemnation of capitalist society and its social inequalities. As a result, they rejected any type of transitory collaboration with the bourgeois State, and, unlike Tolstoy, favoured instead a revolutionary approach in order to achieve their ultimate goal of a classless society (Barrio Alonso 2012:764-766).

From this perspective, Ángel's post-State golden age can be traced further back to what Claeys defines as the 'anti-politics' of some branches of early socialism. As Claeys argues, at one extreme of mid-century British socialist thought there was a 'millenarian, anti-political ideal which assumed that most sources of social conflict would vanish once economic justice and a new social order had been introduced, and thought that many of the mechanisms usually associated with "politics" and the coercive state might therefore be dispensed with' (Claeys 1989: 2). According to Andújar Miñarro, this apolitical stance was also common among Spanish early socialists, who considered that the social question should be tackled from the perspective of social regeneration rather than politics (Andújar Miñarro, no date: 1-2).

In the same way, Ángel's doctrinal mix of Christian spiritualism and social revolution also has a parallel in the quasi-religious character of early socialism, which Claeys also highlights. As he points out, the ideas which many early socialists offered often took the form of a 'New Religion' which represented what they

understood to be the secular essence of the Christian doctrine (Claeys 2014: 903). In Claeys's view, early socialism drew from a tradition of egalitarianism, millenarianism and communal property-holding which was partly based on the primitive Christianity of writers such as the fourth-century St Ambrose. Such ideas were advocated as the solution to the problems of poverty and inequality (Claeys 2014: 896-898). In the same vein, Zavala argues that the early socialist schools were often akin to social religions. As she also notes, the mystical tendency of some early socialists is manifest in their religious-political rhetoric, as in the case of the French social thinkers Saint-Simon, Cabet and Fourier (Zavala 1972: 131-132).

In Varela Suanzes's view, the political and social thought of early French socialism influenced the Spanish Democratic Party in its inception and imbued it with a moralism which invoked the principles of an ideal primitive Christianity, as opposed to those of the official Catholic Church. It is noteworthy that the *partido democrático* was formed in 1849 by an alliance of progressive liberals, republicans and early socialists who shared, among other ideas, their criticism of the *desamortización* in accordance with Flórez Estrada's thesis. For Varela Suanzes, the major influence for the Spanish democrats was that of Hughes-Félicité de Lamennais, whose *Paroles d'un croyant* had been translated by Larra in 1834. In his prologue, Larra states both his *anticlericalismo* and his interest in a pure form of Christianity, one which he identified with democracy (Varela Suanzes 2002: 3; 16-17). The influence of this early Christian idealism among prominent republican democrats such as Sixto Cámara and Fernando Garrido is clear. Cámara, for instance, anticipates that 'el principio de fraternidad, salido con el Cristianismo de las catacumbas, será muy pronto el principio de las sociedades modernas, el molde de sus instituciones' (cited by Cristóbal 2015: 9). Garrido, for his part, defends republicanism on the basis that it is the only political ideology which accords with true Christianity:

La fraternidad, la caridad, la igualdad, proclamadas por Cristo son incompatibles con los tronos [...] la República democrática, federal y universal, es la más cristiana de todas las instituciones políticas [...] porque en ella la práctica de los grandes principios morales del evangelio se

convierten en dogma, en base de todos los derechos, de todas las leyes. (Cited by Varela Suanzes 2002: 18-19)

From this angle, Ángel's religious foundation can be seen as akin to utopian socialist communitarian experiments, such as those of Saint Simon, Fourier or Owen. In this respect, it is interesting to note that Claeys cites some eighteenth-century European Christian sects such the Dunkers, the Shakers and the Moravians as a source for early socialist communitarianism (Claeys 2014: 898). For Claeys, these radical ventures presented a response to the new social challenges which the emergence of capitalism brought with it. As he puts it: 'the age of industry, and the revolutionary spirit of the times, produced an extreme and in many respects pathological social development and demanded extreme answers' (Claeys 2014: 900). In his view, early socialist communities were driven both by nostalgic or practical considerations and also by a desire which was religious and psychological in nature. Thus, in connection with the Owenites, Claeys argues that what attracted them to the communitarian idea was partly an 'intense sense of justice and fairness, and a sentiment or feeling of the need for a much greater equality as the basis for a much stronger sense of group identity or belonging than the outside society could offer' (Claeys 2014: 900). It is worth noting that, as Knowles points out, Tolstoy's own communitarianism is directly linked to early socialist thought, in particular, to that of Proudhon, whom the Russian writer met in 1861 (Knowles 2004: 14; 17-18). Thus Proudhon's statement in 1851 – that the foundation for social justice is the imperative 'do not to others what you would not they should do to you: do to others as you would they do to you' – corresponds to the reciprocity principle in Tolstoy's ethical society ideal (Knowles 2004: 270).

In Spain, progressive Spanish publications from the 1830s and 1840s contributed to the expansion of the radical communitarian ideal, as Zavala points out. In 'Fourier y los fourieristas', an article of 1842 which was published in the periodical *Fray Gerundio: Revista Europea* (1839-1842; 1848-1849), Modesto Lafuente defends the Fourierist approach to tackling social injustice. He presents Fourier's *falansterios* as a harmonious alternative to the prevalent repressive social system (Zavala 1972: 61-62). Zavala summarizes his views thus:

Le atrae el rasgo humanitarista, la solución al problema social por medio de la moral y virtud. Está de acuerdo en que el hombre virtuoso, feliz y sin violencias es la salvación de la humanidad. El hombre podría ser feliz en un falansterio –dice –, porque éste evitaría el trabajo forzado, obligatorio, monótono. (Cited by Zavala 1972: 62)

Ángel's foundation also rejects the repression which underlies the social system, advocating instead the principle of fraternity. As he explains to Casado, the *asilados* in his institution will be improved morally through 'el tratamiento del cariño, de la confraternidad, de la exhortación cristiana, sin hierros, sin violencia de ninguna clase' (AG III: 642). Like a *falansterio*, Ángel's community is established as an alternative to mainstream society and in defiance of its values. It represents the materialization of the self-imposed exile from bourgeois society which, as argued before, results from his acceptance of Leré's ideas. As Sinnigen observes, particularly in connection with *Nazarín* and *Halma*, the characters in Galdós's later novels tend to be outsiders who renounce society rather than attempt their reconciliation with it, as was the case in previous novels. *Ángel Guerra* can indeed be seen as the first of the *novelas contemporáneas* where, in Sinnigen's words, the 'impossibility of reforming society from within is a given, and the protagonists seek to provide an individual or collective example which would serve as an inspiration to the rest of society' (Sinnigen 1978: 234).

Ángel's *Dominismo* and the Philosophy of Comte

As Cardona notes, there are similarities between *dominismo* and Auguste Comte's positivist doctrine, the Religion of Humanity. In this respect, he draws attention to the fact that, between 1884 and 1890, the Chilean brothers Jorge and Juan Enrique Lagarrigue sent to Galdós a series of pamphlets on Comte's philosophy. In his view, these pamphlets may have influenced Galdós in his disparate use of Comte's ideas in both *Torquemada en la hoguera* and *Ángel Guerra*. In the earlier novel, the renegade priest José Bailón indoctrinates Torquemada with his grotesque version of Comte's secular religion. The treatment of Comte is somewhat more sober in *Ángel Guerra*, where ideas akin to the Religion of Humanity are incorporated into Ángel's altruistic

doctrine. As Cardona also indicates, this would not be the only religious theme which connects *Ángel Guerra* and *Torquemada en la hoguera*. When confronted with the grave illness of their respective children, both Torquemada and Ángel attempt business deals with their long-forgotten God. Whereas Torquemada promises acts of charity if his son Valentín lives, Ángel offers Dulce as a sacrifice in exchange for Ción (Cardona 1990: 585-589). It is also worth noting that Gold finds in Bailón's 'distorted *mélange* of socialism, positivism and reincarnation' (Gold 1988: 33) references to French utopian socialist thought, and in particular, to the work of Lamennais (Gold 1988: 29-32). As we have seen, elements of early socialism are also present in Ángel's *dominismo*.

Ángel's social spiritualism, with which he intends to regenerate society through the 'influencia social del ascetismo positivo y altruista' (*AG III*: 738), can be seen as akin to Comte's moral approach to social issues. In the preface to the 1907 edition of his *La religión de la humanidad* (1884), Juan Enrique Lagarrigue argues that 'la cuestión social dista de ser una mera cuestión económica. Ella implica, además, una gran cuestión moral, o más propiamente dicho, una suprema cuestión religiosa' (*La religión de la humanidad*: 10). In the same treatise, he also explains that the Religion of Humanity 'considera el amor universal como el centro de todos nuestros pensamientos y de todos nuestros actos [...] subordina la vida privada a la pública, la personalidad a la sociabilidad, e impone el deber por altruismo' (*La religión de la humanidad*: 29). In the same way, Ángel's ambition for universal *dominismo* matches Juan Enrique Lagarrigue's confidence in the triumph of Comte's doctrine, which will inevitably succeed in uniting humanity 'con los indisolubles lazos de unas mismas ideas y unos mismos afectos (*La religión de la humanidad*: 29).

Furthermore, Cardona argues that the prominent role which Comte's positivist religion assigns to women as the source of men's moral inspiration correlates with the position which Leré holds in Ángel's doctrine (Cardona 1990: 589). In particular, the relationship between Ángel and Leré can be seen as akin to Comte's chaste love for Clotilde de Vaux and to her influence on the development of his philosophy. In this last regard, Juan Enrique Lagarrigue comments: 'Y como Dante encontrara a Beatriz que le inspiró su gran poema, Comte tuvo entonces la

feliz ocasión de conocer a Clotilde, que, despertando las fibras más delicadas de su corazón, le hizo concebir la excelsa Religión de la Humanidad' (*La religión de la humanidad*: 27). For the positivists, Clotilde de Vaux's inspirational role is representative of that of womankind. Hence, in his *Circular religiosa* of 1886, Juan Enrique Lagarrigue explains how the moral influence which women exercise over men will help to expand Comte's religion:

Talentos perdidos, voluntades inertes, recibieron de ellas luz y vida. A cuantos las conozcan alcanzará su radiante inspiración. Y muchos seres decaídos, que veían cerrada ya la senda de una digna existencia, emprenderán, regenerados del todo [...] una fructuosa carrera de servidores de la Humanidad. Esas santas mujeres serán, ciertamente, madres espirituales de innumerables hombres, *hechos de nuevo*, con su bendito influjo. (Cited by Cardona 1990: 590)

As Cardona points out, the title of the first chapter in Part III of *Ángel Guerra*, 'El hombre nuevo', is reminiscent of Lagarrigue's 'hombres hechos de nuevo' (Cardona 1990: 590). Ángel's words to Leré in this chapter summon up the positivist belief in the impact of feminine morality on men: 'Lo único bueno que hay en mí es esta idea que tengo de tu poder espiritual, y si la perdiera, quedaría reducido a un hombre insignificante y vulgar' (*AG III*: 579). It is worth noting that Ángel also invokes the capacity which his daughter has to effect his spiritual betterment. As Ción lies on her deathbed, Ángel makes a feverish appeal to God: 'la necesito para regenerarme. Sólo este ángel podrá dar paz a mi conciencia y hacerme esclavo del bien y la justicia' (*AG I*: 182).

Ángel bestows on Leré a quasi-divine moral superiority and a God-given power to engender his salvation. Even before his religious conversion, Ángel refers to Leré as a priestess who can grant him forgiveness for the 'caso terrible y vergonzoso' of the murder of the officer during the rising (*AG I*: 171). Later in the novel, the narrator conveys Ángel's increasing religious exaltation of Leré: 'Ni sombra de duda tenía ya de la superioridad del ser de su amiga. Las doctrinas vertidas por ella revelaban inspiración del cielo, y quizás una misión providencial confiada a tan excelsa persona' (*AG II*: 411). As Pickering points out, the spiritual power which the positivists ascribed to women responded to the romantic idea of

woman as mediator between man and God, a notion which was powerfully represented in the nineteenth century by the figure of the Virgin Mary (Pickering 2009: 325-326). In his 1884 treatise *Le Positivisme et la Vierge*, Jorge Lagarrigue expounds Comte's view that the Catholic cult of the Virgin has a positive impact on society. Women who aspire to identify with the virgin develop the qualities of chastity and tenderness, and their moral influence on men is thus freed from the morally compromising burden of sexuality (Cardona 1990: 590). In *Positivismo y Catolicismo* (1884), he also argues that Catholicism represents the most advanced step in the preparation towards positivism. He recommends, however, that the Catholic priesthood must purify their religion and concentrate in the adoration of the Virgin Mary, who represents the 'verdadera idealización de la Humanidad' (cited by Cardona 1990: 590). In this regard, it is interesting to note that Ángel finds his attempts at praying to God futile (*AG II*: 460), and can only engage in metaphysical devotion when directing his thoughts to the Virgin, who is 'toda belleza ideal y lírica' (*AG II*: 461). By contrast, focussing on male effigies, particularly bearded ones, has the effect of dampening Ángel's mystical exaltation, and of awakening in him, instead, 'el humanitarismo igualitario con fines de reforma social' (*AG II*: 461). This humorous disparity also serves to emphasize the sensuality which underlies Ángel's mysticism.

Creating Himself Anew: Ángel Guerra's Mystic Family

As Sinnigen argues, after the death of his mother and daughter in the first part of the novel, Ángel begins a process which leads to the creation of a new ideal family in the form of a religious institution presided by himself and Leré. Ángel's dual role in this spiritual family is that of the 'marido/hijo que se somete ante la estereotípica superioridad moral de la buena esposa/madre' (Sinnigen 1996: 195). Indeed, as Ángel develops his *dominista* doctrine, he conceives of the role of Leré as that of a 'esposa mística, que en el orden supremo de un matrimonio ideal llevaba el gobierno moral de la familia. Su saber omnímodo daría solución a todos los problemas que se planteasen' (*AG II*: 413). In this way, Ángel's idea of his spiritual marriage to Leré conforms to Comte's notion of the ideal union between man and woman which, in Juan Enrique Lagarrigue's words, consists of a 'unión casta e indisoluble por la

muerte’, whose objective is not procreation but ‘el perfeccionamiento recíproco de los esposos’ (cited by Cardona 1990: 591).

As has often been noted, there is, however, an underlying tension between Ángel’s religious glorification of Leré and his scarcely stifled sexual passion for her. Thus, as the narrator explains, when Ángel visits Leré at the Congregación del Socorro, he perceives her as ‘dotada de hermosura celestial y vaporosa, que, a poco que sobre ella actuara la imaginación, se condensaría en belleza tangible y humana’ (*AG II*: 399). As Jagoe and O’Connor point out, Ángel’s monstrous beast dreams, as well as the frequent references in the novel to his need to restrain the beast inside him, are indicative of Ángel’s struggle to dominate his sexual desire for Leré (Jagoe 1995: 166; O’connor 1988: 76). One such reference is made by Mancebo, as he muses on Leré’s surprising obliviousness to the fact that Ángel is ‘enamorado de ella como un bruto, y que todo ese furor católico que le ha entrado no es más que los movimientos desordenados y el pataleo de la amorosa bestia que lleva en el cuerpo’ (*AG II*: 516). Paradoxically, as Jagoe notes, Ángel’s love for Leré is spurred precisely by her saintly inaccessibility (Jagoe 1995: 170-171). As Ángel confesses to her:

Tu santidad es un estorbo para quererte, y aún para decírtelo. Y sin embargo, tu santidad me cautiva, y si tú no fueras como eres, si no tuvieras esa fe a toda prueba, y esa vocación irresistible, se me figura que [me] gustarías menos [...] ‘Si me quisiera ella a mí, como yo a ella – me he dicho mil veces –, se vulgarizaría, y entonces, perdido el encanto y deshecha la ilusión, no valdría para mí lo que vale, y no me cautivaría tanto’. (*AG I*: 227)

From this viewpoint, Leré is reminiscent of the superior and ever inaccessible lady of the courtly love tradition. In the same way, Ángel embodies the characteristics of the lover in this genre, as summarized by O’Donoghue. Thus, he is ‘the lady’s inferior and her adoring votive; his love inspires and refines him; above all, he is totally possessed by love, and all he does is in response to it’ (O’Donoghue 1982: 5). O’Donoghue also argues that the lover in courtly love literature often seems more concerned with his own feelings, and with the expression he gives to them, than with the object of his love in itself (O’Donoghue 1982: 5). Insofar as Ángel considers that Leré has a providential role to regenerate and inspire him, he can also be said to

share this last trait. This literary association further accentuates Ángel's likening to Don Quijote. Mancebo makes the connection explicit when he refers to Ángel's devotion to Doña Leré del Toboso (*AG II*: 505). In the same way, the narrator remarks that Ángel surrenders his will and soul to Leré 'como caballero andante ante la señora ideal de sus pensamientos' (*AG II*: 435).

Critics have often remarked on the seeming reversal of traditional gender roles in the relationship between Ángel and Leré as regards the inception and development of *dominismo*. As the narrator explains, 'lo que Leré pensaba, debía llevarlo él al terreno de la acción [...] Trocados los organismos, a Leré correspondía la obra paterna, y a Guerra la gestación pasiva y laboriosa' (*AG II*: 405). However, it is important to consider that, as argued before, Leré's role as inspirer is a traditionally feminine one. Valis points this out by referring to Leré as a 'new version of the muse of inspiration' (Valis 1993: 228). From this perspective, Ángel can be seen as conforming to the convention of masculine creativity. He also follows traditional gender roles when he identifies Leré with what he considers to be the feminine characteristic of 'sentimiento', and himself with the masculine one of 'razón' (*AG III*: 654). Thus, whereas Ángel claims that 'en la esfera del pensamiento, yo no soy yo, soy ella' (*AG III*: 736), he also presents himself as the ambitious intellectual force which can develop Leré's simple philosophy into a universal reforming movement. As Ángel tells Casado: 'En nada se opone el vuelo del *dominismo* a la modestia y a la sencillez de los planes de Leré [...] Leré es la inspiración inicial, y si no se da cuenta hoy de los alcances de sus ideas, ¿qué importa?' (*AG III*: 740-741).

As Jagoe points out, however, Ángel's religious conversion, through which he tries to become a new man in the image of Leré's spiritual expectations, also involves a process of de-masculinization (Jagoe 1995: 173). Tellingly, Dulce's love for Ángel subsides when she sees his devoutness in church. As she tells him:

Yo padecía [...] pero desde que te vi convertido en beato baboso, con medio cuerpo dentro del confesionario, desde que te vi de rodillas hociqueando en el libro como se ponen los hipócritas, me disilusioné [...] En una mujer todo eso es natural y hasta bonito, ¡pero en un hombre...! Quitá allá. (*AG II*: 493-494)

As Bacon argues, Dulce's view that Ángel's religiosity feminizes him conforms to the general nineteenth-century notion that Catholic practice was overwhelmingly the domain of women. As she also points out, this feminization of devotion, which was associated with an increase in the cult of the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus, contributed to its perception as mawkish or *cursi* (Bacon 2007: 31-32). Significantly, when Dulce taunts Ángel about the sexual unattractiveness of his new pious self, Ángel remarks defensively that the performance of religious duty is incompatible with the 'falsa ley de estética social que ha establecido la ridiculez del seglar piadoso' (AG II: 494). By contrast, it is worth noting that, in the early stages of his indoctrination by Leré, Ángel himself feels that his transformation into a devout churchgoer would be absurd: 'Ya me estoy viendo en esa facha de beato, y no tienes ni idea de lo ridículo que me encuentro. Pero tú me vas dominando de tal modo, que harás de mí lo que quieras, y sufriré las modificaciones más absurdas' (AG I: 205). Significantly, he also dismisses at this point the notion that his love for Leré could take a mystical form as a 'farsa, una comedia que hace el entendimiento para engañar al corazón' (AG I: 227). The idea of Ángel's conversion as an unnatural – or to use Jagoe's term, monstrous – process of inversion or distortion is suggested throughout the novel. Dulce points at this when she remarks, in connection with Ángel's relationship with Leré, that 'esa mona eclesiástica te ha vuelto del revés' (AG I: 238). The extent to which Ángel's spiritual metamorphosis suffocates his old self is highlighted by the narrator in two particularly striking images. As Leré intensifies her spiritual demands on him, the narrator observes that Ángel 'se iba extenuando visiblemente. Bastaba mirarle para comprender que ya vivía muy poco hacia fuera, y que tejía para sí, como el gusano de seda, labrándose con un solo hilo su impenetrable túnica' (AG II: 441). In a similar way, and in one of the many examples of the use of the mask motif in the novel, the narrator compares Ángel's soul under Leré's influence to 'esas imágenes bizantinas forradas de chapa de metal precioso, que no permite ver la escultura interior' (AG II: 465).

For Valis, Leré's and Ángel's spiritual search is partly driven by their desire to free themselves from their forebears and thus 'go beyond what they once were and make themselves anew' (Valis 1993: 224). Ironically, they are both the undeniable product of the family histories which they try to negate. So, whereas Ángel is defined by his need to find an alternative to the bourgeois society which his mother

represents, Leré's saintliness must be seen in relation to her deprived background and, in particular, to the brutality of both his biological father and step-father. This brutality triggers her aversion to sex and marriage, and, significantly, it is Leré's dead mother who, in an apparition, compels her not to get married (*AG I*: 148). Leré acknowledges that, as her chastity is a matter of natural inclination and does not involve renunciation or sacrifice for her part, there is no spiritual merit in it: 'Yo no he luchado, no he vencido, porque no siento dentro de mí enemigo que derrotar [...] La idea de casarme con un hombre y de que se ponga muy cerca, muy cerca de mí, me repugna' (*AG I*: 229). She is aware of the way in which her family history has influenced her mysticism. Thus, when asked by Ángel about the motives for her religious vocation, Leré concedes that they are both subjective and 'de carácter externo o social' (*AG I*: 141).

Critics such as Fuentes Peris and Jagoe have analysed the monstrosity which runs in Leré's family in terms of contemporary theories of degeneration. For Fuentes Peris, Leré's family's genetic degeneration is associated in the novel with her father's drunkenness (Fuentes Peris 2003: 119). Jagoe, for her part, stresses that Leré's asexuality is presented as a manifestation of her family's monstrous streak (Jagoe 1995: 170). In relation to Ángel's suggestion that all women want to get married, Leré herself states that she is 'una excepción, un fenómeno', and as much of a monster as her siblings (*AG I*: 201). It is also interesting to consider Comte's chaste marriage ideal in relation to degeneration theories. As Pickering points out, Comte supported the idea that society should offer protection to disabled children on the basis that everybody has social value. However, Comte worried that the disabled would become too much of a burden on society if their numbers continued to rise. Thus he recommended a policy of voluntary eugenics, through which people with hereditary vices and illnesses should abstain from procreating and, if married, should vow chastity (Pickering 2009: 326-327). From this point of view, Leré's asexuality may be interpreted also as the result of her unconscious unwillingness to procreate, and thus to avoid her family's seemingly degenerative tendency.

