# THE SUBVERSIVE ANGEL IN *FORTUNATA Y JACINTA*

Catherine Jagoe

> *La suave y dulce condición de la mujer . . . [es] haber nacido para ser el ángel del hogar doméstico.*
>
> Sinués de Marco, *El ángel del hogar* (1: 228-29)

> *Soy ángel . . . ¿no lo ve? . . . .*
> *¿No lo sabe? . . . Soy ángel . . . yo también . . .* mona del Cielo.
>
> Pérez Galdós, *Fortunata y Jacinta* (2: 528)

*Fortunata y Jacinta* centers on a *pueblo* woman who becomes increasingly obsessed with being an angel. At the end of the novel, Fortunata, the "pájara mala"–fallen woman, former prostitute, and unrepentant adulteress–dies exclaiming: "soy ángel." The final chapter is one of the most complex and baffling episodes in the "dos historias de casadas." How one chooses to interpret the heroine's last remarks is crucial to the larger and much debated question of her overall trajectory in the novel, on which opinion has tended to be polarized. Gilman (*Galdós* 244), Goldman ("Feijoo and Mr. Singer" 105), Sinnigen (50), and Ribbans (68) see her, in different ways, as ascending, spiritually or socially; Blanco Aguinaga ("Having No Option" 32), Rodríguez-Puértolas (58), and Zahareas, on the other hand, see a descent into tragedy and failure. Despite their apparently fundamental differences of view, critics on both sides of the debate have shared the same vaguely defined premise that when Fortunata and other characters talk of her becoming an "angel," they mean Christian redemption. [1] But in the nineteenth century, the purely religious meaning of the angel had become overlaid with other less timeless and universal meanings arising from the gender and class relations of the period. My contention is that Fortunata's claim to be an angel should be read in the light of the nineteenth-century ideal of womanhood known as the *ángel del hogar* or "Angel in the House." Bringing to the text our knowledge of the way the angel metaphor was used in Galdós's culture provides an important new insight not only into Fortunata's death scene but also into the novel as a whole. There is new reason to support the view that Fortunata's biography is one of ascension, this time from a feminist critical perspective, for one of the central concerns of *Fortunata y Jacinta* is the subversion of the patriarchal stereotype of the Angel in the House. [2]

The rise to power of the middle classes in nineteenth-century Spain entailed, as Susan Kirkpatrick has shown, the articulation of a new system of gender relations. One of the most visible symptoms of the hegemony of bourgeois culture was the ubiquitousness of the concept of the *ángel del hogar,* which became common currency in Spanish print culture after the appearance of Pilar Sinués de Marco's feminine conduct manual of that name, first published in 1859. The *ángel del hogar* was a meek, homebound, asexual, pious, and selfless creature. She inhabited the private, domestic sphere and lived entirely for husband and family:

one male writer states that "Dios, la familia y la casa, son los tres puntos en que se detiene su pensamiento" (Selgas y Carrasco 215). By the end of the century, eulogistic descriptions of the angelic woman are found in a vast panoply of different forms of writing: pamphlets, speeches, *folletines,* medical texts, novels, poetry, and conduct manuals.[3] By the 1880s, the angel was indisputably the dominant model of femininity.

As Bridget Aldaraca has observed, the idea of woman as angel is inseparable from the notion that woman's proper place is in the home ("Ideology of Domesticity" 3). What makes the nineteenth century's restatement of the ancient imperatives of female subordination and enclosure unique is the sentimental idealization of the home and woman's function within it. A particular kind of language, characterized by flowery religious rhetoric, was evolved to describe the concept of the woman in the home. Feminine domesticity began to be euphemistically described as a sacred duty in phrases such as "la misión de la mujer," "el sacerdocio de la mujer." The image of the wife and mother was turned into an icon: home was typically referred to as a "templo" or "santuario" and woman as its guardian angel.

A crucial aspect of this conflation of religious rhetoric and gender construction was the fundamental redefinition of women's sexuality. Nancy Cott and Thomas Laqueur have described how, for the first time in western history, nineteenth-century women came to be defined as less capable of sexual feeling than men. Medical and social tracts predicating women's "innate" passionlessness or sexual anaesthesia began to circulate. The analogy between women and angels rested, fundamentally, on the belief in the sexlessness of both. The angel wife was supposed to love her husband with a tender friendship unsullied by passion: Cánovas del Castillo, the architect of the bourgeois oligarchy in the political sphere, acts as a spokesman for bourgeois sexual politics when he admonishes in his prologue to *Las mujeres españolas* that "no es el verdadero amor conyugal . . . pasion [sic] arrebatadora" (1: xii). Once the idea that women were innately less sexual and therefore more "virtuous" was established, it became common to envisage them as having a unique redemptive role. They were credited with special powers to save their erring menfolk from licentiousness: Cánovas praises the "superioridad moral inconmensurable" of the pure woman (1: xiii).