In this way, the uneasiness of Ángel's self-imposed chastity appears in marked contrast with the naturalness of Leré's choice. The misguidedness of his religious vocation is highlighted when, as a result of his need to be in close proximity to Leré, he insists that the men and women of his foundation should live in

the same building, in defiance of society's 'vulgaridad' and 'rutinas' (*AG III*: 731). In view of Leré's and Casado's insistence, he accepts the separation of the sexes, but the idea torments him (*AG III*: 733). It is again Don Pito Babel who puts Ángel's sexual and religious struggle in a humorous light. In connection with his fear that Ángel will impose a vow of chastity on the foundation's *asilados*, Don Pito protests: 'a mí no me entra religión con esas abstinencias, aunque lo digan siete mil concilios, carando, francamente, pues cuanto existe en la naturaleza es de Dios' (*AG III*: 544). Therefore, he advises Ángel to lay aside religious conventionalities concerning gender, and to follow the example of Brigham Young in his Utah Mormon community, which he describes as 'la mejor de las sectas':

Si nos vas a dar una secta nueva, ¿por qué no adoptas una que sirva para aumentar la especie humana y perfeccionarla; una que, en vez de privarnos de las gracias del bello sexo [...] nos las multiplique? Eso de la castidad, ¿a qué conduce? A que se acabe el mundo [...] Pues en vez de secarnos y consumirnos en esa castidad que daría fin a las criaturas, ¿Por qué no aumentamos el número de nenes? (*AG III*: 544)

Finding Solace: Religion as a Balm

As Hafter points out, Ángel's spiritual conversion in Parts II and III spring from the 'seeds of frustration, sorrow and dissatisfaction planted in Book I' (Hafter 1969: 40). The recurrent motif of religion as a soothing balm, which Hafter brings to attention, must be seen from this perspective. After the death of Ción, the narrator refers to Ángel's lack of faith as aggravating to his grief, on the grounds that religion acts as a 'bálsamo por la virtud esencial de las creencias, bálsamo también por el entretenimiento y ejercicio que proporcionan los actos de culto' (*AG I*: 205). Thus the religiosity which Ángel discovers with Leré serves to palliate both his guilt and his bereavement. In this respect, it is interesting to note that, after the death of his mother, Ángel compares his depressed soul with a nearly-empty glass (*AG I*: 134-135). By contrast, after his conversion at the hands of Leré, he explains to Casado that, in his relationship with her, he feels 'como si yo fuera un líquido y ella el vaso que me contiene' (*AG III*: 736).

The theme of a soothing balm is already present in the novel's first episode, in relation to Ángel's hope that sleep may relieve him from the feeling of dread and guilt caused by the previous night's revolutionary experience: 'un poco de ese bálsamo consolador, la nada, me vendría bien ahora, el santo sueño que nos da los consuelos de una muerte temporal' (*AG I*: 31). In a similar way, and as a humorous counterpoint to Ángel's soothing spirituality, the balm motif is also used to refer to Don Pito's and Dulce's use of alcohol in order to find oblivion. In the chapter entitled 'Herida. Bálsamo', and in relation to Dulce's grief after she is abandoned by Ángel, the narrator remarks: 'Realmente la bebida tenía la inapreciable virtud de producir olvido, único calmante eficaz de los males del alma, y con tal medicina la buena mujer perdía por más o menos tiempo la noción de su inmensa pesadumbre' (*AG I*: 254). The drunkard Don Pito, through whose influence Dulce becomes an alcoholic, dutifully recommends 'conformidad cristiana' in his attempt to comfort his niece. He adds, however, that his drinking 'bálsamo' has been a great consolation to him 'como excelente específico contra los quebraderos de cabeza, contra las opresiones y melancolías' (*AG I*: 254-255). In another humorous twist during the same exchange with his niece, Don Pito counterposes Leré's and Ángel's altruistic philosophy with his misanthropic advice to the distressed Dulce:

Calcula que los hombres son de su natural malos, y la mujeres peores, digo, peores no, iguales: que eso que llaman el prójimo es un bicho venenoso [...] Para no afligirte nunca, hazte cuenta de que no hay ni puede haber nada bueno en sí. Si algo figura como bueno, es por la virtud del olvido. (*AG I*: 255)

In like manner, and in line with the Babeles' role in the novel, Dulce provides the ironic counterpoint to Ángel's new mystical fervour. Thus, as she realizes that Ángel has fallen in love with Leré, she resentfully hurls at him the anti-Catholic rhetoric which she has learned from Ángel himself:

te has pasado toda la vida trabajando contra los curas y el fanatismo, y mira por donde has ido a caer en manos de tus enemigos [...] Atrévete a sostener ahora, como sostenías antes, que eso de la religión es farsa y chanchullo [...] No hay más si no que los de la sotana te han echado ese gancho para sacarte el dinero. ¡Ay, cuando andabas por ahí hecho un pelele, no se acordaban de ti

para nada! Como que ellos no hacen caso del pobre [...] Y ahora la pobre discípula se aguanta en la verdad, mientras que el sabio maestro, tú, se traga todos esos disparates. (AG I: 237-238)

Moreover, Dulce now adopts Ángel's previous dreams of violent revolution. Thus, with language reminiscent of that of the ex-priest Bailón in *Torquemada en la hoguera*, she wishes that 'reventara en Toledo un grandísimo volcán y les hiciera polvo a todos. ¡Valiente religión! Falsa, hipocresía, todo mitos' (AG I: 257). Similarly, she suggests to Don Pito that they set fire to Toledo's Cathedral 'cuando estén dentro todos los mitos y los curas predicando' (AG I: 259). Dulce's staggering transformation highlights the fact that her suffering is the corollary of Ángel's spiritual conversion. Leré is aware of this irony when she tells Ángel: '¡Triste cosa que para limpiar un hombre su conciencia tenga que dar a una pobre mujer tal trago de amargura! (AG II: 420). Later on in the novel, in the chapter entitled 'Bálsamo contra bálsamo', Dulce finds consolation, as well as a cure to her alcohol addiction, in a temperate kind of religiosity.

In line with the view that the personal and the national go hand in hand in *Ángel Guerra*, Sinnigen notes that the religious *bálsamo* theme may be associated with socio-economic as well as psychological factors. In the sense that Ángel's foundation redistributes among the poor the fortune which his family had amassed through the *desamortización*, it represents an attempt to remedy the adverse social effects of this liberal policy (Sinnigen 1996: 199). In this way Ángel can also assuage his class guilt. As it has been noted previously, this theme is also present in the later novel *Torquemada y San Pedro*, where Torquemada's salvation is presented by the priest Gamborena as conditional on his leaving one third of his fortune to the Church.

The Toledan Church: Good Old Days and *Desamortización*

As Ewald points out, the priest Mancebo acts in the novel as a mouthpiece for the effects of the *desamortización* on the beleaguered Toledan Church (Ewald 2011: 57). He laments the 'pobreza humillante' of the Toledan Cathedral, which he compares to that of a 'noble lleno de pergaminos y sin una peseta' (AG II: 309). As he explains to

Ángel, the Cathedral survives now on the pitiful allowance which the Government allocates to it, in contrast with the fabulous wealth which its now-lost rents used to yield. In his account, this pre-disentailment wealth trickled down to the inhabitants of Toledo by way of both charitable work and the employment which the Cathedral created, particularly through the *Obra y Fábrica*, the institution in charge of construction and maintenance work. As he tells Ángel:

La mitra cobraba entonces de sus bienes cinco milloncejos, que se gastaban en obras, en fundaciones, en fomentar las artes y los oficios. Con esto y con las rentas de la *Obra y Fábrica*, que del pueblo salían y al pueblo tornaban, Toledo era el comedero universal. Comían el pintor y el estofador, comían albañiles y arquitectos, el tallista y el cerrajero, comíamos en fin todos los que llevamos sotana, pues en la Catedral había dotación para treinta y seis mil misas de año a año, y siguiendo la escala de alto a bajo, comía toda la grey de Dios. Pero nos desamortizaron..., y ¡zapa! Ahora no come nadie. (AG II: 301-302)

The wealth and sumptuousness of the Cathedral of Toledo during the eighteenth century may be inferred from the fact that, as Callahan points out, the number of ecclesiastical and other Church-related staff which it employed was only second to that of St Peter's in Rome. In his view, this kind of luxury was possible thanks to the inordinate share of the national income which the major ecclesiastical institutions received. By virtue of their wealth, cathedrals and monasteries were indeed prominent employers in the Old-Regime economic system, particularly as the poor level of industrial development meant that skilled workers depended on the Church for work. In this way, the Church played an important role in maintaining social stability, and thus helped to guarantee its own privileged position (Callahan 1984: 46-47).

Leré's young cousin Ildefonso echoes in his child-like manner Mancebo's concerns that the impoverished Cathedral cannot now offer employment as it once did. He regards the traditional construction trades as worthless and plans to become an army cadet instead: 'Dice mi padre que en estos tiempos de ahora hay que ser o señorito o nada; quiere decirse, pobre de los que piden limosna. Los oficios, ¿Qué dan? Miseria. ¡Antes sí, cuando la Catedral era rica!' (AG II: 293). In the same vein,

Mancebo does not wish any of his grand-nephews to follow an ecclesiastical career, as there is little money in it now. As he tells Ángel:

vale más ser picapedrero que sacerdote, porque majando piedra veo que llegan muchos a contratistas y se hartan de dinero, mientras que el clérigo, aunque llegue a canónigo, lo comido por lo servido, y todavía le parece mucho lo que nos dan, y nos llaman sanguijuelas de la nación. (AG II: 303)

The extreme poverty in which the priest Don Eleuterio Virones lives would seem to confirm Mancebo's view that there is little to gain from the ecclesiastical career in post-disentailment times. As he is unable to find a curacy, Virones accepts the offer to become an *asilado* in Ángel's foundation with glee: 'No más pobreza vergonzante [...] Vale más vestir el chaquetón de un hospicio. Que me quiten los hábitos. Para lo que me han servido, ¡carambo!' (AG III: 647). However, the enthusiasm with which he approaches physical work at Ángel's estate of Turleque, and his reluctance to take up any clerical duties for the foundation, suggest a lack of vocation which may have contributed to his unemployability (AG III: 649; 651).

Humorously, Mancebo imagines that a marriage between Ángel and Leré would work towards restoring some of the financial losses which the Cathedral's chaplains such as himself suffered as a result of the *desamortización*. As Ángel is the owner of the disentaileed Cigarral de Guadalupe, whose rents used to fund the chaplains' remuneration for a number of now-lost Masses, Mancebo concludes that he would make a rightful beneficiary of the estate once it was in Leré's hands. As he thinks to himself: '¡Miren las vueltas que la Providencia da a las cosas para que la justicia y el derecho se cumplan! (AG II: 327). It is noteworthy that, notwithstanding Mancebo's protests about the priests' plight, Galdós argues in an 1885 article that the clergy has been able to retain much of its social power despite the changes brought about by the *desamortización*:

la clase que sintetiza el sentimiento religioso o los restos de él, tiene todavía mucho poder entre nosotros. Esta clase es el clero, que aún es fuerte, aunque no domina ya en todo el campo de las conciencias, que aún es rico, aunque la desamortización le despojó de sus inmensos caudales, que aún es numeroso, aunque no se nutre con elementos de las grandes familias y recluta casi

exclusivamente sus huestes en las clases más humildes. (*Cartas desconocidas*: 151-152)

As Ewald points out, Mancebo's rosy memories of how the Church contributed to Toledo's economic prosperity during the Old Regime cannot be taken at face value. For many contemporary supporters of the *desamortización*, the lavishness which the Church displayed was in itself proof that its wealth was being directed away from the poor (Ewald 2011: 58). In his 1855 *Reseña sobre el clero español*, Madoz denounces the Church's 'ridícula ostentación y escandaloso lujo' and argues that the legitimate owner of the Church's patrimony is 'la clase menesterosa del pueblo, en cuyo interés se hicieron las donaciones, y á cuya sombra se enriqueció la iglesia' (cited by Ewald 2011: 58). In this last regard, Callahan argues that the economic pressure which the Old-Regime Church exerted on the population of Castile was relentless (Callahan 1984: 46). The tithe, which the disentailment legislation abolished, was thoroughly resented by the peasants, and indeed the liberal Cortes elected after Riego's *pronunciamiento* in 1820 received petitions from peasant proprietors to end the slavery of the *diezmo*. In 1821, a law was duly passed which reduced it by half (Callahan 1984: 114; 129). Moreover, the Church could also exert financial pressure by maintaining high prices for agricultural produce, and, as Callahan notes, some cathedral chapters were not above manipulating grain supplies for profit. Thus, in 1754, the chapter of Toledo Cathedral, which was the wealthiest in Castile, kept the price of bread artificially high for the local population by limiting the release of its grain stock (Callahan 1984: 46).

As for the dispensation of charity by religious institutions during the eighteenth century, Callahan argues that the Church's role in the relief of the poor, although it was crucial, should not be overstated. As a large sector of the population lived in poverty, the Church's often fragmented and disorganized charitable efforts were palpably insufficient (Callahan 1984: 48-50). In this respect, it is interesting to note Galdós's comments in the aforementioned 1885 article 'El primero de mayo'. He argues that the social conflicts of the Old Regime subsist in the post-disentailment society. They appear under a new guise, with different combatants, but remain unchanged in essence. Galdós maintains that, just as it was during the Old Regime, neither the State nor the Church endeavour to alleviate the situation of the

poor. The State defends the right to legal property in preference to ‘la ley moral’. The Church, for its part, ‘no se atreve a amparar a los desvalidos, temiendo salir perdiendo si éstos alcanzan el triunfo. Pónese, pues, de parte de los poderes y de la propiedad constituidos’. He concludes that ‘en el fondo hay, pues, gran semejanza con la situación de hace cincuenta años’ (*Política española*, II: 269). Ángel expresses the same pessimism about the charitable role of the Church when he tells Casado that ‘la Iglesia no practica la caridad más que en la parte que le conviene, para sostener su organización temporal’ (*AG III*: 738).

However, for Catholic critics of the *desamortización* the liberal State had acted wrongfully in disregarding the valuable role which the Church played in society through its charitable and educational activities. In relation to the liberal assailing of religious orders, the Catalan priest Jaume Balmes writes in an 1844 article:

Uno de los objetos en que la incredulidad se ha mostrado más ciega y rencorosa es, a no dudarlo, las instituciones religiosas. No ha visto, o no ha querido ver, que ellas habían servido en todo tiempo para satisfacer grandes necesidades, no sólo religiosas, sino sociales y políticas, y que en nuestra época no se debía desaprovechar un elemento que bien dirigido podía remediar o disminuir muchos males. (Cited by Mínguez Blasco 2012: 7)

As Lannon notes, between 1836 and 1845, 83% of the religious orders’ property was seized and sold. The great majority of the male religious communities were abolished, and by the 1840s only a few dozen survived. Mendizábal’s legislation was more tolerant of women’s orders, however. Despite a drastic reduction in their numbers, there were still around 11,000 women religious by the middle of the nineteenth century (Lannon 1987: 59). Callahan notes that convents with more than twenty nuns were allowed to stay open, although they could not receive new novices. Moreover, congregations dedicated to charitable work, such as the *Hermanas de la Caridad*, could continue working in institutions such as hospitals, old age asylums or orphanages. However, their status was now that of private citizens engaged by local governments (Callahan 1984: 293). For Lannon, the fact that women’s orders were perceived as less politicized than the male orders, and the fact that their welfare activities were regarded as socially useful, contributed to their more lenient treatment

by the disentailment legislation (Lannon 1987: 59-60). Callahan also suggests that one reason for this preferential treatment of nuns was the belief that they would find it more difficult than men to adapt to secular life (Callahan 1984: 159-160).

Despite faring better than their male counterparts, the economic plight of the nuns after the *desamortización* is highlighted by the conservative writer Vicente de la Fuente in his mid-century *cuadro costumbrista* 'La monja'. He describes them as the victims of the liberal bourgeoisie, particularly of its foremost representative, the newly ennobled banker. Thus he poignantly compares the humble lifestyle which the nuns lead in a convent spared by the *desamortización* with the ostentation of 'la casa del banquero opulento, del aristócrata nuevo que compró por una cantidad insignificante los bienes de la Vírgenes del Señor, arrebatándoles sus dotes y su mantenimiento' (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 286). De la Fuente also comments on the particular case of the Hermanas de la Caridad, who were able to avoid the prohibition against accepting new novices, due to the high regard in which their charitable work was held:

Un solo instituto ha logrado levantar de sí el entredicho, y es el de las hermanas de la Caridad. Los hospitales, hospicios, y otros establecimientos de beneficencia reclamaban esta medida, y los pueblos mismos la exigían del gobierno. Una vez levantada la prohibición, multitud de jóvenes piadosas han corrido á llenar las vacantes [...] Jamas las órdenes del gobierno ni las predicaciones filantrópicas de los humanitarios [...] lograrán introducir en los establecimientos públicos la abnegación, la limpieza y la puntualidad que reinan en los departamentos confiados á las hermanas de la Caridad, y mucho menos su esmero por aliviar no solamente los padecimientos físicos, sino hasta los morales de los infelices confiados á sus desvelos. (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 286-287)

The Church Strikes Back: Leré and the Modern Nuns of Liberal Society

Leré's choice of religious institution, the Congregación del Socorro, which, as mentioned previously, is dedicated to the domiciliary care of the poor and sick, follows in the tradition of older female religious institutions such as the Hermanas de

la Caridad. It is however also representative of the new congregations which, as Lannon points out, spread during the Restoration period at a staggering pace, and which, in spite of the mid-century threat to their very existence, became a leading force in the society of the period. Female institutions were particularly successful and by 1904 there were over 40,000 women religious, as opposed to around 11,000 men (Lannon 1987: 59-61). As Mínguez Blasco points out, the Church hierarchy, whose attitude towards active women religious had been traditionally one of mistrust, began to accept them during the second half of the nineteenth century as a useful tool to counter the secularization of Spanish society. In particular, the female congregations presented a religious alternative to the liberal system of *beneficencia*. As Mínguez Blasco also notes, the increase in the number of women in the Church structure through the congregations was one of the aspects which contributed to the aforementioned feminization of religiosity in the nineteenth century (Mínguez Blasco 2012: 2; 7-10).

For Lannon, these congregations, both male and female, were intrinsically linked to the Catholic revival of the end of the century, since, in her words, they ‘empowered it, led it, symbolized it, and flourished because of it’ (Lannon 1987: 59). She also argues that the spread of the congregations must be understood in relation to the development of capitalism. Thus their success was based on their capacity to ‘meet some of the pressing needs of changing Spanish society, especially in the growing cities, and the willingness of the state to accept and rely on these services’ (Lannon 1987: 61). In this last respect, it is noteworthy that the 1851 Concordato, which, as we have seen, gave papal approval to the *desamortización*, also enabled religious institutions to recover through its stipulated concessions to the Church (Lannon 1987: 60; Mínguez Blasco 2012: 3). Moreover, as Callahan points out, it was important for the Restoration governments to appease the Church and reach a settlement with it in order to bolster the forces of order and stability which sustained the system (Callahan 1984: 273-274).

The conditions under which the new congregations grew were nonetheless very different from those of Old Regime religious institutions. As Callahan notes, the government did not recognize any financial obligation towards them. As a result, orders and congregations became dependent on donations from the nobility and

bourgeoisie, who encouraged their role as bulwarks against social unrest (Callahan 1984: 161-162). In this way, as Carr points out, the upper classes played a crucial role in the religious revival of the period. Their charitable organizations, which were ‘supported by the female piety of that “elegant, sanctimonious swarm” of *beatas* who people the novels of Galdós’, were phenomenally influential (Carr 1966: 465). In his 1895 novel *Halma*, Galdós exposes the hypocrisy of this aristocratic fashion for things religious, which the narrator describes as ‘una de esas rachas que temporalmente [...] agitan y conmueven [la sociedad], racha que entonces era religiosa, como otras veces había sido impía’ (*Halma*: 55). Thus, during a *tertulia* at the Marqués de Feramor’s house, the cynical Jacinto Villalonga praises Halma’s charitable project, declaring that her ‘empresas espirituales [...] eran lo mismo que una gran batalla dada a las revoluciones’ (*Halma*: 58). Other *tertulianos*, members of the ‘nobleza frescachona’, also approve of Halma’s project, and remark that ‘los títulos debían ponerse al frente del movimiento de regeneración’ (*Halma*: 58). It is ironic that Ángel’s founding zeal, as well as his support of the Congregación del Socorro as one of its main benefactors (*AG II*: 399), can be seen as conforming to this fashionable religious trend. Yet Ángel’s religiosity is one which tries to subvert, rather than to sustain, the values of bourgeois society.

As Mínguez Blasco points out, some of the new institutions were Spanish in origin, but many came from France as a result of the anti-congregation legislation of the Third Republic (Mínguez Blasco 2012: 7). In Galdós’s *Cánovas* (1912), the narrator Tito refers to the expansion of French male religious orders as an ‘horrible plaga’ (*Canovas*: 158). In the sense that they represent the return to a period of great power for the Church, Tito also considers this ‘invasión monástica’ to be the ‘principio de un período histórico desastroso para nuestra pobre España’ (*Canovas*: 157). In a similar way, Ángel resents the new foreign congregations, which, as he tells Casado, respond exclusively to ‘fines de utilidad inmediata’ (*AG III*: 739). By contrast, his ‘obra’, which he describes as ‘genuinamente española’, intends to ‘renovar el carácter profundamente evangélico de las órdenes antiguas’ (*AG III*: 739). As Elizalde argues, there is a strong element of nationalism in Ángel’s reforming project (Elizalde 1990: 388-390).

A sense of nationalistic nostalgia for the Church of the Old Regime also causes the otherwise practical Mancebo to dislike Lerés congregation, on account of its foreign-inspired modernity. As he tell Ángel:

Figúrese usted mi sorpresa cuando leo la última carta de Braulio y ¡zapa! Que Lorenza viene para acá con ánimo de entrar en esas órdenes modernísimas de hermanas correntonas, que andan de calle en plaza, pidiendo y refistoleando, metiéndose y sacándose por todas partes ... Le diré a usted en confianza que estas órdenes que nos han mandado de extranjis me cargan. Yo soy clérigo de cuño antiguo; me ha criado a sus pechos la *alma ecclesia toledana*, toda severidad y grandeza, y no estoy por esta novedad de las monjas públicas.
(AG II: 304)

By contrast, he praises the ‘nobleza, recogimiento y verdadera devoción’ of the traditional Spanish orders, whose nuns he describes as ‘reclusas y bien trincadas dentro de los hierros, observando bien su regla y rezando noche y día por tantísimo pecador como hay’ (AG II: 304). In this way, a feeling of unease as regards the socially active role of the Congregación del Socorro’s sisters contributes to Mancebo’s dismissal of Leré’s institution.

In her article ‘The Women of Spain’, published in *The Fortnightly Review* in 1889, Emilia Pardo Bazán comments on the transformation which Spanish nuns were undergoing:

The old-fashioned type of nun, who passed her life in contemplation [...] is gradually giving place to the modern sister, less conventional and more practical, dedicated by preference to teaching or works of charity, desirous to learn and anxious to model herself on the French sisters, who [...] have brought about this radical change in the cloister life of Spain (‘The Women of Spain’: 165)

As Mangion points out, in contrast to the contemplative life which nuns led in the enclosed orders, life in the religious female congregations was one of philanthropic and educational work outside the convent as well as of prayer. In this respect, the sisters’ social role was one which both conformed to contemporary beliefs about women’s position in society and also transcended these beliefs, as they were able to

expand their religious authority into the public sphere (Mangion 2008: 2). Hoff stresses that, as the sisters' work in public charity was in line with the idealized image of women as spiritual redeemers, it represented a socially acceptable alternative to domesticity (Hoff 2006: 1067). In the same vein, Lannon indicates that the active life in congregations presented for many women an attractive outlet to their 'piety, energy, and initiative' in a world which offered few professional opportunities outside the family (Lannon 1987: 63). In Jagoe's view, Leré resembles the independent heroines which began to appear in some late-nineteenth-century literature, 'New Women' who rejected the traditional role of wife and mother (Jagoe 1995: 175). Nonetheless, it is important to consider Leré's paradoxical combination of meekness, authority and independence in relation to her identity as a woman religious of the increasingly influential female congregations. Ironically, this congregational movement, which pushed the limits of women's participation in public life, also worked as a formidable force for conservatism in the Spanish society of the second half of the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

Ángel's spiritual journey through *Ángel Guerra* reflects the social, intellectual and religious conflicts which shaped the Spanish society of the late nineteenth century. Ángel's family wealth, a product of the *desamortización*, links his personal history to that of the establishment of liberalism in Spain and the ascent of the bourgeoisie. His sense of disaffection with the class to which he belongs, and his desire for greater social justice, prompt him to search for social alternatives through political revolution first and religion later. His ambitious *dominista* project, with its paradoxical mixture of social radicalism and nostalgia for the Spain of the past, constitutes an attempt both to redirect his wealth to the poor and to relieve his class guilt. Ultimately he fails in his efforts to find personal fulfilment and to bring about social change. A return to the pre-disentailment society of the Old Regime is not an alternative, and even the soothing effect which Leré's religiosity has on him comes at a great personal cost. Frequent images of violent distortion and physical harm appear as prescient warnings of failure from the beginning of the novel. In the manner of Don Quijote, Ángel realizes on his deathbed that his religious vocation

had been an illusion, the result of his attraction for Leré. And yet his spiritual journey ends with the positive realization that he has learned the value of humanitarian love. Beyond this general moral principle, *Ángel Guerra* does not propose political or religious solutions to the conflicts presented in the novel. The pervading sense of social and spiritual malaise which runs through *Ángel Guerra* makes it a deeply unsettling novel which, in its questioning of the very foundations of liberal society, has a strangely subversive power.

Chapter 4

The cuestión social in Misericordia

The theme of charity has been the focus of much literary criticism on *Misericordia*. Many critics, among them Russell (1967), Varey (1970) and Penuel (1972), have concentrated on the religious, philosophical and psychological aspects of this theme. From their perspective, the novel's protagonist, Benina, is seen as the embodiment of charity as a Christian virtue. More recently, critics such as Gold (1997; 2001) and Fuentes Peris (2003) have brought into focus the social dimension of this novel. In particular, Fuentes Peris analyses Galdós's engagement here with bourgeois discourses on the poor, which often presented the lower levels of society as a threat to be contained and controlled. She highlights Galdós's handling of contemporary notions about the dangers of indiscriminate charity and the need to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving poor. However, as Valis argues, Fuentes Peris's analysis of the theme of charity in Galdós relies excessively on the Foucauldian notion of charity, which reduces this complex concept to a simple mechanism of social control by the dominant bourgeois ideology (Valis 2010: 122). It is important to consider that bourgeois discourses on discriminate and indiscriminate charity were part of a wider debate about both the causes of pauperism in modern society and the possible solutions to it. This complex debate encompassed questions of social justice as well as of social control. The subject was discussed from different ideological points of view, and it involved socio-economic, political and religious considerations. Thus it is not possible to speak of a unified bourgeois discourse on the poor. The aim of this chapter, then, is to contribute further to the understanding of Galdós's ironic and multifaceted engagement in *Misericordia* with this social debate at a time when traditional social attitudes towards the poor were rapidly changing. As Bauer argues, a socio-economic approach to *Misericordia* does not undermine the novel's 'messages about the power of the imagination, love and generosity'. Rather, such an approach helps to embed these messages into the money narrative which runs through the novel (Bauer 1992: 241).

The Changing Face of Poverty

As the themes of poverty and charity are central to *Misericordia*, it is worth highlighting some aspects of the contemporary debates around these issues. The subject of poverty, its causes and its remedies, was omnipresent in the press of the time, and Galdós himself wrote articles on this topic during the 1880s and 1890s. It is clear from this extensive literature that the very perception of poverty was shifting along with the socio-economic circumstances of nineteenth century Spain, and that the concept was also dependent on the author's ideological viewpoint. As Carasa Soto points out, poverty is a fluid concept: 'no es solo el número de pobres, huidizo y oscilante, el que cambia en las sucesivas etapas históricas, sino el concepto mismo de pobreza [...] La pobreza es móvil por naturaleza, tanto en la concepción teórica como en su concreción práctica' (Carasa Soto 1987a: 32). Often, along with new concepts and new approaches to the subject, there came a new terminology. However, Carasa Soto notes that the evolution in ideas concerning poverty and its relief, from the Old Regime up to the nineteenth century, is far from straightforward. Rather, it is 'una realidad de larga duración y lenta mutación, con retrocesos, con retazos de viejas posturas, con mezclas, interrelaciones y conflictivas convivencias' (Carasa Soto 1987a: 35).

The word *pauperism* was first used in England during the first half of the nineteenth century to denote the poverty which resulted from industrialization. In Spain, the term *pauperismo* became widespread during the second half of the century and was officially adopted by the *Diccionario de la Real Academia* in 1869. It appeared for the first time in Rafael María Baralt's 1851 *Dictionary de galicismos*, in reference to the 'existencia de un gran número de pobres en un Estado; pobreza originada de causas políticas, administrativas u económicas permanentes' (cited by Capellán de Miguel 2007, II: 15). In 1859, Luis Segundo Huidobro makes the distinction between *pobreza*, which is 'como la enfermedad, es el mal inherente a la condición humana' and *pauperismo*, which is 'como la epidemia, es el mal generalizado, extenso, *socializado*; producto doble de nuestra imperfección natural, y del efecto de las instituciones sociales' (cited by Capellán de Miguel 2007, II: 9). In her 1897 *El pauperismo*, Concepción Arenal places the term's emphasis on the

social inequalities of modern societies. For her, pauperism is ‘la miseria permanente y generalizada en un país culto, de modo que haya una gran masa de miserables, y otra que disfruta riquezas y goza de todos los refinamientos del lujo’ (*El pauperismo*: 17). However, Arenal does not believe that industrialized societies have aggravated the problem of poverty. Rather, modern sensibilities, by being less tolerant of it, have pushed the subject to prominence, thus rendering it more visible:

Lo que hay de nuevo en el asunto es que se estudia: que pensadores y filántropos, academias, tribunas, libros, periódicos [...] meditan y buscan y proponen medios de combatir la miseria; lo que hay de nuevo es que no se resignan con ella los que sufren: que la sienten aun los que no la padecen. (*El pauperismo*: 22)

By emphasizing the social dimension of poverty, the term pauperism suggested the need for a different approach: private and voluntary almsgiving was not enough to mitigate a problem which was perceived as having been created by modern society. As Capellán de Miguel points out, the notion began to spread that the question of pauperism required a political response (Capellán de Miguel 2007, II: 11). The idea of the need for political intervention in the relief of poverty is more clearly apparent in the expression *cuestión social*, a phrase which originated in France during the 1830s in Fourierist circles and which was widely used in Spain by the 1880s. Capellán de Miguel ascribes the introduction of the expression *cuestión social* to the economist Flórez Estrada, an author well acquainted with contemporary European economic and political thought. During a 10 year exile in England, Flórez Estrada had studied the work of the leading British political economists Adam Smith, T. R. Malthus, David Ricardo and James Mill. He was also influenced by the Fourierism he encountered during his stay in France in the 1830s, from which he developed an economic theory more attuned to the problem of pauperism. His emphasis in a just distribution of wealth, as well as in production, distances his economic theory from the classical liberal tradition of *laissez-faire* (Capellán de Miguel 2007, I: 61-63). In Flórez Estrada’s view, ‘la mala distribución de la riqueza es en último resultado el origen de todas las querellas del género humano’ (Flórez Estrada 1836 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, V: 19). Flórez Estrada also rejects the concept of poverty as part of a natural order, an Old Regime idea which also found its way into the classical school of economic liberalism: ‘¿Qué concepto tan poco lisonjero nos deberíamos

formar del gran Bienhechor, si estuviéramos convencidos de que sus beneficios no pueden alcanzar al género humano; de que el proletariado es una calamidad necesaria?’ (cited by Capellán de Miguel 2007, I: 65).

As Shubert points out, the question of State intervention and balance between public and private charity was actively debated in Spain, as in the rest of Europe, during the nineteenth century (Shubert 1991: 48). In the case of Spain, Bahamonde and Toro note that there was a continuous increase in the number of publications dedicated to the subject of *beneficencia* from the middle of the century onwards, coinciding with an explosion of the Madrid population (Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 46). As critics have often brought to attention, there was also a proliferation of novels set in the Madrid slums during the last years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, such as Galdós’s *Misericordia*, Baroja’s trilogy *La lucha por la vida* and Blasco Ibañez’s *La Horda* (Avilés Arroyo 1989: 115-116). Bahamonde and Toro argue that the drastic expansion of Madrid’s population during that period had exacerbated the living conditions of the poor. They estimate that Madrid’s population went from 397,816 in 1877 to 539,835 in 1900, that is, there was a 35% increase in twenty-three years. In 1898, only about half of the Madrid population was born in the city (Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 95-97). As seen in Chapter 2, this expansion was, for the most part, due to migration from the provinces, a fact which is reflected in *Misericordia*, where many of the main characters, including Benina, come from outside Madrid. As Nielfa Cristóbal points out, Madrid was a focus of attraction for wealthy or middle-class individuals from the provinces – as in the case of José María in *Lo prohibido* and Doña Paca and Ponte in *Misericordia*. However, the weight of the immigration consisted of unskilled workers who concentrated in peripheral areas such as the southern districts of Latina and Hospital (Nielfa Cristóbal 1986: 267; 273).

The social challenges produced by the emergence of capitalism could not be met by the liberal system of *beneficencia* which, as Vega points out, was impaired by a ‘carácter muy parcial, circunscrito casi por entero a la asistencia benéfica y tradicional del pauperismo, y ajeno completamente a iniciativas que trataran los problemas de los trabajadores y asalariados desde la perspectiva de la previsión social’ (Vega 2010: 55). Proposals for social legislation which tackled the precariousness of labour associated with industrial societies only began to be

reluctantly accepted towards the turn of the century. It is generally agreed that a turning point in the question of State interventionism was the Comisión de Reformas Sociales. This project was created by Segismundo Moret in 1883 in accordance with the ideas of the Krausist Gumersindo de Azcárate about social harmony, which stood in reaction both to *laissez faire* liberalism and to socialism. As Carr argues, conservatives such as Cánovas and Dato had also assimilated by the end of the century the *doctrinarian* stance of politicians such as Borrego – whose views on the *desamortización* were discussed in the previous chapter – that the threat of socialism could only be contained through social legislation, as resistance would be futile. Dato's mild but modern labour legislation of the turn of the century, such as his Ley de Accidentes de Trabajo and his law regulating the work of women and children must be considered in this light (Carr 1966: 460-461). For Buj, this increase in social legislation was the result, not only of the perceived threat of social unrest, but also of the progressive 'sensibilización colectiva por las cuestiones sociales' (Buj 1994: 3).

The development of Cánovas's ideas on the *cuestión social*, from the 1870s to the 1890s, is representative of the changing attitudes as regards the poor and their relief. In an 1871 speech on the International, Cánovas defends the immutability of social inequalities, and thus reduces the problem of pauperism to one of order, which must be contained by either charity or force:

siempre habrá miseria, siempre: siempre habrá un bajo Estado, siempre habrá una última grada en la escala social, un proletariado que será preciso contener por dos medios: con el de la caridad, la ilustración, los recursos morales y, cuando éste no baste, con el de la fuerza. (*Discurso sobre la Internacional*: no page given)

He also stresses that the established order is God-sanctioned and, in a curious turn of logic, reasons that without God, the demands of socialism would be justified:

si no hubiera más vida que ésta, si no hubiera Dios, como se dice y se proclama con tristes voces, yo no sé qué tendríamos que decir al socialismo; yo no sé con qué razón un hombre que vive esta vida transitoria le diría a otro hombre a quien también ha de tragarse la tierra, 'sufre y padece, y lucha y muere'. ¡Ah señores!, si es verdad que no hay Dios [...] ¿a qué esta lucha impía? Entendámonos con la Internacional y el socialismo, porque yo declaro

que si no hay Dios, el derecho está de su parte. (*Discurso sobre la Internacional*: no page given)

The implication is that if, as he puts it in an 1876 speech, ‘las desigualdades proceden de Dios’ (cited by Sánchez Jiménez 1980: 67), then they are just, and demands for equity are therefore senseless. In this way, Cánovas’s *laissez faire* economic liberalism gets theological corroboration. However, in his 1890 article ‘Novísimo aspecto de la cuestión obrera’, Cánovas advocates Bismarck’s social reform policies, and acknowledges the ‘confesada impotencia de la economía política para formular un reparto de la producción que [...] presente al Estado eficaces medios con que pacificar la discordia social’ (Cánovas 1890 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, IV: 92). Although the emphasis is still on order rather than social justice, Cánovas now admits that the problems associated with the *cuestión social* cannot be left either to the market or to private charity alone.

The *cuestión social* in Galdós’s Journalism

In the context of this growing acceptance of institutional social reform, it is noteworthy that, in his article of 15 April 1885, ‘El primero de mayo’, Galdós reveals both extreme social pessimism and scepticism towards the idea of State intervention:

Tras de una perturbación más o menos grande [...] volverán las cosas al estado antiguo, y todo seguirá lo mismo, los capitalistas siempre explotando, los obreros trabajando siempre y viviendo al día. El Estado metiéndose en funciones que no le corresponden, no puede ofrecer más que paliativos. El remedio de la desigualdad no vendrá nunca, porque la desigualdad es irremediable, eterna y constitutiva. (*Política española*, II: 273)

Galdós’s view of the futility of Government reform is particularly surprising in the light of his analysis of the *cuestión social* in an article of 17 February 1885, where he links the problem of pauperism to free market and industrialization. In reference to the increase in the number of unemployed caused by the contraction of the construction industry in Madrid – which, as Whiston points out, had been thriving during the first years of the Restoration (*Lo prohibido*: 95-97) – Galdós observes:

Nada más triste que esas multitudes que se agolpan a las puertas de un establecimiento de caridad en busca de mezquino socorro, y cuando esas multitudes se componen de hombres sanos, robustos, hábiles y nada perezosos, no se sabe qué pensar de la organización del trabajo en nuestras Sociedades. El gran problema social que, según todos los síntomas, va a ser la gran batalla del siglo próximo, se anuncia en las postrimerías del [siglo] actual, con chispazos, a cuya claridad se alcanza a ver la gravedad que entraña. Los mismos perfeccionamientos de la industria lo hacen cada día más pavoroso, y la competencia formidable, trayendo inverosímiles baraturas [...] produce desastres económicos que van a refluir siempre sobre los infelices asalariados. (*Cronicón*, I: 148-49)

Five years later, in an article on the 1st of May strikes across Europe, Galdós reflects that socialist demands will necessarily intensify in the coming years. He maintains however that class tensions in Spain will never be harsh due to the ‘compenetración democrática’ which exists among the different layers of society (*Cartas desconocidas*: 398). In this article Galdós also presents a more favourable view of State interventionism: ‘La doctrina pura individualista ha perdido bastante terreno, y ya se piden al Estado iniciativas que hace algún tiempo eran consideradas como heterodoxas’ (*Cartas desconocidas*: 401). He considers that the type of social reforms introduced in Germany by Bismarck will also be adopted in other European countries. In his view, these reforms will help maintain a social balance by supporting ‘las pretensiones razonables del proletariado en algunos casos, y defendiendo en otros el derecho de los patrones’ (*Cartas desconocidas*: 401). As Rodgers points out, Galdós sympathises with the working classes ‘en la medida en que se abstengan de reivindicar cambios radicales en la estructura del poder político y económico’ (Rodgers 1993: 278).

In later articles, however, Galdós continues to show detachment from the idea of political solutions to social problems. Thus, in an article of 1893, in which he launches an attack on anarchist ideas following the assassination attempt against General Martínez Barrios, Galdós reiterates the idea that social injustice is connatural to human society: ‘la razón y la imaginación [...] no nos dan idea de que pueda existir la distribución equitativa de los escasos bienes de este mundo. Los anarquistas sueñan con la abolición del mal, que es lo mismo que querer suprimir la

vida' (*Cartas desconocidas*: 486). Galdós continues this article lamenting the lack of religious feeling among the working classes, as he considers that, in the past, religion had made the burden of poverty more tolerable. In his view, the encroachment of secularism is the result of liberalism:

cada día observamos menos resignación para conllevar las penas de la pobreza en aquellos a quienes ha tocado la suerte de figurar en la última escala social. El mal humor y la displicencia de las clases humildes es cada día mayor. Falta el contrapeso de la idea religiosa, de las compensaciones anunciadas para otra vida, en la cual han empezado a perder la fe algunos desheredados de la fortuna [...] Los que nada tienen se vuelven hacia los filósofos y propagandistas liberales que en lo que va de siglo han destruido la fe religiosa, y les dicen: 'Nos habéis quitado el cielo; pues ahora queremos la tierra'. (*Cartas desconocidas*: 486-87)

Galdós aligns himself here with the conservative view according to which the demands of socialism are linked with a lack of religion, as was also expressed by Cánovas in his aforementioned speech of 1871. It is also interesting to note that he views secularism as imposed on the working classes from above. However, Galdós ends this article with a note on the revival of spirituality and religious hope in Spain:

La fe existe siempre, y existirá mientras haya hombres en el mundo, porque es esencial en el alma humana [...] Hoy nos hallamos en un período de franca reacción contra la incredulidad. No sólo renace a fe, sino el misticismo, la exaltación del creer y del esperar, y, en suma, es un craso error eso de que a las clases desheredadas se les haya quitado el cielo. (*Cartas desconocidas*: 487-488)

Thus Galdós's increased interest in religious matters during the 1890s cannot be dissociated from his social concerns. In the same way, the treatment of the theme of charity in *Misericordia* must be examined in the context of this complex public debate on the issues associated with the *cuestión social*, and of Galdós's often contradictory participation in it. As Gold argues, there is a sense of crisis which permeates *Misericordia* and which is evident in the 'contradictorias corrientes finiseculares que convergen en este relato: materialismo y religiosidad, humanismo

liberal y antiburguesismo iconoclasta, escritura realista y nuevos cauces de expresión' (Gold 1997: 387).

The Church of San Sebastián: A Borderline between Classes

Critics have often acknowledged *Misericordia*'s multi-layered complexity and the profound sense of irony which pervades it. To use Russell's often-quoted expression, this is a novel where 'nothing is what it seems to be' and where 'functions are continually reversed' (Russell 1967: 104). For Varey, the complexity of *Misericordia* lies in Galdós's use of a 'prismatic technique' which allows the reader to consider the problems presented under different perspectives; not in terms of clear-cut values, but rather in terms of 'gradations and shadings' of grey (Varey 1970: 164). As Russell points out, the description of the Church of San Sebastián with which the narrator opens the novel announces the ironic 'reconciliation of opposites', which underlies its structure (Russell 1967: 104-105). A case in point is that of the Church's two entrances. Whereas the more ornate 'puerta principal' faces the southern 'barrios bajos', the northern entrance, which is 'pobre y vulgar', faces the 'señorío mercantil de la Plaza del Ángel' (*Misericordia*: 75-77). Therefore, it is the North-facing back-door which the majority of the bourgeois congregation uses and where, consequently, beggars concentrate in greater numbers. The irony of this inversion would not have been missed on Galdós's contemporary readers who, as Sábada Alonso points out, were well acquainted with the geographical and socio-economic polarization of Madrid into a prosperous North and a poor South (Sábada Alonso 2001: 65). The introduction of the beggars in the second paragraph emphasizes the role of San Sebastián as a social borderline: the rich and the poor interact here through the giving of alms. In this respect it is worth bearing in mind that, inasmuch as *Misericordia* is a novel about charity, it is also a novel about class relations. Nevertheless, the social and geographical focus of the novel is clear. As Sábada Alonso notes, much of the action in *Misericordia* takes place in the southern Madrid slums, and the characters never go north of Puerta del Sol (Sábada Alonso 2001: 65-66). Thus, the impoverished middle-class gentleman Frasquito Ponte does not venture beyond the Plaza Mayor unless strictly necessary (*Misericordia*: 188). He lives a self-imposed exile as a 'solitario habitante de los barrios del Sur, sin

atreverse a pasar a los del Centro y Norte, por miedo de encontrar *conocimientos* que le vieran mal calzado y peor vestido' (*Misericordia*: 184). In this respect, the social world of *Misericordia* is the antithesis of that of the Barrio de Salamanca bourgeoisie of *Lo prohibido*.