Paradoxically, alongside the chivalric deference to women's supposed moral superiority, ancient notions of the feminine role such as passivity and subordination to the male were restated in extreme terms. Model feminine behavior in the nineteenth century strikes the modern reader as passive to a masochistic degree. "Abnegation" became a watchword in the conduct works, and Sinués urged her women readers that "sea hija, esposa o madre, su destino y su misión en la tierra es siempre sufrir y resignarse" (*La mujer* 217). Despite the great redemptive powers credited to her, the angel's role was strictly subordinate; her existence was summed up in terms of her kinship role vis-à-vis (usually male) relatives. As early as 1857 Narciso Gay (23) vilifies the proponents of female emancipation and counterposes an image of the ideal woman as "hija, esposa y madre," a formula that was later to be repeated ad nauseam. Woman's life, stressed Sinués, was defined by its "carácter relativo," for a young girl was "destinada a . . . hacer la dicha y embellecer la vida de los seres que la rodean" (*El ángel* 2: 303).

Galdós published articles and novels in two women's magazines particularly involved in promoting the cult of the *ángel del hogar: La Guirnalda* and *La Madre y el Niño* (Simón Palmer, "Revistas" 439-40). His library contains copies of key works on the new role ascribed to women, by Severo Catalina, Michelet, Fernando de Castro, and Mrs. Sarah Ellis, who wrote a famous series of conduct manuals for British women. He published in the same journals as some of the most famous promoters of the new feminine ideal: in *El Imparcial,* as did Sinués; in *La Época,* alongside both Sinués and Faustina Sáez de Melgar; and in the *Revista de España,* with Patrocinio de Biedma (Andreu 165-66). He participated in the new genre of luxury encyclopaedic collections of essays on women, with a contribution in *Las españolas pintadas por los españoles* (Robert 36-47).

At the outset *Fortunata y Jacinta* positions its two main female characters in a way that appears to echo the bourgeois habit of dividing women into antithetical categories: the *ángel del hogar* and the fallen woman or *prójima.* Jacinta is represented, initially, as the asexually pure, chaste, submissive middle-class wife. The narrator stresses her delicacy, fragility, and chastity: "Jacinta era la pureza misma" (1: 202). Juanito describes his wife as an angel: "esposa mía, . . . ángel de mi salvación" (1: 231), "¡qué ángel!" (1: 293), and as a being who is morally superior to him. Fortunata, on the other hand, is associated from the first with passion rather than purity. The many and well-documented images of Fortunata as a bird when she first appears in the novel are important in terms of gender as well as class,[4] for the images of her as "gallina" and "ave" create an association with the concept of a "pájara," a word that bore the negative connotation of a loose woman, a "prójima." The connection between the bird imagery and Fortunata's fallen state is represented in the episode where Fortunata and Juanito meet for the first time. After the narrator has described her resemblance to a bird and her Eve-like offer of the egg, Fortunata rushes downstairs in a way that suggests to the watching Juanito and to the reader a breakneck fall: "al soltar aquel sonido, digno canto de tal ave, la moza se arrojó con tanta presteza por las escaleras abajo, que parecía rodar por ellas" (1: 184). From the beginning, the lower-class Fortunata is already apparently typecast as eroticized, fallen, a "pájara," the antithesis of Jacinta, the pure *ángel del hogar.* However, the text sets up this hackneyed polarity only to subvert it. The initial conformity to the culture's two related stereotypes of femininity is not long maintained.

The narrative begins to disrupt the equation of Jacinta with the Angel in the House by the end of part 1. In the first place, any notion that the "angelical" Jacinta is asexual is difficult to sustain. As Ricardo Gullón points out, "en la alcoba su relación con Juan no es distinta de la de Fortunata" (144). Harriet Turner has demonstrated how Jacinta's disturbing dream at the opera is plainly laden with symbolic sexual desire (19-21). The fact that the angelic Jacinta is sterile is made into a major focus of attention, in such a way as to highlight the paradoxical demands of a culture that required women to be at once "naturally" asexual and fertile. In addition, Galdós records with great psychological insight the pitifully counterproductive effect of Jacinta's determination to fulfill the angelic mission of redeeming her husband, a popular theme in the conduct literature. Jacinta behaves like a model woman, but her chaste fidelity and long-suffering tolerance add an unexpected spice to Juanito's philandering: "no podía contentarse con gustar la belleza comprada o conquistada . . . ; quería gustar

también la virtud, no precisamente la vencida, que deja de serlo, sino la pura, que en su pureza misma tenía para él su picante" (1: 285-86).

At the end of part 1 the reader is introduced to another middle-class female character who blurs the polarity between the angel and the fallen woman: Guillermina Pacheco, who is presented as a "good" woman–a saint, no less–but who is patently not an Angel in the House. Despite the fact that she devotes her time to "feminine" activities such as darning, running a home for orphans, and the moral improvement of society, Guillermina is not married, submissive, or domesticated, even though, like the writers of the conduct manuals, she advocates all these values. In fact, she spends her time in other people's houses or on the streets and manifests distinctly masculine characteristics ("un espíritu con ideas propias y con iniciativas varoniles" [1: 264]). The narrative representation of Guillermina becomes increasingly double-edged as her authoritarianism and her class bias are brought indirectly to the reader's attention by a narrator whose admiration of Guillermina is, on the surface, unquestioning.

In part 2 the emphasis shifts from the "good" to the "fallen" woman, from Jacinta to Fortunata and her relations with Maxi and the Rubín family. It is Maxi who first paradoxically identifies the fallen Fortunata as an angel: on meeting her he is bewitched by "aquel semblante que le parecía angelical" (1: 465), and he says to himself: "¡Si es un ángel!" (1: 466). He becomes obsessed with the idea of redeeming Fortunata from prostitution and making her his wife. Surprisingly, Fortunata the prostitute exerts a stronger redemptive and transformative influence upon Maxi than Jacinta, the angel, upon Juan: "No era ya el mismo hombre . . . . [A]quella pasión . . . le removía y le transfiguraba" (1: 468).

The validity of the Rubín family's desire to transform Fortunata from a *pájara* into an *ángel del hogar* is undermined by the narrator, who exposes their vested personal interests, such as those of Doña Lupe: "se pirraba por proteger, dirigir, aconsejar y tener alguien sobre quien ejercer dominio" (1: 582). He also comments sarcastically on the engaging but absurd romanticism that motivates Maxi: "los disparates y el teje maneje de unas aventuras generalmente muy tiernas, muy por lo fino, con abnegaciones, sacrificios, heroísmos y otros fenómenos sublimes del alma" (1: 461). Maxi and Nicolás Rubín stress the need for Fortunata to renounce passion and desire if she is to become a respectable middle-class lady. Nicolás tells her: "Ilusionarse con un caballerete porque tenga los ojos así o asado, porque tenga el bigotito de esta manera, el cuerpo derecho y el habla dengosa, es propio de hembras salvajes. Amar de ese modo no es amar, es perversión, es vicio, hija mía" (1: 564-65). In the interview between Nicolás and Fortunata, the narrator appears to endorse the middle-class characters' point of view with descriptions of Fortunata that echo Nicolás's prejudiced perceptions of her, such as "la Samaritana," "la prójima," and "la penitente" (1: 562-66). But this middle-class condemnation of Fortunata is simultaneously negated by the unremittingly unattractive presentation of Nicolás. The credibility of the bourgeois views on women's role that Nicolás expounds therefore suffers.

Fortunata is interned in the female reformatory of Las Micaelas in order to cultivate the angelic virtues of obedience, asexuality, and passivity, without which she cannot be accepted as a member of the middle classes. Galdós elicits the reader's disapprobation of the bourgeois feminine role by linking it with the experience of confinement: his narrator provides a graphic description of the

slowly rising brick wall that blocks out the women's view. The spell in Las Micaelas represents the highest point of social coercion applied to Fortunata to make her accept the ideology of domesticity. The coercion is initially successful, for it is in Las Micaelas that Fortunata shows her first signs of wishing to emulate the angelic Jacinta, who is, also appropriately, one of the principal benefactresses of the institution. Manolita describes her as the perfect wife: "una mujer muy mona; lo tenía todo, bondad, belleza, talento y virtud" (1: 622). The sight of Jacinta in Las Micaelas initiates in Fortunata a desire–which turns, by part 4, into an obsession–to be an "angel" too. She wishes to become Jacinta, "de modo que si le propusieran a la prójima, en aquel momento, transmigrar al cuerpo de otra persona, sin vacilar y a ojos cerrados habría dicho que quería ser Jacinta" (1: 625).

Fortunata at first imagines that the bourgeois insistence on the subordination of women of her class is a divinely inspired "idea blanca," a good, "white" idea, the color of purity. She envisages it as emanating from the Host, representative of the sacrificed body of Christ, with its peculiarly feminine message of redemptive victimhood. The Host preaches the same message as Pilar Sinués to her female readers in *El ángel del hogar:* "resignación y conformidad," feminine passivity. It tells her that Juan is married to an angel and that Fortunata can never aspire to legitimize her relation to him: "Es casado . . . con uno de mis ángeles hembras. ¿Te parece que no hay más que enviudar a un hombre para satisfacer el antojito de una corrida como tú?" (1: 635).

Mauricia "la Dura," however, disrupts Fotunata's internalization of the angelic role. The narrator's presentation of this wild and disorderly woman is double-edged:

> Aquella mujer singularísima, bella y varonil tenía el pelo corto y lo llevaba siempre mal peinado y peor sujeto. Cuando se agitaba mucho trabajando, las melenas se le soltaban, llegándole hasta los hombros, y entonces la semejanza con . . . [Napoleón] era perfecta. No inspiraba simpatías Mauricia a todos los que la veían; pero el que la viera una vez, no la olvidaba y sentía deseos de volverla a mirar. Porque ejercían indecible fascinación sobre el observador aquellas cejas rectas. . . . Su voz era bronca, más de hombre que de mujer, y su lenguaje vulgarísimo, revelando una naturaleza desordenada, con alternativas misteriosas de depravación y de afabilidad. (1: 607-08)

The narrator portrays Mauricia as depraved and disturbing, since like Guillermina, she is transgressively "varonil," but at the same time as gifted with a "poder diabólico . . . para conquistar corazones" (1: 629), to which both he and Fortunata reluctantly succumb.