The focal point of the novel's narrative is Benina's complex psychological and social identity which, as Russell points out, is also presented through ironic contradictions (Russell 1967: 105-106). Although she is first introduced as one of the beggars of San Sebastián, the narrator uses a mock-sentimental tone to set Benina apart from the others. She is 'la más callada y humilde de la comunidad [...] bien criada, modosa y con todas las trazas de perfecta sumisión a la divina voluntad'. She also has a 'voz dulce, modos hasta cierto punto finos y de buena educación' (*Misericordia*: 89-90). However, this image of humility is later called into question by the dispute between two old beggars, Casiana and La Burlada, concerning Benina's honesty in her past job as a cooking maid. Whereas Casiana maintains that Benina 'ha sido una sisona tremenda, y por ese vicio se ve ahora como se ve, teniendo que pedir para una rosca', La Burlada, argues that 'si ha venido a pedir es porque fue honrada; que las muy sisonas juntan dinero para su vejez y se hacen ricas' (*Misericordia*: 99-100). For La Burlada, Benina's poverty is, in itself, proof of her honesty. As we see later on in the novel, both women are right to an extent. In a manner reminiscent of the way in which Nazarín's nature is discussed by the narrator and a reporter at the beginning of *Nazarín*, the beggars' discrepancy over Benina's moral worth leaves the question of her responsibility over her own penury open to interpretation.

Thus Benina appears connected with money from the beginning of the novel. Soon after this argument between Casiana and La Burlada, Benina asks the blind beggar Almudena for a *duro*. She claims that only he can help her in her need, as all the other beggars are 'egoístas, corazones de pedernal... que la dejarán a una morir de vergüenza' (*Misericordia*: 100-101). Russell and Fuentes Peris (Russell 1967: 106; Fuentes Peris 2003: 182) take Benina's complaint as a sign of the beggars' moral debasement, as well as of Almudena's and her own distinctiveness (Russell 1967: 106; Fuentes Peris 2003: 182). However, the moral judgement passed on the other beggars by Benina cannot be taken at face value. As Russell points out, Benina shows in this scene that she is not above manipulating Almudena by flattering him

(Russell 1967: 105). It is also worth noting that Benina presents her ‘grave compromiso’ as a question of ‘vergüenza’, that is, as a question of social honour rather than of imperative material need. As we later learn, Benina’s urgency responds to the need to provide for her mistress, the impoverished but middle-class Doña Paca, so that she can avoid the humiliation of public poverty. From this perspective, the idea that the beggars of San Sebastián should assist Benina in her protection of her mistress is, indeed, absurd.

It is profoundly ironic that Benina takes Almudena to the Plaza del Progreso, which is situated between the prosperous centre and the poor southern district of Lavapiés, in order to talk to him about her pressing financial difficulties. There, they sit at the base of Mendizábal’s statue, where Benina ponders wistfully over her troubles: ‘quedóse un rato en meditación dolorosa, mirando al suelo y después al cielo y a la estatua de Mendizábal, aquel verdadero señor de bronce que ella no sabía quién era ni por qué lo habían puesto allí’ (*Misericordia*: 104). Bly argues that this sentence encapsulates both Benina’s dissociation from the flow of history and also Galdós’s own ‘anguished, almost total anti-historicism at this stage in his career’ (Bly 1983: 173). However, every aspect of this scene points to Galdós’s ironic engagement with Spain’s recent past. Bly himself notes the significance of the reference to Mendizábal:

The unfulfilled promise of Mendizábal’s national economic reforms of 1836-1837 is poignantly recalled in his rusting statue looking down on Spain fifty years or more after his death, a Spain still troubled by fundamental economic problems. Mendizábal’s *desamortización* had benefited only a small sector of the country, the bourgeoisie. (Bly 1983: 173)

In an article of 1886, Galdós refers to Mendizábal as the ‘autor de la desamortización civil y eclesiástica de que proviene toda la riqueza moderna’ (*Cartas desconocidas*: 192). As a representative of those left behind by the liberal economic legislation of the 1830s, Benina’s ignorance of Mendizábal is fitting. In contrast, it is reasonable to assume that many of Galdós’s contemporary readers would have been familiar with the recent history of both the Plaza del Progreso and of its famous central statue. Appropriately, the Plaza del Progreso was built and named in 1840 on the site of the Convento de la Merced, which had been demolished under the orders of the liberal

mayor Salustiano Olózaga following the *desamortización*. Mendizábal's statue had been commissioned after the politician's death in 1853. However, the public honouring of Mendizábal proved as controversial as his disentailment laws, and, according to the contemporary journalist Fernández de los Ríos, the question of the liberal politician's statue gave rise to 'acalorados debates en el parlamento' (Salvador Prieto 1993: 507). Conservative opposition managed to block the statue's public display for eleven years, and it was not installed at the Plaza del Progreso until January 1869, as a result of the triumph of the 1868 Revolution. Under Mendizábal's statue, Benina observes the constant flow of both people and money around her. In the mist of Madrid's frantic activity, wealth and poverty exist side to side:

Unos llevaban un duro, otros iban a buscarlo. Pasaban cobradores del banco con el taleguillo al hombro; carricoches con botellas de cerveza y gaseosa; carros fúnebres, en el cual era conducido al cementerio alguno a quien nada importaban ya los duros. En las tiendas entraban compradores que salían con paquetes. Mendigos haraposos importunaban a los señores. Con rápida visión, Benina pasó revista a los cajones de tanta trastienda, a los distintos cuartos de todas las casas, a los bolsillos de todos los transeúntes bien vestidos, adquiriendo la certidumbre de que en ninguno de aquellos repliegues de la vida faltaba un duro. (*Misericordia*: 104)

As Fuentes points out, the Plaza del Progreso is an appropriate place to think about wealth and its unequal distribution (*Misericordia*: 101, note 3), particularly as the new moneyed classes, the beneficiaries of Mendizábal's *desamortización*, had settled not far away in the Barrio de Salamanca, as seen in the first chapter. Benina reasons that it would be fair to have one of their *duros* transferred to her. The narrator renders her thoughts thus:

pensó que sería un paso muy salado que se presentase ella en la cercana casa de Céspedes diciendo que hicieran el favor de darle un duro, siquiera que se lo diesen a préstamo. Seguramente se reirían de tan absurda pretensión, y la pondrían bonitamente en la calle. Y, no obstante, natural y justo parecía que en cualquier parte donde un duro no representaba más que un valor insignificante, se lo diesen a ella, para quien la tal suma era... como un *átomo inmenso*. Y si la ansiada moneda pasara de las manos que con otras muchas

la poseían a las suyas, no se notaría ninguna alteración sensible en la distribución de la riqueza, y todo seguiría lo mismo: los ricos, ricos; pobre ella y pobres los demás de su condición. (*Misericordia*: 104)

The reference to Céspedes is also historically significant. As Fuentes points out, Casa de Céspedes was a private Madrid banking business whose founder was Romualdo Céspedes Orgazón (1809-1887) (*Misericordia*: 104, note 6). It is worth remembering here that, in *Lo prohibido*, José María clarifies that, contrary to popular belief, his own fortune is not comparable to the much greater ones of the Madrid Céspedes, Murgas and Urquijos (*Lo prohibido*: 155). Robledo lists Céspedes as one of the major Banco de España shareholders of the second half of the nineteenth century. As seen in the first two chapters, these shares were regarded as a safe and profitable investment. According to Robledo, the majority of the large investors in Banco de España shares during this period had made their fortunes in the property market following the *desamortización*, as well as in the lending business (Robledo 1988: 561-66). The economic pattern followed by many of these investors was therefore one which the usurer turned financier Torquemada would recognise. In this way, Céspedes can be considered to be representative of the beneficiaries of Mendizábal's reforms. There is, however, another aspect of Romualdo Céspedes which should not be ignored. An article in a 1902 issue of *Revista ilustrada de banca, ferrocarriles, industria y seguros* pays homage to his memory fifteen years after his death, praising his 'filantropía incomparable' and his 'sentimientos eminentemente caritativos' towards the 'clases menesterosas': 'no parecía sino que su predilecta ocupación era averiguar dónde existía miseria real y efectiva para acudir solícito a remediarla en lo posible' (*RIBFIS* 10/3/1902). It is reasonable to think that many of Galdós's contemporary readers would have been able to associate the name Céspedes to both lending and philanthropy, and, therefore, would have been aware of the irony behind Benina's *salada* idea. As Benina herself realizes, the thought of approaching the Céspedes business for either a gift or a loan of a *duro* is both ridiculous and disarmingly reasonable. It is worth pointing out that both charity and lending, which often appear interconnected in *Misericordia*, provide the basis for the economic narrative which guides the novel, as will be seen later.

The Beggars of *Misericordia* as a Mirror Image of Middle-Class Society

The emphasis on Benina's distinctive character as a beggar does not preclude the significant role which the other beggars of San Sebastián play throughout the novel. Their presentation in the first chapter offers another example of Russell's ironic 'reconciliation of opposites'. The beggars are introduced as a 'cuadrilla de miseria, que acecha el paso de la caridad', 'intrépidos soldados de la miseria' and a 'aguerrido contingente, que componen ancianos audaces, indómitas viejas, ciegos machacones, reforzados por niños de una acometividad irresistible'. In their 'rudo luchar por la pícara existencia y en el terrible campo de batalla' they display 'buen orden' and 'táctica exquisita' (*Misericordia*: 77-78). On the one hand, the aggressiveness implicit in the militaristic terminology is undermined by the beggars' helplessness. On the other, the suggestion of martial energy and efficiency suggests the beggars' professionalism, an idea loaded with negative connotations, while at the same time, it reverses the common view which presents them as idle. The frantic activity displayed by the part-time beggar Benina throughout the novel develops further this reversal of social stereotypes.

The initial image of the beggars as a well-organized workforce is, in turn, reversed later on in the novel by the disorderly behaviour of the beggars during a wedding in San Sebastián, which only ends when the police threaten them with confinement:

Al ver salir a la novia, tan emperifollada [...] cayeron sobre ellos como nube de langosta, y al padrino le estrujaron el gabán, y hasta le chafaron el sombrero. Trabajo le costó al buen señor sacudirse la terrible plaga, y no tuvo más remedio que arrojar un puñado de calderilla en medio del patio. Los más ágiles hicieron su agosto; los más torpes gatearon inútilmente [...] y cuando los novios y todo el acompañamiento se metieron en los coches, quedó en las inmediaciones de la iglesia la turbamulta mísera, gruñendo y pataleando. (*Misericordia*: 212-213)

Both Varey and Fuentes Peris argue that, in this episode, Galdós exemplifies the pitfalls of indiscriminate charity as, in their view, the careless throwing of coins by the 'padrino' reduces the beggars to a level of uncivilized brutality (Varey 1970: 171-172; Fuentes Peris 2003: 182-183). However, the inference of such a clear

moralistic message from this passage is problematic. It is worth noting that the chaos is occasioned by the fact that the wedding attracts much ‘pobretería de otros cuadrantes’, which results in ‘barullo y confusión’ (*Misericordia*: 212). This disrupts the hierarchical equilibrium among the San Sebastián beggars, where prime positions at the church’s entrance, as well as the ‘limosnas colectivas’ and ‘bonos’, are distributed according to a strict pecking order based on the principle of *antigüedad* (*Misericordia* 86-87). Moreover, as Varey argues, the beggars are presented as a ‘society within a society, a microcosm with its hierarchies and classes’ (Varey 1970: 172). From this point of view, their rough scramble for coins – and the general infighting which, as Bell points out, their struggle for survival entails (Bell 2006: 143-144) – could also be extended to represent human competitiveness at any social level. It must also be taken into account that the farcical tone of this episode counters any sense of heavy-handed moral positioning. Thus there is an ironic distance between the beggar Pulido’s and the narrator’s views on the wedding. For Pulido, it is a classy affair, since the bride is the niece of a *pleniputenciano* and the groom is ‘cosa de periódicos’ (*Misericordia*: 212). However, the narrator refers to the wedding as a ‘bodorrio’, a term suggestive of garish ostentation, and to the bride as ‘emperifollada’, that is, *cursi* or affected (*Misericordia*: 212). Also, the narrator’s use of expressions indicative of disease to refer to the beggars, such as ‘nube de langosta’ and ‘terrible plaga’, mocks the negative terminology employed by some contemporary commentators on mendicity and which has been studied by Fuentes Peris. Thus her assertion that the beggars of San Sebastián are presented as deprived, as their description in terms of ‘infection, animality and savagery’ suggests (Fuentes Peris 2003: 182; 186), must be treated with caution, and in the context of Galdós’s exploitation of social clichés to ironic effect. In this respect, it is also worth noting the narrator’s use of terms such as ‘moscones’ (*Misericordia*: 279) and ‘molesto enjambre’ (*Misericordia*: 280) in reference to the beggars who assail Benina in Las Cambroneras slum later on in the novel. The irony here resides in the fact that Benina herself, in her role as a beggar, is not averse to importuning ‘con quejumbroso reclamo a media voz a todo cristiano que pasaba’ (*Misericordia*: 286).

Fuentes Peris singles out La Burlada in particular as ‘one of the most degraded beggars depicted by Galdós’ (Fuentes Peris 2003: 182). However, her description as ‘levantisca, revoltosilla, picotera y maleante’ (*Misericordia*: 87)

suggests mischievousness rather than moral degradation. The narrator's sympathies lie more on the side of the new and, therefore, low status beggar La Burlada, than on that of the authoritarian Casiana. With her acerbic criticisms which spare neither poor nor rich, La Burlada also exposes the hypocrisies which underlie the charity culture of San Sebastián, as when she presents Don Carlos as miserly and Casiana as 'adulona' for praising him (*Misericordia*: 85). Neither the beggars nor the characters which populate Madrid's miserable slums are dehumanised in *Misericordia*. As Varey points out, not even the severely alcoholic Pedra, Almudena's flatmate, is portrayed without sympathy (Varey 1970: 177). In her first appearance in the novel, at Almudena's lodgings, she is in such a state of drunken stupor that, at first, Benina only sees a 'bulto negro, como un lío de ropa, o un costal abandonado'. Only later does she understand that this heap of cloth is, in fact, a person (*Misericordia*: 106). As well as Pedra's generosity towards Almudena, it is the narration of her neglected childhood that humanizes her. Having lost both her parents, the young Pedra 'se quedó en la puerta de la calle, sentadita'. Her efforts to apply her commercial instincts productively came to nothing when she met Diega, who 'en pocos días la enseñó a embriagarse, y otras cosas peores' (*Misericordia*: 163). Thereafter, Pedra's decay is unstoppable: 'La enflaquecieron, dejándola en los puros pellejos, y su aliento apestaba. Hablaba como una carreterona, y tenía un toser perruno y una carraspera que tiraba para atrás'. She was unconstant even in her work as a prostitute at the *Comadreja*'s establishment: 'sólo duraba en ella el gusto del aguardiente; y cuando se *apimplaba*, que era un día sí y otro también, hacía figuras en medio del arroyo, y la toreaban los chicos' (*Misericordia*: 163-164). Pedra represents, better than any of the other indigents, the difficulty in classifying the poor according to their moral merit, and the extent of her responsibility over her own declivity is left open to question by the narrator. As the French Alexis de Tocqueville argues in his 1835 *Memoir on Pauperism*: 'Nothing is so difficult to distinguish as the nuances which separate unmerited misfortune from an adversity produced by vice' (cited by Himmelfarb 1984: 149).

The effect of presenting the beggars of San Sebastián as a microcosmic society structured just as the society at large is precisely that readers cannot distance themselves from them and dismiss them as degraded. Thus, in their conversations and quarrels, the beggars are 'iguales a los ricos', the only difference being that their

speech is not constrained by ‘las conveniencias usuales de la conversación, que, poniendo entre el pensamiento y la palabra gruesa costra etiquetera y gramatical, embotan el gusto inefable del dime y direte’ (*Misericordia*: 84). It is a source of irony that the beggars’ gossip and conversations mirror standard contemporary middle-class discourses on pauperism. As Fuentes Peris points out, that is the case with the beggars’ comments about deserving and undeserving poor (Fuentes Peris 2003: 181). La Burlada complains that Demetria, who has a new baby each year despite not having a husband, receives good alms nevertheless. Hence Demetria has found a way to turn her ‘vicio’ into her ‘comercio’. She is, therefore, a professional beggar. Both the parishioners and the priests are moved to compassion by the sight of the children without realising that the real deserving poor are ‘las que estamos en la *senetú*, hartas de trabajos y sin poder valernos’ (*Misericordia*: 95-96). In the same way, she accuses Casiana of having become wealthy through her begging and of even owning the best pig in Cuatro Caminos (*Misericordia*: 91). La Burlada reasons that, as Casiana is a false beggar, ‘todo lo que coge aquí nos lo quita a las que *semos* de verdadera *solenidá*’ (*Misericordia*: 91). In an ironic reversal of the expression *pobres vergonzantes*, La Burlada refers to Casiana and her family as ‘ricos sinvergonzonzos, que engañan a nosotras y a la Santa Iglesia católica’ (*Misericordia*: 91). The cripple Eliseo, who is the person ‘de más autoridad y mangoneo en la cuadrilla’ (*Misericordia*: 89) after Casiana, is also the target of La Burlada’s sharp-tongued attacks. In a mocking tone, La Burlada wishes Eliseo all the trimmings of the middle-class life which she thinks he can now afford: ‘y ten casa de balcón con mesas *de noche*, y camas de hierro con sus colchas rameadas [...] y ten hijos que lleven boina nueva [...] y niña que gaste toquilla rosa y zapatito de charol los domingos’ (*Misericordia*: 94).

The Deserving and the Undeserving Poor in Contemporary Debate

As it has often been pointed out, the need to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving poor was in the nineteenth century a subject of concern both for legislators and contemporary social commentators. In practice, the distinction was both unclear and subjective. In her 1861 *La beneficencia, la filantropía y la caridad*, Arenal acknowledges that it is impossible for individuals to always identify the

‘verdadero pobre’, as they do not have the time, the means or the will to properly investigate (*La beneficencia*: 150). As she regards the giving of alms as a moral duty, it is her concern that the fear of helping impostors is having a negative effect on the exercise of charity: ‘no se da en la calle por temor de dar á vagos é impostores, y porque hay establecimientos de Beneficencia para los verdaderos necesitados; no se da á los establecimintos benéficos porque, ó no se recuerda si existen, ó se sabe que están mal montados, que hay dilapidación, etc’ (*La beneficencia*: 150). Arenal argues that, in order to have a rational system of *beneficencia*, the distinction between ‘pobre invalido’ and ‘vago’ should be left to ‘tribunales [...] que con la intervención de la caridad, de la autoridad y de la ciencia, y después de un maduro examen, decidan si un pobre es ó no inválido. Al que lo sea, désele una chapa, medalla ó distintivo cualquiera’ (*La beneficencia*: 165). In this way, almsgivers will be able to easily identify those worthy of charity, whereas the ‘vago’ will have to choose between ‘trabajar ó morir de hambre’ (*La beneficencia*: 165).

The difficulty in establishing distinct categories among the poor is reflected in the ambiguous Spanish legislation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which, as Carasa Soto argues, often linked mendicity to vagrancy and treated them indistinctly, criminalizing both (Carasa Soto 1987b: 137-138). This conceptual and terminological indeterminacy is also common among social writers. Thus, in his 1885 *Pobreza y mendicidad*, the author Luis Vega-Rey distinguishes between the ‘pobre honrado y trabajador y el mendigo vicioso y holgazán’ (*Pobreza y mendicidad*: 12). In the 1840s, the writer José María Tenorio expresses a similar view of mendicity in his *cuadro costumbrista* ‘El mendigo’. The Spanish beggar is a cynic ‘que se burla de la sociedad, molestándola con su desaseo y sus clamores’. He finds shelter in ‘la misma sociedad de que tanto se mofa’ and makes a good living by abusing society’s ‘sentimientos humanitarios y motivos religiosos’ (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 121-123). Among the different types who indulge in the ‘inmundicia de la mendiguez voluntaria’, Tenorio includes the ‘viejezuela’:

boca de sumidero, nariz corba y barba puntiaguda [...] va todos los días desde muy temprano á estorbar el paso en la puerta de la iglesia mas concurrida [...] Cualquiera que la vea sin otro antecedente que aquel ademan gazmoño y compungido, la creerá verdaderamente en necesidad, y un dechado de humildad y devoción. Pues todo es pura ficción [...] Se puede

apostar cualquiera cosa á que tiene cosidas entre los remiendos de su corpiño algunas monedillas de oro, ahorros no solo de la limosna abundante que recoge, sino de ciertas inteligencias. (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 123)

Casiana, with her alleged wealth and her ‘carácter duro, dominante, de un egoísmo elemental’ (*Misericordia*: 87) beneath her humble appearance, responds to this deceitfully submissive old beggar prototype.

It is interesting to note that, in his 1843 *The Bible in Spain*, the author and traveller George Borrow comments on the pride which he thought that Spanish beggars displayed and also on the respect which Spaniards seemingly showed them: ‘it is one of the few countries in Europe where poverty is never insulted nor looked upon with contempt [...] In Spain the very beggar does not feel himself a degraded being for he kisses no one’s feet and knows not what it is to be cuffed or smitten upon’ (cited by Shubert 1991:36). However, in ‘El mendigo’, Tenorio gives a more negative account of this respect supposedly commanded by the Spanish beggar, as he correlates it with the fear that their seeming defiance of the rules of society inspire:

El mendigo español es una especie de alimaña que infunde miedo como lo comprueba aquello de cállate niño que viene el pobre, con que se nos asusta desde chiquitos. Ese miedo es la causa porque se le respeta pues nace de su independencia y de los recuerdos de su origen que ofrece la idea de fuerza. (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 122)

For many Catholic authors, this disparaging view of mendicity was un-Christian and one of the negative products of rationalist liberalism. Thus Arenal condones honest mendicity in *La beneficencia*, as she attacks the liberal perception that there is no place for public display of poverty in modern society. Against this idea, Arenal argues that poverty, with its connotation of suffering, acts as a moralizing force in society:

Pero se nos dirá: El aspecto de la miseria en una gran población, con aceras, y policía, y alumbrado de gas, es una cosa repugnante. Á nosotros nos parece repugnante este argumento, si argumento puede llamarse, la hipocresía cruel, que hace tan poco para que no haya pobres, y tanto para que no se vean.

Habrá siempre pobres entre vosotros, ha dicho el que no se equivoca. Y meditando, se comprende que debe haberlos, que es preciso que los haya: representan en la sociedad el dolor, ese elemento indispensable de la moralidad y de la perfección humana. (*La beneficencia*: 166-167).