By the end of part 2, the conventional dyptich of feminine characters, the pure woman versus the fallen, has been thoroughly disrupted. Jacinta and Guillermina stand revealed as only superficially angelic, for Jacinta is childless and sexual, and Guillermina is grasping, imperious, and undomestic. Likewise, although Mauricia and Fortunata are fallen women, they are not evil: Mauricia's personality is attractive, while Fortunata increasingly seems the most moral of all the characters in the novel. Galdós creates a curious labyrinth of connections between the four women. Mauricia, who is interned in Las Micaelas by Guillermina, was brought up as a servant in the Pacheco household. Mauricia's child Adoración has been quasi-adopted by Jacinta. Fortunata is the mistress of Jacinta's husband. Furthermore, in the crucible of Fortunata's mind, the apparent gulfs between them are dissolved, for in her dreams "transmigraban recíproca-

mente, tomando Jacinta el exterior de Fortunata y Fortunata el exterior de Jacinta" (1: 626). On a later occasion she will dream that she is imbued with the spirit of Guillermina, a Guillermina who mysteriously embodies the dead Mauricia: "Sentíala [a Guillermina] dentro de sí, como si se la hubiera tragado, cual si la hubiera tomado en comunión. . . . [L]legó a figurarse que de los restos fríos de Mauricia salía volando una mariposita, la cual mariposita se metía dentro de la *rata eclesiástica* y la transformaba." The narrator enigmatically draws the reader's attention to this destruction of binary dualities: "¡Cosa más rara! ¡El mal extremado refundiéndose así y reviviendo en el bien más puro!" (2: 237).

Fortunata leaves Las Micaelas temporarily convinced that the angelic role, which involves the renunciation of desire and marriage to Maxi, is morally right. However, this unquestioning acceptance on Fortunata's part of middle-class gender ideology and the feminine role of passive object is short-lived. A change in the trajectory of the heroine occurs at the center of the novel at the end of part 2. Now released from the reformatory and married to Maxi, Fortunata experiences a sensation of freedom. She illicitly goes for a walk alone, savoring as she does so the pleasure of the liberty she is taking, just as she savors the dates she has bought to eat along the way. From the conjunction of these two satisfied appetites comes her awakening to the patterns operating in her life. As Sinnigen has observed, she has a moment of epiphany as she realizes that hitherto she has played the role of object, matter to be shaped by others. She begins to envisage at least the possibility of being subject, and not object, of her own history:

> alguien la sacó de aquel su primer molde para lanzarla a vida distinta; después la trajeron y la llevaron diferentes manos. Y por fin, otras manos empeñáronse en convertirla en señora. La ponían en un convento para moldearla de nuevo, después la casaban . . . y tira y dale. Figurábase ser una muñeca viva, con la cual jugaba una entidad invisible, desconocida, y a la cual no sabía dar nombre.
>
> Ocurrióle si no tendría ella *pecho* alguna vez, quería decir iniciativa . . . si no haría alguna vez lo que le saliera *de entre sí.* (1: 686)

It is important not to simplify Fortunata's role in the novel to that of a figurehead for the working class, for she is also a woman, and her adoption of a more active role from this moment on is crucial for that reason. The novel that had appeared to promise the conventional moral fable of the redemption of a fallen woman into an angel becomes instead a female *Bildungsroman.* For *Fortunata y Jacinta* traces the passage of the heroine from a childlike, passive state to autonomy and responsibility. As in other nineteenth-century novels of this genre, such as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary,* Kate Chopin's *The Awakening,* and George Eliot's *Middlemarch,* a crucial stage in the heroine's path to maturity is the realization of the way her inner aspirations are being thwarted by the limitations that gender roles impose. Fortunata now begins to resist consciously her categorization as fallen and sinful woman and to aspire to be an "angel" in a different way.

Fortunata's move from object to subject is shown in her appropriation of the very language that has up to now served to marginalize her. Instead of being the passive medium of others' aspirations and receptacle of their definitions, she becomes agent and definer herself, a spectacle that violates the gender prescriptions that governed male-authored fictional representations of women in the

nineteenth century. From the moment of her awakening, Fortunata begins to subvert the language of patriarchal society. She legitimizes her own position by implicitly claiming the position of Juanito's "wife": "mi marido eres tú . . . todo lo demás . . . ¡papas!" (1: 690). Fortunata struggles to apprehend and redefine the meanings of key words in her life, such as *honradez, ángel,* and *esposa.* The novel, subversively, does not present these concepts as self-explanatory, transparent, natural givens. Rather, it presents them as questionable and shifting.

In the episode of Fortunata's relationship with Feijoo in part 3, Galdós absolves Fortunata of moral blame for taking yet another lover by stressing the harsh economic reason for her conduct. Even the middle-class narrator overturns the bourgeois tendency to blame prostitution on the "innate" promiscuity of working-class women when he links Fortunata's unchastity explicitly to financial hardship. Feijoo himself mocks her desire to be "honrada": "eso de la honradez es muy bonito. . . . No hay nada que se diga tan fácilmente y que luego resulte más difícil en la práctica. . . . Usted, compañera, no tiene ahora más remedio que aceptar el amparo de un hombre" (2: 98). Thanks in part to her association with the cynical Feijoo, Fortunata's own attitudes to herself start to evolve. She comes to the conclusion that she is not sinful: "Si yo no soy mala–pensaba–. ¿Qué tengo yo de malo aquí *entre mí*? Pues nada" (2: 100).

This vision of herself as a good woman is the start of Fortunata's rebellion against the social ideal of womanhood. Paradoxically, she asserts her own claim to be an angelic woman precisely when she begins to behave least submissively. The fact that Fortunata for most of the novel depends upon prostitution and male "protection" in order to survive makes her an impossible candidate for the role of "angel" in the conventional sense of the word. Neither chaste nor, it turns out, submissive, she is the very opposite of an angel: a fallen or loose woman. Her claims to be angelic therefore amount to a new definition of the good woman. She decides that physical chastity is irrelevant and that what counts is her passionate and unswerving faithfulness to Juanito Santa Cruz.

The theme of her own and Jacinta's rival claims to angelhood remains present in her mind throughout parts 3 and 4. At first she is merely scornful of Jacinta's angelic nature: "¿que es un ángel? Pues que lo sea" (2: 207). But her interior monologues reveal her growing belief that she may be able to become an angel: "¡Vaya con la *mona del Cielo*! Ea . . . no venga acá vendiendo mérito . . . ¡Y ángel me soy! Pues para que lo sepa, también yo, si me da la gana de ser ángel, lo seré, y más que usted, mucho más. Todas tenemos nuestro ángel en el cuerpo" (2: 211). Significantly, she speaks of being an angel as a specifically feminine attribute. A little later she dreams of performing a service of angelic abnegation for Maxi, wishing "que a Maxi le entrase una enfermedad asquerosa, repugnante y pestífera, de esas que ahuyentan hasta los más allegados. Ella, entonces, daría pruebas de ser tan ángel como otra cualquiera" (2: 221).

The second half of the novel poses the definition of the *ángel del hogar* as its central problem. Fortunata constantly wonders whether the definition of an angel can be stretched to include herself because of her qualities of love and motherhood. She goes so far as to call the rebellious and unangelic prostitute Mauricia an angel, as she laments her death: "Por más que digan, tú eras un ángel en la tierra" (2: 254). A great deal depends on establishing whether Jacinta has been unfaithful to Juanito, for, if so, Jacinta will be an imperfect angel, which will

strengthen Fortunata's own claims to the name. When Fortunata confronts Juanito himself with this idea at the end of part 3, he not unnaturally pours scorn on it and goes on to insult her, reminding her that she is not a "pure" woman like his wife. Fortunata demands ruefully: "Pero, Señor, ¿qué culpa tendré yo de que esa niña bonita sea ángel? Hasta la virtud sirve a darme a mí en la cabeza" (2: 369). Finally Fortunata asks herself an exasperated question which is emblematic of the whole antiideological process of the novel: "¿Pero qué demonios es esto de la virtud, que por más vueltas que le doy no puedo hacerme con ella y meterla en mí?" (2: 370).

Fortunata's many statements about being an angel in part 4 all refer to the questions of female fidelity and motherhood. Her declarations are noticeably contradictory and confusing, for she vacillates between believing and doubting that she is angelic. At times she claims that she too is already an angel, like Jacinta: "las dos somos ángeles, cada una a su manera" (2: 498); "yo soy tanto como ella por lo menos . . . Como no sea más" (2: 489). On another occasion this confidence collapses: "*Aquélla* es un ángel; yo otro ángel; digo, yo no . . ." (2: 481). She sometimes speaks of the "angel" as a future state, conditional only on hard work, which she may be able to attain: "Aquí donde usted me ve, amigo Ballester, yo también puedo ser ángel, poniéndome a ello. Todo está en ponerse" (2: 513).

It is significant that claiming to be an angel should lead Fortunata into so many contradictions. By this means Galdós deliberately draws attention to the paradoxical nature of the feminine ideal; the novel represents the perplexity and confusion, rather than the illumination, that the concept creates in the mind of an uneducated young woman. The ideal of the *ángel* appears in the text as a constantly shifting and opaque concept, as Fortunata struggles to live up to it. Her attempts to include herself in the category of angel lead to some bizarre claims on her part. For example, she says that in order to become an angel she must assault Aurora: "si no lo hago, Dios mío, me va a ser imposible ser ángel" (2: 515). This is highly ironic, given that the *ángel del hogar* was imaged as the epitome of meekness. After the attack Fortunata makes another blatantly unangelic assertion and defies the Samaniego family to destroy her "reputation": "por más que hagan esos perros, no me quitarán, Dios mío, que yo sea tan ángel como otra cualquiera. Que rabien, que rabien, porque lo seré, lo seré" (2: 516).

In part 3, chapter 7, "La idea . . . la pícara idea," Fortunata enunciates her subversive challenge to the "idea blanca," an idea that she describes to Guillermina as "una idea muy perra, una idea negra como las niñas de los ojos de Satanás" (2: 250). Fortunata believes that she has proved herself morally worthy through her love for Juanito and her ability to produce his son and heir, and she disregards the fact of her adultery which, in terms of nineteeth-century morality and gender roles, brands her as sinful. This manifesto for an alternative scheme of morality is deeply disturbing to the middle-class listeners, Guillermina and Jacinta. By claiming that her virtue as a woman is not necessarily synonymous with passionlessness, monogamy, and domesticity, Fortunata in effect challenges one of the central tenets of nineteenth-century bourgeois society. Guillermina tries to bring Fortunata's ideas into line with middle-class ideology, reminding her that "es pecado, y pecado horrible, desear el hombre ajeno" (2: 231) and urging her to accept her feminine role of sacrifice and passivity by giving up her

relationship with Juan: "¿Cuál es la mayor de las virtudes? La abnegación, la renuncia de la felicidad. ¿Qué es lo que más purifica a la criatura? El sacrificio. . . . Llénese usted de paciencia, cumpla todos sus deberes, confórmese, sacrifíquese" (2: 232-33).