However, it is interesting to note that, by the end of the century, Arenal's views on mendicity had become harsher. Thus, in her 1897 *El pauperismo* Arenal argues that 'el cuadro que ofrece España respecto a la mendicidad es de lo más lastimoso o irritante [...] se subvenciona al holgazán, se estimula al pícaro, se pervierte al inocente, se oprime al desventurado, según circunstancias fortuitas de tiempo o lugar' (*El pauperismo*: 303-304). Thus, due to the inability to differentiate effectively between the deserving and the undeserving, mendicity must be discouraged and replaced by a system which encourages work. She considers that, among those who beg for a living, 'hay pocos que sean completamente inútiles', and the majority can offer 'algún servicio de esos que no exigen fuerza ni habilidad' (*El pauperismo*: 298-299).

Among the writers who agree with Arenal's early view on mendicity is Fray Zeferino González. In his 1873 *Estudios religiosos, filosóficos, científicos y sociales*, he maintains that liberal legislation has been unfair to the 'clases indigentes' and that the principles of political economy have departed from the Christian spirit:

Mientras el orgullo racionalista confunde la pobreza y la mendicidad con el crimen sin distinción, añadiendo aflicción al afligido, la doctrina católica nos enseña a honrar y respetar al pobre verdaderamente tal o que lo es sin culpa suya; porque [...] la pobreza digna y resignada fue honrada y practicada por Jesucristo y sus discípulos. (Zeferino González 1873 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, II: 129)

This argument is the religious justification for what, in an article of 1887 discussed in the previous chapter, Galdós calls the Spanish 'culto a la pobreza', according to which 'pobreza y honradez son sinónimos' (*Política Española*, I: 300-301). In this respect, it is interesting that the derisive *La Burlada* sticks to the traditional Christian view of virtuous poverty and sinful wealth. In connection with Eliseo's supposed wealth and her own penury, she remarks; 'nos alegramos de ser pobres y de morirnos de flato, para irnos en globo al cielo' (*Misericordia*: 93). In the same way, when

Casiana rebukes La Burlada for her sharp tongue, she retorts that ‘no se condena una por bocona, sino por rica, mayormente cuando quita la limosna a los pobres de buena ley’ (*Misericordia*: 100).

There is a connotation of honest poverty in the traditional categorization of some poor as *pobres de solemnidad*. These were the poor who were able to get a certificate, issued by either a priest or the town mayor, stating the circumstances which made them unable to work, whether it was illness, old age or unavailability of employment. Consequently, the *pobres de solemnidad* were perceived as the legitimate objects of both official public relief and private charity. However, as Carasa Soto argues, this kind of declared poverty was an insignificant percentage of the indigent population (Carasa Soto 1987b: 134-135). It is interesting that La Burlada refers to herself as ‘[pobre] de verdadera *solenidá*’ (*Misericordia*: 91), not as a legal category, but as a moral one, thus implying that the categorization of the beggars at San Sebastián is reversed. Whereas she must survive with her meagre share of the distribution of alms and *bonos*, the beggars Casiana, Eliseo and Demetria, who are deemed as unworthy by La Burlada, have official protectors among the priests of San Sebastián. Later on in the novel La Burlada also finds one of these desirable personal arrangements with a banker’s family, from whom she receives a daily meal. With her sustenance assured in this way, La Burlada can now ‘*chincharse en las ricas*’ like Casiana (*Misericordia*: 259). In relation to the terminology used by the beggars, it is also worth noting that Eliseo uses the expression ‘*pobres decentes*’ (*Misericordia*: 94) to refer to those who beg in the protected environment of San Sebastián rather than in the streets. For him, the expression carries a connotation of social rather than moral status. Thus, the beggars of San Sebastián also reflect middle-class society in their individual search for social distinctiveness.

Charity and the Preservation of Social Order

In contrast with the unsettled and fiercely independent ‘*vagos*’, the *pobres de solemnidad* were perceived to be harmless and well integrated in society. As Carasa Soto argues:

Los pobres solemnes, precisamente por su fijación social, por su aceptación de la regla oficial que los clasifica y por la sumisión que significa su disposición a cumplir las condiciones previstas, no aparecen como una pobreza peligrosa, sino controlada. Sobre ella la sociedad suele practicar la caridad autocomplaciente, paternalista y orientada muchas veces a realzar el brillo y prestigio social de los donantes' (Carasa Soto 1987b: 135-136).

In *Misericordia*, the blind beggar Pulido and the wealthy Don Carlos conform perfectly to this symbiosis between the non-threatening poor and the self-satisfied benefactor. As a staunch defender of the traditional private form of charity, Pulido blames his diminishing alms yield on modern fads such as Government intervention, public charity subscriptions and even the new religious congregations for the care of the poor:

Todo es, por tanto pillo como hay en la política *pulpitante*, y el aquel de las suscripciones para las *víctimas*. Yo que Dios, mandaría a los ángeles que reventaran a todos esos que en los papeles andan siempre inventando *víctimas*, al cuento de jorobarnos a los pobres de tanda. Limosnas hay, buenas almas hay; pero liberales, por un lado, el *Congrioso* dichoso, y, por otro, las *congrigaciones*, los *mitingos* y *discursiones* y tantas cosas de imprenta, quitan la voluntad a los más cristianos...Lo que digo: quieren que no *haiga* pobres, y se saldrán con la suya. Pero *pa* entonces yo quiero saber quién es el guapo que saca las ánimas del purgatorio [...] a mí que no me digan: el rezo de los ricos, con la barriga bien llena y las carnes bien abrigadas, no vale...
(*Misericordia*: 80-81)

Here, Galdós exploits the irony of having a beggar advocate the Old Regime system of private charity against a background of new approaches to beneficence and public discussions on *cuestión social*. Pulido disapproves of any type of organized *beneficencia*, whether led by the State or the Church, and of the political prevalence which the question of welfare has acquired, as he sees these modern ideas to be interfering with his 'trade'. Whereas the cynical La Burlada exposes Don Carlos's mean-spirited charity (*Misericordia*: 85), Pulido displays perfect affinity with his benefactor, for they both have a vested interest in the preservation of the old paternalistic approach to charity. As Round puts it, 'they speak the same language'

(Round 1993: 159). Thus Don Carlos's distribution of a few 'perras' among the beggars and his 'sermoncillo gangoso, exhortándoles a la paciencia y humildad' is met by Pulido's mixture of deference and confidence in the importance of his own social role as the collector of the 'contribución impuesta a las conciencias impuras que van adonde lavan' (*Misericordia*: 77). Their conception of poverty responds to what Carasa Soto defines as a theological interpretation of social inequalities, according to which 'el pobre es un instrumento de salvación, un intermediario entre Dios y el rico' [...] practica las virtudes de la humildad y la resignación para alcanzar la imagen de Cristo y el rico ejercita la caridad junto con la advertencia de la inestabilidad de las cosas humanas' (Carasa Soto 1987a: 31).

In his aforementioned speech of 1871, Cánovas also defends this hierarchical relationship as the foundation for the 'verdadero orden social que representa el Cristianismo':

Al pobre se le dice: no codicies siquiera los bienes ajenos. Al rico se le dice: vende cuanto tienes y dalo a los pobres. He aquí dos leyes al parecer antinómicas, y que juntas y resueltas en una síntesis forman el grande, el incomparable recurso de la religión católica, de la caridad cristiana, para hacer frente a la miseria, inseparable de la humana naturaleza. (*Discurso sobre la Internacional*: no page given)

From this point of view, private charity both sustains the established order and redeems the State from any social obligation. New concepts of official public charity could be perceived, both by conservative Catholics and defenders of *laissez faire* liberalism, as a challenge to the status quo, since, as Himmelfarb puts it, 'it made of charity a matter for social action rather than the exercise of a private virtue, and it transformed it from a moral obligation to a legal right' (Himmelfarb 1984: 149).

However, this change in the concept of charity was a concern even for those who considered that the State had a role to play in the relief of poverty. As Himmelfarb points out, the qualms felt by many in this respect were clearly expounded by Alexis de Tocqueville after he visited England in the 1830s. He was puzzled to see that as much as one-sixth of the population lived off public charity in a country which was both the most prosperous in Europe and also the one with the most developed system of public relief. Tocqueville admired English society's

willingness to relieve the suffering of the poor and he considered that it was both moving and inspiring to see a country ‘continually examining itself, probing its wounds, and undertaking to cure them’ (cited by Himmelfarb 1984: 149). Despite finding the extensive English system of public relief good in principle, he had two main concerns. Firstly, he worried that the guarantee of a minimum level of welfare as a legal right, by removing the obligation to work, could foster idleness. Secondly, he considered that public relief dissolved the moral bond between giver and recipient, making the rich resentful, as they had not given their money willingly, and the poor ungrateful and dissatisfied (Himmelfarb 1984: 148-150).

The view that there was no spiritual value in official public beneficence for either giver or recipient was often expressed by Catholic authors in Spain. Thus Arenal argues that ‘la limosna que se da a fin de mes o de año en cambio de un recibo, no nos habitúa al bien, no moraliza ni consuela como esa otra que se da por la propia mano, o por la de un hijo, que aprende desde niño a no pasar indiferente por delante de un desdichado’ (*La beneficencia*: 167). Fray Zeferino González, for his part, is concerned that compulsory charity dispenses with the spontaneous feeling of compassion, as ‘es muy natural [...] que el que ha pagado su cuota o impuesto legal para los pobres, se considere dispensado ya y libre de todo deber para con los mismos’ (Zeferino González 1873 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, II: 132). He also argues that there is a moral risk in legal charity for the recipient. Whereas the Christian principle of private charity ‘predispone el corazón del indigente que lo recibe a escuchar con docilidad e interés los consejos de reforma moral del donante’, legal charity ‘suele predisponer al orgullo el corazón del que la recibe’ (Zeferino González 1873 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, II: 132).

However, it is important to point out that neither Arenal nor González oppose State intervention in the relief of poverty. Thus González argues that legal charity is acceptable as long as it is subordinated to ‘la caridad libre y cristiana’ (Zeferino González 1873 in Capellán de Miguel 2007, II: 133). Arenal, for her part, defends a harmonious mixture of private and public charity where ‘la razón debe estar representada por el Estado, el sentimiento por las asociaciones filantrópicas, el instinto por la caridad individual’ (*La beneficencia*: 139). In her view, neither official charity, which ‘hace el bien sin amor’, nor private charity, which ‘hace el bien sin criterio’, can be effective independently (*La beneficencia*: 75-76). Her argument is

that, even if the Government could invest enough funds to ensure that the *establecimientos de beneficencia* were well equipped and able to satisfy the material needs of the poor, this would not be enough on its own: ‘En el presupuesto bien formado de una casa de Beneficencia hay una gran partida, *la compasión*, que no puede cubrirse oficialmente con los fondos que ingresan en tesorería: un átomo de caridad valdría a veces más para un enfermo que todos los tesoros de Atahualpa’ (*La beneficencia*: 104-105).

The concept of charity as a social right is treated humorously in *Misericordia* in one of the scenes at the Cambroneras slum. During Benina’s third visit there in search of Almudena, she is approached by the old indigent Silverio, for whom she had provided a meal the previous day, and other Cambroneras beggars ‘formados como en línea de batalla’. With a legless cripple acting as their spokesman, they demand that Benina, whom the beggars believe to be the philanthropist Guillermina in disguise, distribute her alms equitably: ‘dijo, en nombre del gremio de pordioseros allí presente, que la señora debía distribuir sus beneficios entre todos sin distinción, pues todos eran igualmente acreedores a los frutos de su inmensa caridad’ (*Misericordia*: 277). As with the San Sebastián beggars, both Varey and Peris Fuentes analyse the portrayal of the Cambroneras poor in relation to the debate on the effects of indiscriminate charity (Varey 1970: 175; Fuentes Peris 2003: 184). As Fuentes Peris points out, the beggars of Cambroneras believe that they have a right to receive alms. In her view, this attitude contradicts ‘the new more scientific and rational views on poverty’ (Fuentes Peris 2003: 184) according to which the dispensing of official charity as a right of the poor helped to foster idleness and, therefore, pauperism. Fuentes Peris also argues that Galdós condemns the beggars’ apparent acceptance of poverty and thus legitimizes the liberal credo of self-reliance and self-help (Fuentes Peris 2003: 184).

However, it is worth noting that many of the Cambroneras beggars, such as the legless cripple and old Silverio fall within the traditional category of the deserving poor, as their economic possibilities are indeed very limited. It is also important to bear in mind the complexities of nineteenth-century debates about official charity, which makes it difficult to ascribe clear-cut binary positions. As we have seen, the stance of *laissez faire* liberalism, to which Fuentes Peris refers, was challenged throughout the century from all sides of the political spectrum. In fact,

whereas the moral hazards presented by the concept of official charity as a right were often recognised, the general tendency by the end of the century pointed to the acceptance of a certain measure of State interventionism. The need for this was grudgingly recognized even by the fervent liberal Cánovas, as mentioned previously. Thus the Cambroneras beggars, like those of San Sebastián, reproduce and internalize aspects of contemporary public debates on the question of charity and *beneficencia*. Moreover, as is often the case throughout the novel, the underlying humour makes it difficult to attribute a clear ideological stance to Galdós. Thus the cripple's use of professional and economic terms contrasts with Silverio's promise of a rather Old Regime kind of gratitude if Benina were to bestow alms on them: 'por santa fue tenida la señora de antes, y por santísima tendrían a la presente, respetando su disfraz, y poniéndose todos de rodillas ante ella para adorarla' (*Misericordia*: 277). The beggars display a curious mixture of new discourses and old attitudes, which represents another example of Russell's reconciliation of opposites.

The squabble for Benina's bread alms which follows the cripple's exhortation and the others' pleading resembles the San Sebastián beggars' disorderly behaviour in the wedding episode: 'todos se abalanzaban a ella con furia, cada uno quería recibir su parte antes que los demás, y alguien intentó apandar dos raciones. Diríase que se duplicaban las manos en el momento de mayor barullo, o que salían otras de debajo de la tierra' (*Misericordia*: 278). Benina cannot meet the beggars' expectations, and ungratefully, they turn against her. In the final scene at the slum, Benina and Almudena are attacked by a group of 'gitanillos maleantes, alguno que otro lisiado de mala estampa, y dos o tres viejas desarrapadas y furibundas' who hurl stones at them and accuse Benina of deceiving them: 'que si era santa de pega; que si era una ladrona que se fingía beata para robar mejor...' (*Misericordia*: 281). As in the case of the San Sebastián beggars, Fuentes Peris argues that Galdós further emphasizes here the 'association of mendicity with disorder, animality and savagery' (Fuentes Peris 2003: 183). For Varey, the beggars' behaviour points to the 'brutalising effect of poverty and the irrelevance of indiscriminate charity' (Varey 1970: 175). It is important to note however that the subject of ungratefulness is explored throughout the novel, and not only in connection with the indigent population. It can be argued that the beggars' vicious attack acts as a prelude to the novel's final and climatic act of ungratefulness, that is, Benina's dismissal from

Doña Paca's service after years of lovingly and relentlessly providing for her. Indeed, this act proves to be both more hurtful and of more serious personal consequences for Benina than the attack at Cambroneras.

The theme of ungratefulness is also explored in another of the Cambroneras scenes. Here, a woman takes Benina to her flat in a derelict 'casa de corredor', where she lives with her sister and father, in order to show her 'el más lastimoso cuadro que podría imaginarse' (*Misericordia*: 279). As well as hunger, the sisters have to contend with a landlord who 'no las dejaba vivir, reclamando a todas horas las tres semanas que se debían' (*Misericordia*: 280). When Benina gives them one of her last remaining *pesetas*, the women duly thank her for it, although 'bien se conocía que algún reconcomío se le quedaba dentro del cuerpo por no haber recibido el socorro que esperaban' (*Misericordia*: 280). Here, the women's polite ungratefulness is justified by the fact that they are convinced that Benina is the wealthy benefactor Guillermina, from whom they would have expected a more magnanimous gift. So Benina's remarkable act of charity is interpreted by them as ungenerous. From this point of view, their reaction is similar to that which Benina feels when the rich Don Carlos assigns the ludicrously small amount of two *duros* per month to his impoverished sister-in-law Doña Paca. Benina accepts the monthly allowance 'con humildad, pensando que más cuenta le tenía conformarse, y coger lo que se le daba, sin meterse en cuestiones con el estrafalario y ruin vejete' (*Misericordia*: 152).

As Fuentes Peris points out, none of the beggars who are presented in *Misericordia* belong to the category of *mendigos coyunturales*, that is, unemployed workers whose poverty was the result of lack of work caused by specific economic downturns. This type of beggar was generally thought of as more politicised, and therefore a potential threat to the social order (Fuentes Peris 2003: 183). For Rodríguez Puértolas, the beggars of San Sebastián, whose social ideas are firmly anchored in the past, represent what, in Marxist terminology, is described as the *lumpenproletariat* (Rodríguez Puértolas 1989: 367). This group is formed by beggars, prostitutes, petty criminals and the unemployable among others and they are, according to Marx, the 'social scum [...] thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society' (*The Communist Manifesto*: 231). Marx's dismal view of this group comes from the fact that he sees them as lacking in class-consciousness, and therefore unlikely to join in the proletarian revolution. In fact, rather than be

attracted by revolutionary ideas, they are more prepared for the part of ‘a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue’ (*The Communist Manifesto*: 231). From this point of view, it is supremely ironic that, as La Burlada complains of misguided charity and false beggars, she gives an account of Pulido’s yearning for a revolution which will put the old social hierarchies back in place:

Pero vete tú ahora a *golver* del revés el mundo, y a gobernar la compasión de los señores. Por eso se dice que todo anda trastornado y al revés, hasta los cielos benditos, y lleva razón Pulido cuando habla de la *rigolución mu gorda, mu gorda*, que ha de venir para meter en cintura a ricos miserables y a pobres *ensalzaos*. (*Misericordia*: 96)

Pulido’s rants against modern social trends conform to what Bahamonde and Martínez define as the culture of poverty, that is, a socially conservative ideological framework which encourages the poor to accept their social condition as irreversible and, in consequence, to identify with the status quo. It is interesting to note that, for these two social historians, this traditional frame of mind appears illustrated in Galdós’s *Misericordia*:

La cultura de la pobreza alimenta al mendigo profesional que desarrolla una especie de esbozo de contracultura frente a las nuevas relaciones sociales que emergen, al estilo de *Misericordia* de Galdós, y actúa como válvula de control social, instrumento de orden público y proveedor de complementos económicos para las economías populares. (Bahamonde and Martínez 1994: 479)

For Rodríguez Puértolas, despite the fact that *Misericordia* is a novel ‘sin proletarios, reflejo de un Madrid sin industria’ (Rodríguez Puértolas 1989: 369), contemporary working-class demands are reflected in the background with comments such as those made to Benina by both Pulido and the owner of a *burras de leche* establishment later on in the novel: ‘que iba a subir el pan y que había bajado mucho la Bolsa, señal lo primero de que no llovía y lo segundo de que estaba al caer una revolución gorda, todo porque los *artistas* pedían *las ocho horas* y los *amos* no querían darlas’ (*Misericordia*: 175). Both Rodríguez Puértolas and Fuentes argue that Pulido’s reflections present him, in contrast with the other beggars, as class conscious and in tune with modern social debates (Rodríguez Puértolas 1989: 369;

Misericordia: 175, note 2). However, it is important to note that Pulido's choice of words here, *artistas* and *amos*, belongs to the Old Regime hierarchical system and not to the new class-based one. Pulido's talk of social demands is humorous precisely because of his own regressive ideological perspective, as has been argued.

Despite the oblique references to social unrest, the Madrid of *Misericordia* is clearly not that of the increasingly organized working class. In this respect, it is worth noting that, as Gutiérrez Sánchez argues, during the decades of the 1880s and 1890s, the 'obrerismo madrileño' was characterized by its small number of militants and its low level of ideological engagement. Hence socialist and anarchist ideas did not have as much of an impact in Madrid as they did in Barcelona (Gutiérrez Sánchez 1986: 113). This view corresponds with that expressed by the anarchist Anselmo Lorenzo in his 1901 *El proletariado*, in which he draws a distinction between the attitude of workers in Madrid and in Barcelona. Lorenzo compares the thriving industrial atmosphere of Barcelona, which is a 'población liberal en cuyo recinto hay centenares de fábricas, muchas sociedades obreras y trabajadores a millares', with the social apathy of Madrid, described as a 'centro autoritario y burocrático, sin más industria que la imprescindible [...] y, por consiguiente, con relativo corto número de trabajadores lo menos predispuestos posible a la solidaridad y a la aceptación de los grandes ideales de reforma social' (cited by Gutierrez Sánchez 1986: 101). Thus the lack of direct engagement in *Misericordia* with the specific concerns of what was generally referred to as the *cuestión obrera* reflects the social mould of a predominantly non-industrial city such as Madrid, without diminishing the novel's social relevance. As Gold argues, the urban poverty described in *Misericordia* highlights the structural imbalances 'que aquejan las grandes ciudades españolas en los umbrales de una modernidad difícilmente lograda' (Gold 1997: 388).

Charity and Punishment: *Beneficencia* in *Misericordia*

Through the economic plight of the beggars and the inhabitants of Madrid's slums Galdós also explores the shortcomings of the existing system of *beneficencia*. A case in point is that of Silverio. During her first encounter with the old beggar, Benina listens with characteristic compassion to the story of his misfortunes. Despite having

worked as a navy for forty-five years, Silverio finds himself in a state of absolute indigence in old age. He is unable to feed his two granddaughters, who had been left under his care when his own daughter died ‘de miseria [...] de cansancio, de tanto padecer’ (*Misericordia*: 267). Now he only hopes for death, once he secures entrance in an institution for the girls. The narrator renders his words thus:

Desde el día de San José que quitaron la sopa en el Sagrado Corazón, no había ya remedio para él; en parte alguna encontraba amparo; el cielo no le quería, ni la tierra tampoco [...] En cuanto que colocara a las dos criaturas, se *acostaría* para no levantarse hasta el día del Juicio por la tarde... ¡y se levantaría el último! (*Misericordia*: 268)

The reference to the elimination of the Sagrado Corazón convent’s soup-kitchen is significant, as this was a form of charity reviled by many liberals. It officially came to an end as a result of the closure of convents in accordance with Mendizábal’s 1837 legislation, which also saw the abolition of the important economic resource of the *diezmo*. In his 1853 *costumbrista* sketch *La sopa boba*, the writer Antonio Flores describes the soup-kitchen in negative terms, as a ‘cuadro de hambre perpétua, que se veía diariamente en todas las porterías de los conventos de Madrid. Cuadro desgarrador que los hombres de hoy, quisieran borrar de la historia de ayer’ (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, I: 159). Flores laments the fact that this tradition survives in some of the remaining convents, where the soup is ladled out with ‘una ración de vergüenza y de humillación’ (*Ayer, hoy y mañana*, I: 159). What Flores condemns is the public character of this tradition, which he sees as humiliating for the recipients. By contrast, in his 1868 *La sopa de los conventos*, the historian Vicente de la Fuente lambasts the liberal detractors of this form of almsgiving, who argue that its indiscriminate character was ‘una de las causas principales de la holgazanería en España, suponiendo que por este medio se mantenían una porción de haraganes que vivían sin trabajar, y eran una de las lepras sociales que principalmente corroían a nuestro país’ (*La sopa de los conventos*: 15). Against this view, De la Fuente argues that the beneficiaries of the convent soup-kitchen were, in fact, ‘pobres conocidos y elegidos’ such as ‘ciegos, cojos, mancos, tullidos, ancianos imposibilitados para el trabajo, epilépticos, jornaleros sin trabajo, jornaleros de poco jornal y cargados de familia, viudas de trabajadores’ (*La sopa de los conventos*: 94). Thus, among the

poor who De la Fuente considers worthy of receiving the soup, he includes the potentially troublesome *mendigos coyunturales*.

Notwithstanding the liberals' objections, it is clear that Silverio benefitted from the convent's charity. The dreadful consequences which its abolition have for him point to the deficiencies of a system which, as Arenal argues in *La beneficencia*, has dismantled the institutions of the Old Regime relief system without a viable new alternative:

Salvas excepciones harto raras, debidas a individuales esfuerzos, el estado de nuestra Beneficencia es *deplorable* [...] Los medios de la sociedad antigua no existen, los de la nueva no están organizados, y la humanidad doliente y desvalida sufre cruelmente en este fatal interregno. (*La beneficencia*: 64-65)

Arenal considers that the new official *beneficencia*, which has substituted the old religious one, is disorganized, inefficient, and devoid of all Christian spirit. In particular, she denounces the cruel confinement of beggars in supposedly charitable institutions, such as the Asilo de San Bernardino, which are in fact worse than prisons. She argues that it is understandable that beggars refuse voluntary entry into the asylum 'porque en él se le trata mal, material y moralmente; porque se convierte en prisión para él; porque es natural el amor a la libertad' (*La beneficencia*: 158-159). As beggars fear the institutions for the poor, they can only be brought to them by force:

Mirad qué escena pasa en Madrid, en la capital de la Monarquía. Un grupo de guardias hace oír á otro de mendigos la lúgubre y temida voz de ¡A San Bernardino! Los mendigos protestan, los soldados insisten, toman un ademán hostil [...] los soldados hacen uso de las armas, reducen á prisión a los mendigos, que se quejan y piden justicia y auxilio[...] ¿Por qué ningún criminal opone tanta resistencia para ir a la cárcel como oponen los mendigos para ir á San Bernardino? Porque este bien es hipócrita, es mentido, no existe. (*La beneficencia*: 157- 158)

Arenal's sketch is reminiscent of Benina's own arrest while begging at the Church of San Justo:

-¿Pero a dónde me lleva?

- Cállese usted, que le tiene más cuenta... ¡Hala! A San Bernardino.
- ¿Pero qué mal hago yo... señor?
- ¡Está usted pidiendo!... ¿No le dije a usted ayer que el señor Gobernador no quiere que se pida en esta calle?
- Pues manténgame el señor Gobernador, que yo de hambre no he de morirme, por Cristo... ¡Vaya con el hombre!...
- ¡Calle usted, *so borracha!*... ¡Andando digo!
- ¡Que no me empuje!... yo no soy *criminala*... (*Misericordia*: 291-292)

Benina's arrest comes as a result of her pressing economic obligations, which force her to beg for longer hours beyond the safe haven of San Sebastián, in streets where begging is forbidden. It is noteworthy that Arenal emphasizes the random character of the legislation which restricts the areas where begging is allowed: 'La mendicidad se tolera en esta calle, se autoriza en la puerta de aquel templo, se persigue en ese paseo [...] ¡Qué desorden! ¡Qué anarquía! ¡Qué contradicción!' (*La beneficencia*: 159). In *Misericordia*, the threat of imprisonment hovers over Benina and the other beggars throughout the novel. Thus, the beggars' squabbling over coins in the wedding scene only comes to an end when the police threaten to '*recogerles* si no callaban' (*Misericordia*: 213). On another occasion, Benina's begging is interrupted by a 'maldito guindilla que la conminó con llevarla a los sótanos de la prevención de la Latina si no se largaba con viento fresco' (*Misericordia*: 215). Benina is also aware that, without her efforts to sustain Doña Paca, they could both end in the feared asylums: '¡Ay, si yo no mandara, bonitas andaríamos! Ya nos habrían llevado a San Bernardino o al mismísimo Pardo' (*Misericordia*: 251). Ironically, it is to these two institutions that Benina and Almudena are taken to after their arrest.

Appropriately for an institution representative of the new official charity, the Asilo de San Bernardino was founded in 1834 on the site of a Franciscan convent which had been expropriated that same year as part of the disentailment process. Vidal Galache points out that, despite its many deficiencies, it became one of the main 'depósitos de pobres' in Madrid during the second half of the nineteenth century (Vidal Galache 1992: 308). The strict regime to which the inmates were subjected in this institution was one which, in Shubert's words 'would have done Jeremy Bentham proud' (Shubert 1991: 45). As stated in an edict issued on its

foundation, the Asilo's purpose was to house street beggars who 'son mengua de la civilización y de la moral pública, infestan nuestras calles y arrastran su miserable existencia a expensas de una caridad mal entendida' (cited by Argullo y Cobo 1972: 28). Thus its ethos conformed to the liberal approach to beneficence which Arenal condemns almost three decades later in *La beneficencia*. This same ethos is, however, endorsed by Mesonero Romanos in his 1837 sketch 'Una visita a San Bernardino':

El antiguo sistema de *hacer el bien sin mirar á quién*, es mas generoso que político; las sociedades modernas han considerado justamente que los dones indiscretos hacen florecer la mendicidad, que la holganza ningún derecho tiene a ser mantenida por el trabajo ajeno, y que todo el que reclame el auxilio de sus semejantes es preciso que sea á cambio proporcional del que les preste con el suyo. Tales principios presiden hoy los establecimientos públicos de beneficencia en los países civilizados. (*Escenas matritenses*: 271)

In accordance with the liberal credo, Mesonero Romanos stresses the harm done by indiscriminate charity and extols the value of work, with which the poor should repay the charity offered to them. The inmates' work regime is, for him, a source of spiritual well-being: 'el silencio y compostura de los acogidos, su buen humor y aspecto saludable, convencen al espectador de que el trabajo es solo capaz de infundir en el hombre aquella tranquilidad y bienestar tan análogo á la especie civilizada' (*Escenas matritenses*: 277). In his sketch, the inmates of San Bernardino are treated according to their moral worth. Thus the ex-soldier Tomás, who came to the institution through 'desgracias no merecidas', receives 'cargos honoríficos y premios' on account of his good conduct. By contrast, his deserter brother, who is characterized as a 'mendigo de siniestro aspecto' and 'insubordinado y vagabundo [...] holgazán y borracho', ends up in the institution's cells (*Escenas matritenses*: 277). Despite praising many aspects of the institution, such as 'el aseo y limpieza de las habitaciones' and 'la cortesía de los encargados' (*Escenas matritenses*: 277), Mesonero Romanos strikes a more negative chord as he denounces San Bernardino's economic precariousness. Consequently, he urges the Government to supplement the funds which the Asilo obtains through subscriptions, alms and the sale of products made by the inmates (*Escenas matritenses*: 276-277).

It is clear that the optimism which Mesonero Romanos showed in the 1830s with respect to the new institutions for the poor is not shared by Galdós at the end of the century. Rather, the view that emerges from *Misericordia* is in tune with Arenal's forceful denunciation of the state of official *beneficencia*. Mesonero Romanos's rosy depiction of San Bernardino bears very little resemblance to the 'gran sala, ahogada y fétida, donde había ya como un medio centenar de ancianos de ambos sexos' (*Misericordia*: 294) where Benina is taken. After a short stay in San Bernardino, Benina and Almudena are moved to the single-sex asylums of Santa María and San Juan in the district of El Pardo, which were both founded in 1849. As Vidal Galache points out, it was common practice to classify, and subsequently to redistribute, the beggars who arrived at San Bernardino (Vidal Galache 1992: 306-308). The effect that their short stay in these institutions has on Benina and Almudena is devastating:

En lastimoso estado iban los dos: Benina descalza, desgarrada y sucia la negra ropa; el moro envejecido, la cara verde y macilenta; uno y otro revelando en sus demacrados rostros el hambre que habían pasado, la opresión y tristeza del forzado encierro en lo que más parece mazmorra que hospicio. (*Misericordia*: 335)

The futility of Benina's imprisonment is manifested by the fact that, as a result of Doña Paca's rejection, Benina has no choice but to continue begging for a living after her release. Now, however, she begs 'con mucho cuidado de los guindillas, por no caer nuevamente en poder de los que echan el lazo a los mendigos, cual si fueran perros, para llevarlos al depósito, donde como a perros les tratan' (*Misericordia*: 352).

As well as this institutional repression on the part of police and officials, Benina must fend off the advice of well-meaning and charitable persons who regard the asylums as a better alternative to a life of begging in the streets. Such is the case with the switchman who gives shelter to Benina and Almudena after the Cambroneras attack. Whereas he acts charitably by taking them to his home 'como buen cristiano', he does it 'demostrando tener en poco a las víctimas del atentado' (*Misericordia*: 283). It is clear that he disapproves of the two beggars' lifestyle, and thus recommends that they seek shelter in institutions:

Lo que deben hacer ustedes es dejarse de andar de vagancia por calles y caminos, donde todo es ajeteo y malos pasos, y ver de meterse o que los metan en un asilo, la señora en las *ancianitas*, el señor en otro recogimiento que hay para ciegos, y así tendrían asegurado el comer y el abrigo por todo el tiempo que vivieran. (*Misericordia*: 284).

Almudena's silent rejection of this suggestion is the result of his love of freedom. As the narrator explains, he 'amaba la libertad, y la prefería trabajosa y miserable a la cómoda sujeción del asilo' (*Misericordia*: 284). As we have seen, Arenal points to this natural inclination as one of the reasons why beggars refuse voluntary entry into the asylums. Benina, for her part, deflects the moral judgement implicit in this advice with an acceptable excuse:

Benina, por su parte, no queriendo entrar en largas explicaciones, ni desvanecer el error de aquella buena gente, que sin duda les creía asociados para la vagancia y el merodeo, se limitó a decir que no se recogían en un *establecimiento* por causa de la mucha *existencia* de pobres, y que sin recomendaciones y tarjetas de personajes no había manera de conseguir plaza. (*Misericordia*: 284)

In the same way as the swithman, Don Romualdo's *arabista* priest friend, Mayoral, advises Benina to enter the asylum for old people of La Misericordia: 'Usted, *Doña Benigna*, bien podría dejarse de esta vida, que a su edad es tan penosa. No está bien que ande tras el moro como la sogá tres el caldero. ¿Por qué no entra en la *Misericordia*?' (*Misericordia*: 290). The religious affiliation of this asylum, which is marked by the fact that the priest Don Romualdo is a patron there, distinguishes it from the official secular institutions of San Bernardino and El Pardo. In this respect, Fuentes points to the irony implicit in having a representative of the institutional Church 'instando a recluir en el asilo de la 'Misericordia' a la encarnación de este principio, Benina' (*Misericordia*: 290, note 4). As Shubert points out, the liberal tendency to centralize institutions for the poor gave way, after 1868, to a more open approach which encouraged private initiative, with the Government maintaining a supervisory role (Shubert 1991: 49). As seen in the previous chapter, this change in policy helped to revive the traditional preeminence which religious institutions had as providers of beneficence. It is noteworthy that, unlike San Bernardino and El

Pardo, La Misericordia is presented as a much sought-after institution. Don Romualdo is constantly besieged by requests for entry: ‘no daba un paso por la calle sin que le acometieran mendigos importunos, y se veía continuamente asediado de recomendaciones y tarjetazos pidiendo la admisión’ (*Misericordia*: 306). Whereas beggars are forced into San Bernardino and El Pardo as criminals, entry in La Misericordia is dependent on a certification of moral worth.

Glannon considers that La Misericordia is presented in the novel as ‘the rational solution’ to pauperism and ‘the only viable alternative to the lack of efficacy apparent in Benina’s indiscriminate generosity’ (Glannon 1985: 259-260). In his view, Benina is blinded in her unreasonable rejection of Don Romualdo’s asylum by her attachment to the abstract idea of ‘bondad’ (Glannon 1985: 262). Glannon concludes that the novel’s title points more towards the ‘social efficacy of Romualdo’s workhouse – La Misericordia- than to the unconditional but ineffectual principle of charity to which Benina rigidly adheres’ (Glannon 1985: 264). Wright rejects Glannon’s interpretation as incompatible with the narrative perspective in *Misericordia*. She stresses that Don Romualdo’s asylum is not presented as different from the other institutions for the poor in its desire to isolate and control those viewed as abnormal (Wright 2009-2010: 6; 11-12). As Gold points out, charity at asylums like La Misericordia was dispensed in exchange for compliance with discipline (Gold 1997: 391). Moreover, Glannon’s clear-cut interpretation does not do justice to the subtleties of *Misericordia* in dealing with the complex question of poor relief. In this respect, it is worth noting Don Romualdo’s own scepticism about the efficacy of his own institution, which is apparent in his oft-quoted words of despondency concerning pauperism in Spain: ‘Podríamos creer que [...] es nuestro país inmensa gusanera de pobres, y que debemos hacer de la nación un Asilo sin fin, donde quepamos todos, desde el primero al último. Al paso que vamos pronto seremos el más grande Hospicio de Europa’ (*Misericordia*: 306).

Keeping Up Appearances: The Impoverished Middle-Class

Don Romualdo’s words of all-encompassing poverty point to the fact that both indigence and economic precariousness are presented in *Misericordia* as problems which transcend social class. Benina, in her dual role as a beggar and a house maid

acts as a link between the world of open mendicity and that of the impoverished middle classes, which is represented by her mistress Doña Paca, her daughter Obdulia and Francisco Ponte. These characters belong to the category known as *pobres vergonzantes*, who are defined by the discrepancy between their economic situation and their perceived social status. Thus they feel obliged to hide their poverty through what Carasa Soto calls a ‘simulacro social convencional’ (Carasa Soto 1987b: 136). According to Cabrera, the *pobres vergonzantes* were ‘personas venidas a menos’ who could only receive charity ‘con recato, disimulo y sigilo, ya que mantenían una mentalidad y una condición social que, en términos de honorabilidad y dignidad personal, les alejaba del mundo de los pobres’ (Cabrera 1998: 24). For Benina, this kind of ‘miseria vergonzante, que tiene que guardar el crédito, mirar por el decoro’ (*Misericordia*: 135) is worse than her own, as she indicates when thinking of Ponte’s predicament:

Voy a tener otra vez el gusto de dar de comer a ese pobre hambriento, que no confiesa su hambre por la vergüenza que le da... ¡Cuánta miseria en este mundo, Señor! [...] Y cuando se cree una que es el acabóse de la pobreza, resulta que hay otros más miserables, porque una se echa a la calle, y pide, y le dan, y come [...] Pero éstos que juntan la vergüenza con la gana de comer, y son delicados y medrosicos para pedir; éstos que tuvieron posibles y educación, y no quieren rebajarse... ¡Dios mío, qué desgraciados son!

(*Misericordia*: 178)

Don Carlos expresses the same opinion in reference to the twelve *duros* which he sets apart for the ‘necesitados que no se determinan a pedir limosna porque les da vergüenza’. These are, in his view, ‘los más dignos de conmiseración’ (*Misericordia*: 152). However, the meanness of his gift to his relative Doña Paca, who is the beneficiary of the *duros* in this occasion, reduces his comment to the category of cliché. The narrator also refers to the particular plight of the *vergonzantes* in relation to Ponte. As a gentleman *venido a menos*, he would rather starve than ‘hacer cosa alguna sin dignidad’, such as importune his friends with requests for help. Thus his ‘delicadeza innata’ and ‘amor propio’ act as a ‘piedra atada al cuello para que más pronto se hundiera y se ahogara’ (*Misericordia*: 183). However, Ponte is presented as a figure of ridicule. Expressions such as ‘persona [...] inofensiva’ but ‘inútil’ (*Misericordia*: 181) and ‘*cursi*’ (*Misericordia*: 182), with which the narrator

describes him, point to scruples which are based on an old-fashioned and misplaced sense of social dignity. In this respect, Fuentes considers that Ponte ‘viene a ser el último de los famélicos hidalgos de la tradición literaria española’ (*Misericordia*: 179, note 9).

The conditions in which the *pobres vergonzantes* of *Misericordia* live reflect the difficulties that they have in maintaining their perceived status. Both Doña Paca and Obdulia live in *sotabancos*, or attics. As Cabrera points out, in buildings where there were several floors, the *sotabancos* were reserved for poor tenants (Cabrera 1998: 67-68). By contrast, the first floor or *principal* carried the most social prestige. Cabrera also brings to attention the snobbery with which the wealthier residents of the lower floors regarded their impecunious neighbours. Thus, one contributor to *La voz de la caridad* writes in 1875 that ‘es inconveniente para la moral y para la tranquilidad pública que el pobre y el rico vivan dentro de unos mismos umbrales’ (cited by Cabrera 1998: 68). The author contends that it is easier for a poor person to suffer his or her misery ‘aislado en modesta vivienda, que respirando una atmósfera de lujo y ostentación’ (cited by Cabrera 1998: 68). The disparity between Obdulia’s social pretensions and the reality of her situation is ironically emphasized by the narrator’s remark that Obdulia lives in ‘el primer piso, bajando del cielo, con vecindad de gatos y vistas magníficas a las tejas y buhardillones’ (*Misericordia*: 176). Moreover, she lives in a run-down building, as is made apparent from the state of the gloomy stairs, which have ‘los peldaños en panza, las paredes desconchadas, sin que faltaran los letreros de carbón o lápiz garabateados junto a las puertas de cuarterones’ (*Misericordia*: 176). As Fuentes observes, architects and hygienists often warned against the insalubriousness of the numerous *sotabancos* which existed in Madrid (*Misericordia*: 111, note 2; 133, note 3). Del Moral, for her part, notes that these attics were expensive as well as unhealthy (Del Moral 2001: 89). In this respect, it is interesting to note that La Burlada is forced to move from Madrid proper to Puerta de Toledo, near Las Cambroneras in the outskirts of Madrid, as she cannot afford to live in the ‘riñón de Madrid con la carestía de los alquileres y la mezquindad del fruto de la limosna’ (*Misericordia*: 259).

Ponte’s living conditions are considerably worse than those of Doña Paca or Obdulia, as he does not have a fixed abode and relies on *casas de dormir* for his night shelters. As Benina explains to a shocked Doña Paca, he spends the night in the

‘palacios encantados de la *señá* Bernarda, calle de Mediodía Grande...la casa de dormir’, when he has the three *reales* which he needs to pay for a bed there (*Misericordia*: 139-140). As in the case of the *sotabancos*, Fuentes draws attention to the fact that social commentators often remarked on the squalid conditions of these *casas de dormir*, of which there were, according to the hygienist Guerra y Cortés, around two hundred in Madrid by the turn of the century (*Misericordia*: 139, note 4). In order to put some perspective into the different levels of poverty which are presented in the novel, it is worth considering that tenants at a ramshackle *casa de corredor* at Las Cambroneras must pay six *pesetas* (24 *reales*) a month for a room in this ‘vasta colmena de cuartos pobres’ (*Misericordia*: 261). For many of the Madrid beggars, who cannot afford that price, there is the possibility of renting some floor space in one of the slum’s dilapidated stables for ten *céntimos* per night, that is, three *pesetas* (12 *reales*) a month (*Misericordia*: 262). That is also the price which Silverio pays for a ‘cuarto lóbrego’ in the *casa de corredor* which he shares with his granddaughters and five other beggars with their respective families (*Misericordia*: 268). By contrast, Ponte’s bill for a full month at his *casa de dormir* would come up to twenty-two and a half *pesetas* (90 *reales*). This is in fact a discounted price, as Bernarda, who is a ‘mujer muy dispuesta y que sabía distinguir’, allows Ponte to sleep in a ‘cama de a peseta’ for only three *reales*, in consideration to the ‘excepcional decencia del parroquiano’ (*Misericordia*: 184-185). Moreover, although Bernarda, as Benina warns Ponte, only gives credit for one or two nights (*Misericordia*: 203), Ponte is only turned down from her establishment after accumulating an outstanding debt of seven *camas* (*Misericordia*: 217). Thus class works in Ponte’s favour as credit guarantee, even in his abject poverty.

Many of the nineteenth-century authors who objected to mendicity found the discreet character of the *pobres vergonzantes* to be praise-worthy. As seen before, the author Vega-Rey makes a moral distinction between those who shamelessly display their poverty publicly and the virtuous poor who do not resort to mendicity, since ‘virtud es, y hasta heroicidad á veces, soportar en el silencio del hogar doméstico todas las amarguras de las privaciones, todo el dolor que causa la falta de recursos; y esto sin manifestarlo [...] carácter enteramente opuesto al de la mendicidad’ (*Pobreza y mendicidad*: 10). In his view, this honourable poverty is found both among the ‘honradas masas trabajadoras’ and among those who have

come to it by ‘reveses de la fortuna, más frecuentes que nunca ahora que nada hay seguro, ni en las más elevadas clases sociales’ (*Pobreza y mendicidad*: 11). The same point is made by Arenal in *El pauperismo*, in which she praises the dignity of the working-class poor who refuse to beg:

es general la repugnancia del trabajador honrado y de su familia a mendigar, repugnancia que debe custodiarse como fuego sagrado, porque es verdaderamente santa la dignidad del pobre que sufre todo género de privaciones antes de rebajarse a pedir limosna. Hay que evitar que la pida, para que la penuria extrema no le ponga en el caso de perder su dignidad, que no recobraré una vez perdida. (*El pauperismo*: 301)

As we have seen, her stance on mendicity became less accepting as the century progressed, and it is interesting that she now relates begging to loss of dignity. Nevertheless, Arenal makes concessions for situations of extreme need, maintaining that ‘el que se halla en necesidad extrema y no recibe espontáneo auxilio, tiene que pedirle, y debe hacerlo; no puede condenar a morirse de hambre a su familia, ni aun a sí mismo’ (*El pauperismo*: 295-296).