Guillermina's reminder of the angelic role model fails to achieve its effect. In this confrontation Fortunata insists that her affair with Juanito does not constitute a sin and that her relationship to him is morally valid. The middle-class narrator is unable to resolve the mixture of fear and attraction that he feels towards Fortuna in this scene. He does not share Guillermina's unqualified horror of Fortunata at this point, for although he describes Fortunata as "la prójima" and as a dangerous and anarchic figure, he also represents her as beautiful, inspired, and surrounded by a metaphorical halo, the sign of saintliness:

> En la fisonomía de la prójima se encendió de improviso una luz vivísima. Fue como una aureola de inspiración que le envolvía toda la cara. Más hermosa que nunca, sacó de su cabeza un gallardísimo argumento, y se lo soltó a la otra como se suelta una bomba explosiva.
>
> ¡Pruuun! Guillermina se quedó atontada cuando oyó esta atrocidad:
>
> –¡Angelical! . . . sí, todo lo angelical que usted quiera; pero *no tiene hijos*. Esposa que no tiene hijos, no es tal esposa. . . .
>
> –Es idea mía–prosiguió la otra con la inspiración de un apóstol y la audacia criminal de un anarquista–. Dirá usted lo que guste; pero es idea mía, y no hay quien me la quite de la cabeza . . . Virtuosa, sí; estamos en ello; pero no le puede dar un heredero . . . Yo, yo, yo se lo he dado, y se lo puedo volver a dar . . .
>
> –Por Dios . . . cállese usted . . . no he visto otro caso . . . ¡Qué idea! . . . ¡Qué atrevimiento! Está usted condenada. (2: 247)

This passage provides a good example of the narrator's unsettling technique of juxtaposing conflicting narrative judgments in the same sentence, such as "la inspiración de un apóstol y la audacia criminal de un anarquista."

With its refusal to privilege conclusively any one point of view, *Fortunata y Jacinta* conforms to Catherine Belsey's definition of an "interrogative text," one which undermines the ideology that structures it:

> the world represented in the interrogative text includes what Althusser calls "an internal distance" from the ideology in which it is held, which permits the reader to construct from within the text a critique of this ideology. . . . [T]he interrogative text refuses a single point of view, . . . but brings points of view into unresolved collision or contradiction. It therefore refuses the hierarchy of discourses of classic realism, and no authorial or authoritative discourse points to a single position which is the place of the coherence of meaning. (92)

Fortunata ecstatically repeats on her deathbed: "yo también . . . soy ángel" (2: 527). We cannot easily equate her use of the term "ángel" here with Christian redemption, for, as Blanco Aguinaga has pointed out in "On 'The Birth,'" Fortunata dies unabsolved and therefore in a state of sin. In Fortunata's mind, an angel is identical to a "mona del Cielo," the term she has used all along to describe Jacinta. Furthermore, she implies that to be an angel is to be like the living Jacinta, rather than an other-worldly spirit. It seems more likely that Fortunata is announcing herself to be a virtuous woman. The true interest of this scene only emerges when we read these statements in the context of the feminized angel peculiar to nineteenth-century society. It is deeply ironic that Fortunata, who is conspicuously not a spotless "hija," "esposa," or "madre,"

should claim to be an *ángel del hogar:* she cites her devoted love, but the man she loves is not her husband; and her motherhood is of a child conceived in adultery. Fortunata at this point appropriates the middle-class moral vocabulary and redefines it according to her own terms. Wittingly or unwittingly she explodes the angelic paradigm by being who she is as she claims her right to the label, for she is neither passive, asexual, middle-class, nor confined.

Galdós deliberately shrouds the angel theme in confusion at the end of the novel. The narrator is torn about how to categorize Fortunata. He reiterates Guillermina's description of Fortunata as a "diabla" eight times in the pages preceding Fortunata's death scene; he repeatedly endorses the bourgeois vision of Fortunata as delirious or insane ("el falso gozo" [2: 493]; "con exaltación delirante" [2: 498]; "lo ofuscado que su espíritu estaba" [2: 515]; "veía los objetos desfigurados y se equivocaba a cada momento, creyendo ver lo que no existía" [2: 518]); and he appears to lend some credence to Padre Nones's final verdict on Fortunata as a "cabeza trastornada" (2: 528).[5] But he simultaneously undermines the negative judgment of Fortunata when he prefaces her death scene with the statement that she is now lucid: "la cabeza se le había serenado" (2: 519). When Estupiñá reiterates his employers' opinion that "esa mujer . . . es más mala que arrancada," the narrator observes with some irritation that he speaks "con oficiosidad sañuda" (2: 506). Later, he creates an ironic antithesis when he describes the dying Fortunata first as good and moral–"en aquella idea vaciaba, como en un molde, todo lo bueno que ella podía pensar y sentir" (2: 519)–and then, immediately afterwards, as "la diabla" (2: 520). During Fortunata's dying moments, when she repeats three times that she is an angel, his presentation of her is admiring rather than condemnatory. He compares her to a poet or a mystic:

> Entonces resplandeció en la cara de la infeliz señora de Rubín algo que parecía inspiración poética o religioso éxtasis, y vencida maravillosamente la prostración en que estaba, tuvo arranque y palabras para decir esto:
>
> –Yo también . . . ¿no lo sabe usted. . . ?, soy ángel. . . . . y en la cara le quedó una expresión de dicha inefable y reposada. (2: 527)

On the second affirmation of the statement "soy ángel," the narrator speaks of her as overcome by an "espíritu benigno" and then proceeds to describe the entrance of Padre Nones, whose mission is to make Fortunata recant, as an evil omen: "toda la estancia se llenó de una negrura triste y severa" (2: 528).

The ambiguous narrative style thus succeeds in undercutting the overt values of the narrator. It creates an unresolved conflict between two levels of opinion: on the one hand, the middle-class view that Fortunata is a sinful woman and that her belief that she is an angel is merely the product of a disordered mind, and, on the other, the opinion that she is in her own way a model woman and that her redefinition of the concept of the Angel is inspiring and attractive. The ambiguity continues after Fortunata's death. Segismundo asserts to the disbelieving Guillermina that Fortunata was, after all, an honest woman: "Era un ángel . . . digo, debía serlo, podría serlo. . . . [E]ra la persona más honrada y honesta que usted puede imaginar" (2: 529). He insists to Doña Lupe: "Era un ángel . . . Sí; no me vuelvo atrás, aunque usted se ría. . . . Un ángel a su manera" (2: 538). Finally,

Segismundo and Maxi proclaim over the dead woman's grave that she was an angel. The use of Maxi to issue this verdict on Fortunata's virtue adds an extra dimension of irony and ambiguity.

Blanco Aguinaga and Caudet believe that Fortunata has been coerced into accepting middle-class moral values by the end of the novel ("Having No Option" 32; Introducción 69). It may be useful to distinguish, once again, between gender and class on the question of whether Fortunata is, in the end, a victim or victor. In class terms there is no doubt that she serves bourgeois interests by producing a son to continue the Santa Cruz dynasty. Nevertheless, Fortunata does succeed in validating herself as a woman. On this level, the text suggests a victory by an unrepentant Fortunata, who is never browbeaten by Guillermina or the priest Nones into acceding to their categorization of her as a fallen and sinful woman. Guillermina receives Fortunata's declarations that she is an angel with a mixture of deep alarm and unease, not with the satisfaction one might expect if she were reiterating an acceptable idea. Guillermina urges her to recant: "reconozca usted que semejante idea era un error diabólico a fuerza de ser tonto, y prométame que ha de renegar de ella y que no la olvidará cuando el amigo Nones la confiese" (2: 527). But these repeated attempts at coercion fail: unlike Mauricia, Fortunata does not die a penitent but goes on affirming the "idea negra" that she is a pure woman.

Furthermore, it is clear that, thanks to Fortunata, Jacinta too departs from the oppressive role of the *ángel del hogar.* The male child who is passed between the two women provides tangible evidence of Juanito's duplicity and infidelity. Jacinta's attitude of angelic wifely subservience to her husband ends, finally, when she acquires the child:

> Entonces se vio que la continuidad de los sufrimientos había destruido en Jacinta la estimación a su marido, y . . . [le mostraba un] desdén no simulado, sino real y efectivo. . . . Claramente se lo dijo ella. . . .
>
> –Haz lo que quieras. Eres libre como el aire. Tus trapisondas no me afectan nada.
>
> Esto no era palabrería, y en las pruebas de la vida real, vio el Delfín que aquella voz iba de veras. (2: 533)

Whereas Juanito's objectifying gaze as he looked at Fortunata dominates the beginning of the story, the most powerful image at the end is the mutual gaze of the two women, Fortunata and Jacinta, both now subjects of their own lives: "bien podría ser que las dos mujeres se miraran de orilla a orilla, con intención y deseos de darse un abrazo" (2: 532).

Tony Tanner's analysis of the nineteenth-century novel is of especial relevance to the ambiguity of the narrative in *Fortunata y Jacinta.* Although the nineteenth-century realist novel as a genre, says Tanner, works towards affirming the bourgeois values of order, harmony, and stability, represented by marriage, it draws its narrative energy from protagonists who embody a potentially disruptive form of energy and who actually or implicitly threaten the organization of bourgeois society. He points out that the protagonists, who are often socially displaced or unplaced–orphans, prostitutes, adventurers–assert their right to "live by another rule." In *Fortunata y Jacinta,* the "other rule" that Fortunata proposes, the challenge to middle-class morality and gender roles, provides the central dynamic of the novel.

Even Fortunata's removal from the scene through the conventional narrative resolution of death cannot obliterate the unconventional nature of Galdós's representation of women. Although bourgeois patriarchal order is reaffirmed at the close, the leanings towards subversion of that order remain. Fortunata's death is surrounded by questions: is she deranged or lucid, and whose definition of her are we to accept? These open ends undermine the narrative closure imposed by her death. What Susan Kirkpatrick has termed the "liberating ironies" of the narrative technique ("More on the Narrator" 148) lends covert support to the departure of the two heroines from the prescribed feminine role. Beneath the overtly middle-class and patriarchal value system of the narrative lies a protofeminist statement. *Fortunata y Jacinta* implicitly criticizes the exploitative power of middle-class men like Juanito, while it subtly supports the attitudes of a heroine who appropriates and radically redefines the ideal of the *ángel del hogar*.

Northern Illinois University

## NOTES

[1] Gilman speaks in "Feminine and Masculine Consciousness" of her "self-proclaimed spiritual metamorphosis" (64), Kronik defines an angel as "pure and everlasting spirit" ("Fabrication of Fortunata" 68), and Sinnigen says that Fortunata is "tied to religious vocabulary on her death" (66).