Maid and Mistress: The Dynamics of Social Dignity

Arenal’s proviso that mendicity is acceptable in circumstances of extreme need may be applied to Benina, who only resorts to charity when her economic situation, as provider for both Doña Paca and her daughter Obdulia, becomes untenable:

La situación llegó a ser un día tan extremadamente angustiosa, que la heroica anciana, cansada de mirar a cielo y tierra por si inopinadamente caía algún socorro, perdido el crédito en las tiendas, cerrados todos los caminos, no vio más arbitrio para continuar la lucha que poner su cara en vergüenza saliendo a pedir limosna. Hízolo una mañana, creyendo que lo haría por única vez, y siguió luego todos los días, pues la fiera necesidad le impuso el triste oficio mendicite, privándola en absoluto de todo otro medio de atender a los suyos. Llegó por sus pasos contados, y no podía menos de llegar y permanecer allí hasta la muerte, por ley social, económica, si es que así se dice. Mas no queriendo que su señora se enterase de tanta desventura, armó el enredo de

que le había salido una buena *proporción* de asistenta, en casa de un señor eclesiástico. (*Misericordia*: 135)

As Russell points out, Benina's begging and her fictional creation of Don Romualdo are prompted by her wish to sustain both Doña Paca's basic material needs and her social pride (Russell 1967: 107-108). As befits Doña Paca's status as *vergonzante*, Benina's charity towards her mistress must be disguised and tactful. The subterfuge of her employment at Don Romualdo's house protects Doña Paca from the reality of her association with street begging. However, Benina's pious lie still leaves Doña Paca willingly accepting to live off the product of what she believes to be her servant's work at another household. It is ironic that, while considering the possibility of refusing Don Carlos's miserly alms-gift, Doña Paca tells Benina that 'mientras tengamos a nuestro D. Romualdo, podemos permitirnos un poquito de dignidad' (*Misericordia*: 146). The nature of Benina's and Doña Paca's relationship subverts the dichotomy which Vega-Rey establishes between the shameful beggars on the one hand and the virtuous non-mendicant poor on the other: Doña Paca can only be virtuously poor through Benina's sacrificial debasement.

The social distortion which is created by the fact that Doña Paca is, unknowingly, economically dependent on her servant's begging is a source of irony in the novel and opens up questions about class, social status and conventions of propriety. For Doña Paca, the difference in the way in which she and Benina confront their poverty is a symptom of their respective social class. Doña Paca, who is overcome with passive despair in the face of destitution, cannot comprehend Benina's hopeful acceptance of their wretched lives:

-¿y soportas además la miseria, la vergüenza, tanta humillación, deber a todo el mundo, no pagar a nadie, vivir de mil enredos, trampas y embustes, no encontrar quien te fíe valor de dos reales, vernos perseguidos de tenderos y vendedores?

-¡Vaya si lo soporto!...Cada cual, en esta vida, se defiende como puede. ¡Estaría bueno que nos dejáramos morir de hambre, estando las tiendas tan llenas de cosas de substancia! (*Misericordia*: 115).

Doña Paca concludes that, in contrast to herself, Benina lacks ‘vergüenza’, ‘decoro’ and ‘dignidad’ (*Misericordia*: 116), that is, Benina does not need to worry about her social status. By contrast, as a *pobre vergonzante*, Doña Paca ascribes her acute suffering to the fact that her economic situation negates the social standing which she believes to be hers by right. Thus the narrator describes Doña Paca’s early economic misfortunes as the preamble to the ‘infortunio grande, aterrador’ which is the collapse of her social reputation. Her constant downwards move, to ever more marginal neighbourhoods, goes hand in hand with her being snubbed by the ‘sociedad que la ayudó a dar al viento su fortuna’ (*Misericordia*: 125). Those of a lower social status also begin to refer to her without the deference due to class:

Por entonces, la gente de la vecindad, los tenderos chasqueados y las personas que de ella tenían lástima empezaron a llamarla *Doña Paca*, y ya no hubo forma de designarla con otro nombre. Gentezuelas desconsideradas y groseras solían añadir al nombre familiar algún mote infamante: *Doña Paca la tramposa, la marquesa del infundio*. (*Misericordia*: 125)

In her attitude towards her mistress, Benina is moved by a ‘profundo sentimiento de caridad’ which, as is the case of her begging for her mistress’s sake, often involves self-denial: ‘Conformábase ella con chupar algunos huesos, y catar desperdicios, siempre y cuando Doña Paca quedase satisfecha’ (*Misericordia*: 133). It is also clear that, despite Doña Paca’s complete economic and psychological reliance on her servant, her social authority over Benina remains intact. Thus, when she arrives late at Doña Paca’s house after her frenetic search for the essential *duro*, Benina fears her mistress’s anger at her delay, and as usual determines to ‘acomodarse al son que le tocara la otra’ (*Misericordia*: 112). This time, she is in a friendly mood, but Benina’s late arrival on a different occasion prompts Doña Paca to lambast her maid, calling her ‘correntona’, ‘borracha’ and ‘bribonaza’ among other insults (*Misericordia*: 206-208.) During one of Doña Paca’s most ferocious verbal attacks on her maid, which is prompted by jealousy over the attention that Ponte lavishes on Benina, Doña Paca reminds her servant of their hierarchical relationship: ‘hay que ponerte siempre a distancia, no dejarte salir de tu baja condición, para que no te desmadres, para que no te subas a las barbas de los superiores’ (*Misericordia*: 252). She also accuses Benina of having had a baby with a *guardia civil*, and of later abandoning it at the hospital for foundlings of La Inclusa. Following the conventional view that linked women in

domestic service with sexual waywardness, Doña Paca argues that it would have been impossible for Benina to remain virtuous: ‘pues milagro sería, en plena vida de Madrid, y en la clase de servicio doméstico, una virginidad de sesenta años’ (*Misericordia*: 254). However, the balance of power is reversed in questions concerning the running of the household. Here, Benina’s resolution dominates over Doña Paca’s vacillating nature, particularly at times of acute economic crisis. In this way, it is Benina who decides the downwards move to Calle del Olmo, taking away from Doña Paca ‘las riendas del gobierno’ (*Misericordia*: 122). On another occasion, when Benina objects to her mistress’s unrealistic shopping list, Doña Paca capitulates, acknowledging her servant’s administrative superiority with expressions such as ‘se hará lo que tú quieras’, ‘yo no sirvo para nada’ and ‘a todo me avengo, Nina. Tú mandas’ (*Misericordia*: 250-251).

The origin of this complex relationship between maid and mistress is explained in the three chapters which deal with the historical account of Doña Paca’s descent into poverty. For Russell, the focus of this account, which he refers to as a seemingly ‘unnecessarily lengthy excursion into “the past”’ (Russell 1967: 107) is not the narration of the family’s decaying fortunes but the exposition of Benina’s personal attachment to Doña Paca and her children by a ‘bond of affection, devotion and concern’ (Russell 1967: 107). This dismissal of the economic aspect of the narration does not seem justified. As seen in the previous chapters, Galdós often provides detailed outlines of the characters’ economic backgrounds in his *novelas contemporáneas*. As well as defining the characters, this information helps to embed them in the flow of nineteenth-century Spanish history, as seen, for example, with Torquemada and Ángel Guerra. In *Misericordia*, the fact that the narrator also gives a detailed account of Ponte’s social descent points to the narrative importance of these characters’ economic histories. Crucially, both Doña Paca and Ponte are given full responsibility for the woeful situation in which they find themselves. As the narrator remarks in relation to Doña Paca: ‘Bien miradas estas cosas y el subir y bajar de las personas en la vida social, resulta gran tontería echar al destino la culpa de lo que es obra exclusiva de los propios caracteres y temperamentos’ (*Misericordia*: 119). Don Carlos’s wealth is also explained, this time through Doña Paca’s resentful comments. She maintains that he accumulated his fortune ‘haciendo contrabando de géneros, untando a los de la Aduana y engañando a medio mundo’

(*Misericordia*: 143). In this way, Don Carlos is presented as one of the corrupt characters with links to the administration who populate the *novelas contemporáneas*, as exemplified in *Lo prohibido* and the *Torquemada* novels.

The pattern of Doña Paca's decline is also a common one in the *novelas*, involving profligacy, debt and usury. Thus, the 'bienes raíces de mucha cuenta' which both Doña Paca and her husband possessed in Ronda, proved insufficient for the ostentatious lifestyle which Doña Paca imposed on the family as soon as they were established in Madrid:

le faltó tiempo a la señora para poner su casa en un pie de vida frívola y aparatosa que, si empezó ajustando las vanidades al marco de las rentas y sueldos, pronto se salió de todo límite de prudencia, y no tardaron en aparecer los atrasos, las irregularidades, las deudas. (*Misericordia*: 120)

The sudden death of Doña Paca's inefficient husband leaves her unable to cope with the burden of debt, causing a proliferation of usurers and debt collectors who, 'como los gusanos en cuerpo corrupto [...] se la comían por dentro y por fuera, devorándola sin compasión' (*Misericordia*: 120-121). In a similar manner, Ponte, whose own social background is very similar to that of Doña Paca's, eats his modest fortune away in an active but lacklustre and futile social life (*Misericordia*: 182-183).

Doña Paca justifies her inability to manage money and keep an eye on expenses as a sign of her class. As she tells Benina: '¿Quién te ha dicho a ti que las señoras son tenedoras de libros? El no llevar cuentas ni apuntar nada, no era más que la forma natural de mi generosidad sin límites' (*Misericordia*: 253). It is noteworthy that Benina's own social perspective is affected by her close proximity with Doña Paca. Thus, while listening in one occasion to Pedra's and Diega's exploits in the business of 'compra y vende', Benina regrets having gone into domestic service rather than opening a shop, as she believes that she has the qualities of a good 'negocianta'. However, as the narrator reports, it is now too late for Benina to emulate Pedra and Diega in their petty trade, as 'su vejez y la indisoluble sociedad moral con Doña Paca la imposibilitaban para el comercio' (*Misericordia*: 173). The suggestion is that Benina feels touched by the old-fashioned prejudice of the landed middle class about the indignity of trade, while still being able to beg for a living.

In this way, as with the beggars of San Sebastián, the ideological outlook of the *pobres vergonzantes* in *Misericordia* is stuck in the past. This is made particularly clear in the case of Ponte and Obdulia, who spend hours immersed in their dreams of a glorious past. As the narrator indicates, Ponte goes through a physical and mental process of mummification: ‘así como su cuerpo se momificaba, su pensamiento se iba quedando fósil’ (*Misericordia*: 187). In a similar way, Obdulia’s nostalgia for a past world which she never knew characterizes her, in Zambrano’s words, as a ‘niña embalsamada entre los fúnebres objetos de que, a causa del oficio del marido, se encuentra rodeada’ (cited by Fuentes in *Misericordia*: 189, note 7). In marked contrast with the languidness of these characters is Doña Paca’s working-class daughter-in-law Juliana. Critics have often highlighted her negative qualities, such as her domineering personality, her selfishness and the cruelty of her dismissal of Benina at the end of the novel. However, her role as an alternative to the decayed middle-class model represented by Doña Paca, Obdulia and Ponte must be emphasized. With her ‘buen juicio y laboriosidad’ Juliana achieves the ‘redención moral’ of Doña Paca’s dissolute son Antonio, who becomes a hard-working family man (*Misericordia*: 133). Even after receiving their inheritance, she continues with her hard work as a seamstress and forbids Antonio to stop working as a *corredor de anuncios* (*Misericordia*: 317). As Rodríguez Puértolas argues, this socially hybrid couple, whose robust twins are presented in contrast to Obdulia’s infertility, points towards the possibility of ‘crear un futuro y [...] cambiar un presente’ (Rodríguez Puértolas 1989: 376).

The relationship between Benina and her mistress is shaped by Doña Paca’s economic penuries. When Benina enters Doña Paca’s service, the household is already going through rapid decline. Benina soon reveals the complex duality of her personality or, in the narrator’s words, the ‘desequilibrios de su carácter’ (*Misericordia*: 121). Thus Benina proves to be both an efficient worker whose ‘actividad pasmosa [...] producía el milagro de agrandar las hora y los días’ (*Misericordia*: 121), and ‘la más intrépida sisona de Madrid’ (*Misericordia*: 121). The tensions between mistress and maid which result from Benina’s propensity for petty theft fail to break their mutual bond of affection and loyalty. When, after her first dismissal, Benina returns to Doña Paca’s home, the narrator explains that ‘no podía olvidar a la señora ni a los nenes. Éstos eran su amor, y la casa [...] la

encariñaba y atraía. Paquita Juárez también tenía especial gusto en charlar con ella, pues algo (no sabían qué) existía entre las dos que secretamente las enlazaba' (*Misericordia*: 121). This special bond is also invoked by Benina after her return from her second dismissal:

Yo no sé qué tiene la señora [...] yo no sé más sino que no me hallo en ninguna parte. En casa rica estoy, con buenos amos que no reparan en dos reales más o menos; seis duros de salario... Pues no me hallo, señora [...] Yo no tengo a nadie en el mundo más que a la señora, y sus hijos son mis hijos, pues como a tales les quiero. (*Misericordia*: 122)

Doña Paca, for her part, refers to Benina several times in the novel as 'amiga' and 'compañera de mi vida' (*Misericordia*: 298; 303).

Thus Benina's relationship with her mistress is based on a deep affection which does not preclude their acceptance of a clear social hierarchy. It is worth comparing Benina's attitude as regards her mistress to that presented by Arenal as typical of modern servants in *El pauperismo*. Here, Arenal discusses some of the conflicts between servants and masters which result from the inevitability of their living side by side. In particular, Arenal considers that the preservation of social hierarchies in a situation of close proximity can be problematic. One source of hostility comes from the fact that servants must obey masters whom they cannot respect, since 'es bien raro que parezca respectable el que se ve de cerca, a todas horas y en los minuciosos detalles de la vida material' (*El pauperismo*: 252). Moreover, the 'condición servil' implicit in domestic service is a cause for 'pugna entre el servidor y el servido, y más en una época en que se habla tanto de igualdad y tanto se aspira a ella' (*El pauperismo*: 253). She also argues that, since the 'fidelidad del perro de algunos criados antiguos' is now rare, the idea of *servidumbre* is becoming increasingly difficult to accept, due to 'el espíritu de independencia y el sentimiento de dignidad' of those who could do the job well (*El pauperismo*: 257). Arenal concludes that the proximity of individuals 'tan distantes por su posición, su inteligencia y todo su modo de ser' is artificial and cannot be based in 'comunidad alguna de ideas, de sentimientos, ni de intereses' (*El pauperismo*: 252-253). The implication of Arenal's analysis is twofold. On the one hand, social class acts as a barrier for the existence of both true affection and true respect between a mistress

and her servant; on the other hand, a modern employer-employee work association is incompatible with the servile nature of domestic service. Interestingly, Arenal suggests that domestic service could be easily superseded by ‘los adelantos de la civilización que llevan a domicilio el calor, la luz y el agua’ (*El pauperismo*: 257). It is clear that the relationship between Benina and her mistress does not conform to Arenal’s analysis. As Barr points out, Benina upholds the conventions of the traditional social order in her relationship with Doña Paca (Barr 1982: 102). Unlike Arenal’s independent and resentful servants, Benina interiorizes and accepts the social structures of the Old Regime.

Arenal’s negative view of domestic service at the end of the century can be contrasted with the kinder image which Jose María de Andueza presents in his mid-century *cuadro costumbrista* ‘La criada’. Andueza’s archetypal Spanish maid shares some of Benina’s traits. Along with some of the usual clichés concerning both the expense which maids entail and their sexual waywardness, the author gives an account of a good maid’s loyalty to her masters at times of economic hardship due to, for instance, a *cesantía*. He praises her ability to provide both economic and emotional support for them in such cases. Thus a loyal maid ‘nos proporciona recursos para comer quince días, probándonos así su buena ley, cuando a todas horas tenemos que bajar la cabeza delante de personas’ (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 32). When shopping in the market, she is able to buy good-quality food on credit with a silent but expressive language which ‘entre verduleras y criadas equivale á la cuenta corriente del mas acreditado comerciante’ (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* 1851: 32). In the same way, Benina ensures Doña Paca’s sustenance with her skills and connections at the ‘comercios para pobres’ in Calle de la Ruda. There, she acquires ‘con poquísimos dinero, o sin ninguno a veces, tomando al fiado [...] diversas porquerías que presentaba a la señora como artículo de mediana clase’ (*Misericordia*: 132).

Andueza’s maid can also render the invaluable service of sparing her mistress’s decorum by going to the pawn shop of El Monte de Piedad on her behalf:

Pues ¿que diremos de los consuelos y recursos que inventa para mitigar las amarguras de su señora que se desespera porque no tienen sus hijos un pedazo de pan que llevar á la boca? – Vaya, no se aflija vd. por eso, que no

todos los días son iguales, y tras de uno malo viene otro bueno [...] Si V tuviese algunas cosas que darme, unos pendientes ó algo de ropa blanca, se podrian llevar á empeño al *Monte de Piedad* [...] – Hija, pero yo no estoy acostumbrada á eso; me da tanta vergüenza ir allí a que me miren las gentes. – Es que si V. quiere iré yo [...] y no le dé a V. cuidado que nadie necesita saberlo. (*Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*: 32)

Thus both Andueza's *criada* and Benina act as a buffer against the ignominy of public poverty for their mistresses. There are several references to pawning in *Misericordia*, although it is never specified whether it takes place at the Monte de Piedad or at independent, and often usurious, *casas de empeño*. As an impoverished middle-class lady, Doña Paca has 'infinitas prendas de ropa y objetos diversos' in the pawn shop, which her daughter-in-law Juliana redeems as soon as they receive their inheritance, 'dando preferencia a las papeletas cuyo vencimiento estuviese al caer' (*Misericordia*: 331). Pawn shops are also familiar institutions for those at the lowest end of the social scale. Thus, at the beginning of the novel Almudena helps Benina to obtain her *duro* by allowing her to pawn his suit (*Misericordia*: 107-108).

Savings, Sisas and Gifts in Benina's Finances

The Monte de Piedad de Madrid was founded in 1702 with the objective, like other *montepíos* elsewhere, of avoiding the effects of usury among the the poor. To this effect, it conceded free loans against jewels and clothes. The history of the Monte de Piedad's sister institution, the Caja de Ahorros de Madrid, may also throw some light over the economic narrative of *Misericordia*, and, in particular, over Benina's approach to saving. The Caja was founded in 1838 by the Marqués de Pontejos as a dependent organization of the Monte de Piedad. According to its founding decree, it was created to be an 'establecimiento de beneficencia, destinado exclusivamente a recibir y hacer productivas las economías de las personas laboriosas' (cited by Fernández Sánchez 2004: 1). As Martínez Soto points out, it had a double function as a financial organization and as an intitution of *beneficencia*. The financial objective of the Caja de Ahorros was to capture the savings of the working classes and to invest its financial surplus in social work, or, in other words, to use those savings for public financing. Through its symbiotic association with the Monte de

Piedad, it also operated as a lending bank, as the Caja was obliged to transfer its deposits to the Monte. In its charitable role, the Caja was strongly didactic and moralizing, and its purpose was to ensure the subsistence of the urban *clases populares* at times of crisis or during old age through the promotion of saving habits among them (Martínez Soto 2006: 1-4; 34). This emphasis on the idea of self-help was common among contemporary social commentators. As Fuentes Peris notes, the periodical publication *La voz de la caridad* dedicated a considerable amount of articles to the subject of thrift and its role in the betterment of the working classes (Fuentes Peris 2003: 187).

Women and minors, who were the sector of the population most exposed to the effects of economic vicissitudes, represented the highest percentage among the Caja's depositors. Amongst them, Martínez Soto highlights the popularity of the Caja among female servants, who constituted nearly 21% of the depositors of the Caja de Ahorros de Madrid in 1875. He argues that, as they had their accommodation, food and clothes assured, they were able to save part of their salary. Moreover, their close contact with the 'moral y estilo de vida de la burguesía urbana' could have had the effect of rendering them more receptive to the idea of saving (Martínez Soto 2006: 31). Sarasúa agrees that the servants of the nobility and the bourgeoisie were in a better position to save than most workers. However, she argues that 'a pesar de que amos, clérigos y políticos instaban al ahorro, en el que veían grandes cualidades morales y sociales, es dudoso que fuera una posibilidad real para muchos criados' (Sarasúa 1994: 238-239). It is worth noting that, according to a 1839 letter to the Townhall by the Marqués de Pontejos, servants were one of the three professional groups, together with 'artesanos' and 'labradores' at which the Caja de Ahorro de Madrid was aimed. The letter refers to the servants' propensity to deposit 'sus economías en usureros y rateros', and maintains that, as a result, 'no es extraño el ver a muchos criados reducidos a la mendicidad, al fin de una vida laboriosa, a causa de una estafa o quiebra fraudulenta' (cited by Sarasúa 1994: 239). In a similar way, in *El pauperismo*, Arenal refers to domestic service as a 'concausa de miseria [...] por la mala situación económica en que se encuentra el criado o criada, cuando deja de serlo' (*El pauperismo*: 251).

Despite its original charitable purpose, the financial evolution of the Caja de Ahorros points to a shift in the focus of its operations from the working to the middle

classes. As Fernández Sánchez points out, the original plan envisaged that the funds deposited in the Caja would be absorbed by the pledge loans offered by the Monte de Piedad to the working classes. However, the success of the Caja de Ahorros created a surplus of deposits which the Monte de Piedad could not invest. In order to place this surplus, the Caja expanded its financial operations by investing in securities such as safe government bonds and by offering securities-based loans aimed at the middle classes through the Monte de Piedad. These operations soon superseded the original charitable ones in terms of invested capital (Fernandez Sánchez 2004: 3; 18-19). Martínez Soto and Bahamonde and Toro maintain that this created a contradiction between the supposed charitable objectives of the Caja and its actual operations, with financial interests more akin to those of a normal bank (Martínez Soto 2006: 26-28; Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 139). As Bahamonde and Toro note, the situation brought the Marqués de Grijalba to denounce, in a speech at the Senate in 1890, that the Monte de Piedad had been transformed from a ‘modesta casa de préstamos gratuitos sobre prendas’ into a ‘banco de préstamos sobre efectos públicos a los banqueros ricos de la Corte’ (Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 139). It is interesting to note that, in *Misericordia*, Benina’s saving instinct becomes essential for her mistress’s survival but it does not prevent her own indigence at the end of the novel.

Benina’s commendable saving habit is humorously presented as inseparable from her other and less savoury habit of *sisá* or petty theft:

tenía el vicio del descuento, que en cierto modo, por otro lado, era la virtud del ahorro. Difícil expresar dónde se empalmaban y confundían la virtud y el vicio. La costumbre de escatimar una parte grande o chica de lo que se le daba para la compra, el gusto de guardarla, de ver cómo crecía lentamente su caudal de perras, se sobreponían en su espíritu a todas las demás costumbres, hábitos y placeres. Había llegado a ser el sisar y el reunir como cosa instintiva, y los actos de este linaje se diferenciaban poco de las rapiñas y escondrijos de la urraca. (*Misericordia*: 123)

In this way, the narrator links two practices associated to servants. As seen previously, female servants formed one of the largest groups among the Caja de Ahorros’s depositors. On the other hand, the *sisá* was one of the problems which social commentators often associated with domestic service, as Fuentes Peris notes

(Fuentes Peris 2003: 187). Arenal, for instance, recommends that families of middle or lower-middle income abstain from introducing a servant into the house for the reason that ‘su sostenimiento es oneroso, a veces ruinoso, para gente que no está muy bien acomodada: por la manutención; por el salario; por lo que derrocha; por lo que sisa’ (*El pauperismo*: 255). Clearly, Benina’s position at Doña Paca’s household also reverses Arenal’s conventional view of domestic servants as regards petty theft. As Benina is Doña Paca’s benefactor, her habit of *sisa* is tinged with irony.

Thus Benina’s interconnected habits of saving and *sisa* must also be considered in relation to her sense of charity towards her mistress. These three traits come together when, during the narration of Doña Paca’s economic descent, the narrator recounts how Benina was able to avert the risk of eviction through the generous gift of all her life savings in the Monte or, more accurately, the Caja de Ahorros:

Por cierto que hubo no pocas dificultades para evitar un desahucio vergonzoso: todo se arregló con la generosa ayuda de Benina, que sacó del Monte sus economías, importantes tres mil y pico de reales, y las entregó a la señora, estableciéndose desde entonces comunidad de intereses en la adversa como en la próspera fortuna. Pero ni aun en aquel rasgo de caridad hermosa desmintió la pobre mujer sus hábitos de sisa, y descontó un pico para guardarlo cuidadosamente en su baúl, como base de un nuevo montepío, que era para ella necesidad de su temperamento y placer de su alma.

(*Misericordia*: 122-123)

The amount which Benina gives to Doña Paca, and which can be assumed to be just under one thousand *pesetas*, represents her only insurance against ill health and old age. In order to put this amount into perspective, it is worth considering that, according to an article of 1881 published in *La Epoca*, a maid in a middle-class household could expect an annual salary of 460 *reales* (Bahamonde and Toro 1978: 237). However, as Sarasúa points out, servants’ salaries varied considerably, due to the personal and informal nature of the contract (Sarasúa 1994: 224). Benina’s act of generosity reveals the extent to which she considers her fate to be inextricably intertwined with that of her mistress. It also highlights the injustice of Benina’s dismissal at the end of the novel, as well as the pettiness of the two *reales* a day

which Juliana assigns to her as alms (*Misericordia*: 355). During another period of acute economic crisis, Benina must again sacrifice to Doña Paca the much humbler savings which she had accumulated as the product of her ‘descuentos y sisas’ (*Misericordia*: 124). However, of the the seventeen *duros* (85 *pesetas*) which she had managed to gather, Benina only hands twelve and a half *duros* to her mistress. The remaining four and a half *duros* are thus left as the basis for a new deposit which, assumably, will eventually revert to her mistress. The absurdity of this combination of *sisas* and charity is laid out by the narrator: ‘No podía remediarlo. Descontaba de su propia caridad y sisaba de su limosna’ (*Misericordia*: 124). It is interesting to note that there is a parallelism between Benina’s use of savings and her use of lies. Thus the circular movement with which Benina constantly turns the product of her *sisas* into another *montepío* for Doña Paca’s benefit is replicated in the way Benina turns old lies into new ones, also for the sake of her mistress. This creativity in the handling of lies is possible owing to ‘su mente, fecunda para el embuste, y su memoria felicísima para ordenar las mentiras que antes había dicho y hacerlas valer en apoyo de la mentira nueva’ (*Misericordia*: 142).

The Compensatory Power of Dreams

As noted previously, Benina’s economic support of Doña Paca and her charitable lies concerning Don Romualdo are interconnected. This connection is made explicit by the narrator at the beginning of the novel, in his comment that while Doña Paca ‘tomaba los alimentos adquiridos con el duro del ciego Almudena, digería fácilmente los piadosos engaños que su criada y compañera le iba metiendo en el cuerpo’ (*Misericordia*: 137). As Bauer notes, Benina’s fictional stories are often linked to economic needs (Bauer 1992: 237). Such is also the case with the pitiful tales of utter destitution with which she hopes to attract the charity of passers-by while begging: ‘que acababa de salir del hospital, que su marido se había caído de un andamio, que no había comido en tres semanas, y otras cosas que partían los corazones’ (*Misericordia*: 214-215). For Bauer, a parallel is established in *Misericordia* between narrative and monetary exchanges through Benina’s role as story-teller and money-manager. As he also points out, Benina’s invention of Don Romualdo is only one the many instances in *Misericordia* in which fiction compensates for the

characters' economic, social or emotional dissatisfactions (Bauer 1992: 236-237). Almudena's fables of King Samdei and Frasquito's and Obdulia's memories and dreams of a glorious past also play this compensatory role in their lives. So when Almudena narrates the story of his encounter with King Samdai to Benina, Pedra and Diega, the three women remain sceptical at first, but 'acabaron creyendo, por estímulo de sus almas, ávidas de cosas gratas y placenteras, como compensación de la miseria bochornosa en que vivían' (*Misericordia*: 171). Ponte and Obdulia, for their part, possess a '*riqueza* inagotable' in the midst of their penury, one which consists of 'la facultad preciosa de desprenderse de la realidad, cuando querían, trasladándose a un mundo imaginario, todo bienandanzas, placeres y dichas' (*Misericordia*: 179). As regards other compensatory techniques, it is worth noting Benina's attitude towards Pedra's alcoholism. On seeing the inebriated Pedra sleeping off her hangover at the room which Pedra shares with Almudena, Benina tells him: 'y a esta pobre desgraciada, cuando despierte, no la pegues, hijo, ¡Pobrecita! Cada uno, por el aquel de no sufrir, se emborracha con lo que puede: ésta con el aguardentazo, otros con otra cosa' (*Misericordia*: 108).

The dreams of wealth redistribution in which the characters often indulge also form part of their compensatory escapism. For instance, while discussing Don Carlos's wealth at the *café económico*, Benina and Almudena wonder about the 'sinnúmero de pobres que podrían ser felices con toda aquella *guita*, que a D. Carlos le venía tan ancha' (*Misericordia*: 156). Almudena's assertion that Don Carlos's wealth can be easily transferred to Benina through a spell provokes a hopeful curiosity in Benina: 'Siempre fue Benina algo supersticiosa [...] además, la miseria despertaba en ella el respeto de las cosas inverosímiles y maravillosas' (*Misericordia*: 157). However, she remains humorously cautious about the idea: 'Pero yo [...] dudo mucho que le den a una tanto dinero, sin más ni más. Que para socorrer a los pobres, un suponer, se quite a los ricos medio millón, o la mitad de medio millón, pase; pero tantas, *tantismas* talegas para nosotros... no, esa no cuela' (*Misericordia*: 160). Doña Paca also indulges in dreams of reversing her fortune overnight, as when she asks Benina if there could be a 'sortilegio por el cual nosotras pudiéramos pasar de la escasez a la abundancia; por el cual todo eso que en el mundo está de más en tantas manos avarientas, viniese a las nuestras que nada poseen' (*Misericordia*: 209). Like Doña Paca, Benina can only envisage an improvement in

the life of the poor through a miracle, and in this respect she oscillates between cheerful optimism and despair. While discussing the possibility that Doña Paca's dream about an inheritance may become true, Benina says: 'digo que no hay justicia, y para que la *haiga*, soñaremos todo lo que nos dé la gana, y soñando, un suponer, traeremos acá la justicia' (*Misericordia*: 231). However, at the landfill near Las Cambroneras, where Benina goes in search of Almudena, she responds with despondency to the idea that there may be money buried on the ground: 'No, no: aquí no hay salvación para el pobre; y eso de sacar tesoros, o de que le traigan a uno las carretadas de piedras preciosas, me parece a mí que es conversación' (*Misericordia*: 275).

Also among the poor's compensatory dreams is the Lottery. References to this abound in the novel, often in relation to redistribution and social justice. After Almudena helps Benina to obtain her *duro*, she praises him by saying: 'Mereces que te caiga la lotería, y si no te cae, es porque no hay justicia en la tierra ni en el cielo' (*Misericordia*: 108). The Lottery is presented in *Misericordia* as a dream as fabulous as Almudena's stories of King Samdei, as it is made clear by the narrator's humorous rendering of Benina's thoughts:

pensaba que toda la tracamundana del conjuro de Almudena era simplemente un engaña-bobos. Más probable veía el éxito en la lotería, que no es, por más que digan, obra de la ciega casualidad, pues ¿quién nos dice que no anda por los aires un ángel o demonio invisible que se encarga de sacar la bola del gordo, sabiendo de antemano quién posee el número? Por esto se ven cosas tan raras: verbigracia, que se reparte el premio entre multitud de infelices que se juntaron para tal fin, poniendo éste un real, el otro una peseta.

(*Misericordia*: 234)

In order to buy a *participación*, Benina goes in search of Pulido, who does 'combinaciones de jugadas lotéricas' with the owner of the milk donkey establishment. The esoteric character of the Lottery is humorously emphasized by the narrator through a description of the *burreros*'s probability calculations and the blind beggar's authority concerning the choice of number: 'Pulido, examinando el caso con su poderosa vista interior [...] remachó el convencimiento de los burreros, y en tono profético les dijo que tan cierto era que saldría premiado el 5.005, como

que hay Dios en el Cielo y Diablo en los Infiernos' (*Misericordia*: 235). As Font de Villanueva points out, esoteric Lottery manuals had been frequently published since the Lottery's establishment in 1763 and remained popular throughout the nineteenth century. They described methods for choosing numbers accurately, through means such as complicated number operations or dreams (Font de Villanueva 2009: 11-13). In *Ángel Guerra*, when the priest Mancebo hears of Fausto Babel's Lottery combination cards, which purportedly allow the user to 'calcular de antemano el número favorecido' (*AG II*: 329), his feelings are mixed: 'fluctuaba entre el escepticismo y la credulidad, y tan pronto veía en el cálculo lotérico uno de los mayores disparates [...] como la más grandiosa y practica invención' (*AG II*: 332).

The morality of the game was frequently debated throughout the nineteenth century, particularly in relation to the appropriateness of the State's monopoly on it (Font de Villanueva 2009: 23-25). It is important to take into account that the Lottery was conceived as a fiscal mechanism to address the deficit, and that, as Tortella points out, it was an important source of revenue (Tortella 2000: 183). As a consequence, many considered it to be a covert tax which, due to the popularity of the Lottery among the *clases populares*, fell more heavily on the poor. Among those who advocated the abolition of the Lottery on the grounds that it was an immoral tax were the prominent politicians Antonio Alcalá Galiano and Laureano Figuerola (Font de Villanueva 2009: 23-25). As Font de Villanueva notes, another idea which was often invoked against the Lottery was that it distracted workers from productive work (Font de Villanueva 2009: 24). In *Misericordia*, the narrator passes judgement on the game along these lines with the comment, in reference to the milk donkey business, that 'la afición se perpetuó, pues, en el establecimiento, formando hábito vicioso; y a la fecha de esta historia, con lo que los burreros llevaban gastado en quince años de jugadas, habrían podido triplicar el ganado asnal que poseían' (*Misericordia*: 235). Moreover, Benina spends two *pesetas* in *participaciones*, a sum which she can hardly afford and which could have been better employed, as she herself realises (*Misericordia*: 236). Thus the view which emerges from *Misericordia* is that the Lottery represents, as Garvía puts it, a 'gravamen sobre la desesperación' (Garvía 2015: 107).

An Alternative Economy for the Poor

Other than dreaming of wealth redistribution, the poor in *Misericordia* rely on a much more pragmatic system of informal lending for their subsistence. Almudena, Bernarda and La Pitusa, the brothel-keeper, all lend money to Benina when all formal means of obtaining credit are closed to her. Almudena's loan is without interest and can be considered an act of friendship. La Pitusa, for her part, helps Benina to get ten *duros* (200 *reales*) by allowing her to pawn two rings. As this jewellery does not belong to her, La Pitusa is in fact taking a serious risk with this loan. However, she acts under a sense of obligation, since, in the past, Benina herself had lent fifty *duros* (1000 *reales*) to La Pitusa without interest so that she could avoid prison (*Misericordia*: 221-222). Although Benina pays an interest of 'peseta por duro de rédito' on La Pitusa's loan, it is implied that the reason for this is Benina's delay in repaying, as La Pitusa does not seem to demand interest in the original arrangement (*Misericordia*: 222; 362). It is important to note that all the loans are duly repaid. Benina thinks that returning Almudena's *duro* promptly is important because 'bueno es tener con él palabra. Vendrán días malos, y él me servirá' (*Misericordia*: 155). In the same way, as Benina and La Pitusa recall, La Pitusa had returned Benina's money 'duro sobre duro' (*Misericordia*: 222), and Benina is in the process of slowly repaying La Pitusa when the novel ends (*Misericordia*: 362). This unofficial lending system constitutes a network of mutual support more akin to charity than business, and it offers a viable alternative to those left out of the mainstream economic system.

As Varey points out, acts of charity in *Misericordia* often come from unlikely sources (Varey 1970: 177-178). As well as these cases of non-profit lending, it is worth noting the case of La Pitusa's business partner *El comadreja*, who, after Ponte is found ill in the street, takes the impoverished gentleman to his establishment, where La Pitusa looks after him (*Misericordia*: 220-221). By contrast, when Benina brings the sick Ponte to her mistress's home in order to nurse him, Doña Paca doubts whether they are in a position to perform acts of charity, in view of their own poverty: '¿Has pensado bien en la carga que nos hemos echado encima?...Tú que no puedes, llévame a cuestras, como dijo el otro. ¿Te parece que estamos nosotras para meternos a protectoras de nadie?' (*Misericordia*: 228). As Doña Paca is totally dependent on Benina's charity, her words have an ironic effect.

Following Pascual Izquierdo, Fuentes observes that the proverb used by Doña Paca is also the title of Goya's etching *Capricho 42*, in which a person is carrying a donkey on his back. Among the contemporary commentaries about *Los caprichos* which are included in the Manuscrito de la Biblioteca Nacional, there is this explanation of *Capricho 42*: 'Los pobres y las clases útiles de la sociedad son las que llevan a cuestas a los burros, o cargan con todo el peso de las contribuciones del estado' (Carrete Parrondo 2007: 358). Fuentes argues that this interpretation of Goya's etching corresponds with the allegorical social theme of *Misericordia* (*Misericordia*: 228-229, note 12). It is worth noting that, as Bell points out, the idea of social parasitism in the novel is not connected to the alms-receiving beggars at the bottom of society. Rather, this idea is suggested in relation to characters such as Don Carlos, who, as we have seen, enriched himself by milking the system, and also took advantage of Doña Paca's poverty in order to buy her possessions at a bargain price (Bell 2006: 144). From this perspective, Doña Paca is presented as both a victim of social parasites like Don Carlos and the usurers who devour her wealth (*Misericordia*: 120-121; 145) and as a social parasite herself, with her complete reliance on her lower-class maid.

Conclusion

The dream of becoming wealthy overnight in which the poor of *Misericordia* indulge does indeed come true, but only for the middle-class Doña Paca and Ponte and through the very conventional means, for that class, of an inheritance. Benina, for her part, by losing her connections with Doña Paca's household, becomes firmly established in the world of mendicity, living with Almudena in a 'choza' in the outskirts of Madrid, and relying for her subsistence on street begging and her private arrangements with Don Romualdo and Juliana. Critics often stress Benina's 'conformidad' with her fate (*Misericordia*: 352), but, as Wright points out, Benina also shows fierce defiance of the rules of society. This is apparent in her rejection of official charitable institutions and, notably, in her unconventional association with Almudena (wright 2010: 18). Benina's awareness of her own moral high-ground is a consolation, but it is not presented as a substitute for social justice. As the narrator indicates, her spiritual triumph comes after losing 'la batalla en el terreno material'

(*Misericordia*: 351). By contrast, Doña Paca's and Ponte's recovered social positions come in tandem with the collapse of her vital energy and his death respectively. Thus the backward-looking rentist middle class which they represent, and which Benina had helped to maintain, is presented as non-viable. Galdós does not offer clear solutions to the social problems which are presented in this novel. Rather, as in the other *novelas contemporáneas* discussed in this thesis, Galdós encourages the reader to reflect critically on the fabric of contemporary Spanish society. However, it is significant that Galdós ends *Misericordia* with Juliana's psychological ailment and her cure at the hands of Benina. With Juliana's moral redemption suggested in this way, the novel leaves the door open to the emergence of a hybrid new middle class which may contribute to Spain's regeneration.

Final Concluding Remarks

This thesis has analysed Galdós's critical engagement, in seven of his *Novelas contemporáneas* from the 1880s and 1890s, with some of the fundamental social transformations which were brought about by the development of a liberal political system and a capitalist economy in Spain. As I have shown, Galdós represents the Restoration bourgeoisie within a historical perspective, linking its wealth and social power to such policies of the liberal state as the *desamortización*, and to the speculative possibilities of a market economy. Chapter 1 has highlighted the way in which José María, the narrator of *Lo prohibido*, traces the origin of many of the fortunes which form his social milieu to the economic expansion of the 1850s and 1860s. The speculative activities in which these characters engage, such as the stock market, government concessions, the railway, private lending and investment in real state, coincide with what modern social historians consider to be the backbone of nineteenth-century Spanish economic development. Through the account given by José María, moreover, Galdós stresses the corruption which permeates this world of high finances. In this way, the abuse of government concessions and involvement in the Cuban slave trade and plantation system are to be found at the root of some of *Lo prohibido*'s spectacular fortunes. This corruption in Madrid's business world has its parallel in the hypocrisy and self-interest which guides many of the novel's personal relationships. The search for social status is the main motivating force for many of the bourgeois characters in this novel, and the frantic and competitive consumerism in which they engage, often financed through credit, becomes a means towards realising their social aspirations. It is, indeed, the need to make a social display of status which fuels lending, one of the most profitable speculative activities in Galdós's *Novelas contemporáneas*.

In the four *Torquemada* novels, which have been studied in Chapter 2, the narrative of Torquemada's social ascent, from his working-class origins as a small-scale usurer to becoming both a prominent member of the Madrid financial elite and an aristocrat, parallels the development of capitalism in Spain. As in *Lo prohibido*, the activities which enrich Torquemada are speculative and often corrupt. It is thus ironic that he presents himself as a self-made entrepreneur in the speech which he

gives at a banquet held in his honour. Through the social tensions which result from Torquemada's marriage to the ruined aristocrat Fidela, Galdós explores another aspect of Restoration society: the integration of members of the bourgeoisie into the aristocracy, either through marriage or ennoblement. The reluctant adoption of a full aristocratic way of life by the ultra-capitalist Torquemada saps his vital energy and ultimately results in his demise. There is irony in the process whereby Torquemada profits from his loans to the ruined aristocracy, confiscates the aristocracy's status-loaded possessions, marries into it, takes from it its high place in society but is finally defeated and absorbed by it. Galdós points here to the persistence of Old Regime social structures in the new capitalist society, a process which recent social historians have also highlighted.

In *Ángel Guerra*, which has been analysed in Chapter 3, as well as in the fourth of the *Torquemada* novels, *Torquemada y San Pedro*, the question of the social effects of the disentanglement process of the 1830s and 1850s becomes central to the narrative. The social ascent of both Ángel's family and Torquemada is linked to this emblematic liberal policy. In *Torquemada y San Pedro*, charity is presented by the priest Gamborena as a way both to redirect Torquemada's fortune towards the poor, thus redressing the effects of the *desamortización*, and to enable the salvation of Torquemada's soul. In *Ángel Guerra*, class disaffection and class guilt drive Ángel to seek ways to repair the detrimental social impact which his family's enrichment through the purchase of Church property may have caused. He tries to achieve this through political revolution first and a strangely seditious form of religion second. In this way, Ángel's search for spiritual fulfilment goes hand in hand with his striving for social justice. I have argued that, through Ángel's spiritual journey, Galdós offers a caustic reflection on the social and religious conflicts and ideologies which shape the liberal society of his time.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, the themes of wealth distribution and social justice are further explored in *Misericordia*, a novel in which the world of the dispossessed takes centre stage. There is one scene here which summarizes ironically the contradictions of Spain's developing capitalism: sitting at the base of Mendizábal's statue at Plaza del Progreso, the beggar Benina ponders over her money troubles while, around her, both people and money flow at a frantic pace. In this work Galdós exposes the inadequacy of both private charity and the liberal

system of *beneficencia*. The social question is presented in *Misericordia* from the perspective of pauperism, rather than from that of labour; and as I have argued, this partly reflects the social mould of a non-industrial city such as Madrid. Moreover, Galdós emphasizes in this novel the tension between old and new social structures which characterizes Restoration Spain. Thus the beggars' engagement with contemporary discourses presents a humorous contrast with their traditional acceptance of poverty, and, in the case of Pulido, with his reasoned defence of the Old Regime social system. One of the fundamental ironies which underlie the novel is that, by means of secret begging, a humiliation for her, the servant Benina protects her mistress's middle-class social dignity. Her internalization of old social structures helps in this way to support the status quo. Yet Benina is undoubtedly the victim of the same middle-class ethos which she unwittingly helps to perpetuate. Crucially, the idea of social parasitism is connected in this novel not to the beggars, but to middle-class characters such as Doña Paca and Don Carlos.

Galdós does not offer solutions, political or otherwise, to the social problems which he presents in his *Novelas contemporáneas*. Moreover, as I have argued throughout this thesis, any clear moral message which could be inferred from the novels analysed here is ultimately undermined by the humour and irony which pervades them. Galdós's engagement in his novels, both with Spain's contemporary history and with the diverse currents of thought which shaped that history, encourages the reader to reflect critically on the fabric of Restoration society. With the interdisciplinary approach which I have adopted in this thesis, I have aimed to cast light on certain socio-economic aspects of these novels which may have been more obvious to a contemporary reader in the late nineteenth century than to a modern reader in the twenty-first. I believe that this kind of contextual analysis enhances our understanding of Galdós, and that it reveals that his work is relevant to us today, particularly since we, like him, live in a time which is marked by a perception of profound change and uncertainty.

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