[2] This essay aims to supply the need noted by Blanco Aguinaga ["Having No Option" 19) for a coherent feminist reading of *Fortunata y Jacinta,* although I do not agree with him that such a reading must be non-Marxist.

[3] Andreu and Aldaraca have provided excellent and fascinating analyses of the growth of the angel stereotype. Simón Palmer's series of bibliographies for primary sources list some two thousand works written on the subject of woman during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

[4] The bird imagery, originally noted by Gilman in "The Birth," and examined in further detail by Roger Utt, Agnes Moncy Gullón, and Stephen Hart, has been interpreted by Marxist critics such as Caudet as symbolizing the oppression of Fortunata-*pueblo* by Juanito and other members of the bourgeoisie (81).

[5] Padre Nones and Guillermina believe that Fortunata's statement cannot be treated seriously. But Guillermina has, all along, told Fortunata that she is a "cabeza trastornada" whenever she makes statements that threaten the bourgeois status quo, even at points when she is clearly lucid (e.g., 2: 490, 508).

## WORKS CITED


Aldaraca, Bridget. "*El ángel del hogar:* The Cult of Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century Spain." *Theory and Practice of Feminist Literary Criticism.* Ed. Gabriela Mora and Karen S. Van Hooft. Ypsilanti, Mich: Bilingual Press, 1982. 62-87.

———. "The Ideology of Domesticity: Galdós and the Spanish Tradition." Diss. Univ. of Washington, 1981.

Andreu, Alicia. *Galdós y la literatura popular.* Madrid: SGEL, 1982.

Belsey, Catherine. *Critical Practice.* New York: Methuen, 1980.

Blanco Aguinaga, Carlos. "Having No Option: The Restoration of Order and the Education of Fortunata." Goldman, *Conflicting Realities* 13-38.

———. "On 'The Birth of Fortunata.'" *Anales Galdosianos* 3 (1968): 13-24.

Cánovas del Castillo, Antonio. Prólogo. Guijarro 1: i-xv.

Caudet, Francisco. Introducción. *Fortunata y Jacinta.* By Benito Pérez Galdós. Madrid: Cátedra, 1983. 1: 11-91.

Cott, Nancy. "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850.' *Signs* 4 (1978): 219-36.

Gay, Narciso. *La mujer en su pasado, su presente y su porvenir.* Barcelona, 1857.

Gilman, Stephen. "The Birth of Fortunata." *Anales Galdosianos* 1 (1966): 71-83.

———. "The Consciousness of Fortunata." *Anales Galdosianos* 5 (1970): 55-66.

———. "Feminine and Masculine Consciousness in *Fortunata y Jacinta*." *Anales Galdosianos* 17 (1982): 63-70.

———. *Galdós and the Art of the European Novel: 1867-1887*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981.

Goldman, Peter B., ed. *Conflicting Realities: Four Readings of a Chapter by Pérez Galdós (Fortunata y Jacinta, Part III, Chapter IV)*. London: Tamesis, 1984.

———. "Feijoo and Mr. Singer: Notes on the *aburguesamiento* of Fortunata." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 9 (1982): 105-14.

———. "El trabajo digestivo del espíritu: sobre la estructura de *Fortunata y Jacinta* y la función de Segismundo Ballester." *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 31 (1984): 184-85.

Guijarro, Miguel, ed. *Las mujeres españolas, portuguesas y americanas tales como son en el hogar doméstico*. 3 vols. Madrid, 1872-76.

Gullón, Agnes Moncy. "The Bird Motif and the Introductory Motif: Structure in *Fortunata y Jacinta*." *Anales Galdosianos* 9 (1974): 51-75.

Gullón, Ricardo. "Estructura: la polaridad complementaria." *Técnicas de Galdós*. Madrid: Taurus, 1980. 159-67.

Hart, Stephen. "Galdós's *Fortunata y Jacinta:* An 'Inoffensive Hen'?" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 22 (1986): 342-53.

Kirkpatrick, Susan. "More on the Narrator of *Fortunata y Jacinta*." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 9 (1982): 143-50.

———. *"Las Románticas": Women Writers and Subjectivity in Spain, 1835-1850*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989.

Kronik, John W. "Feijoo and the Fabrication of Fortunata." Goldman, *Conflicting Realities* 39-72.

Laqueur, Thomas. "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology." *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1987. 1-41.

Pérez Galdós, Benito. *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Ed. Francisco Caudet. 2 vols. Madrid: Cátedra, 1983.

Ribbans, Geoffrey. *Pérez Galdós: Fortunata y Jacinta*. London: Grant and Cutler, 1977.

Robert, Roberto, ed. *Las españolas pintadas por los españoles*. 1871-72. Reprinted as *Mujeres españolas del siglo XIX*. Madrid: Atlas, 1944.

Rodríguez-Puértolas, Julio. *Galdós: Burguesía y revolución*. Madrid: Turner, 1975.

Selgas y Carrasco, José. "La mujer de Murcia." Guijarro 2: 185-215.

Simón Palmer, María del Carmen. "Libros de religión y moral para la mujer española del siglo XIX." *Primeras jornadas de bibliografía de la Fundación Universitaria Española*. Madrid: n.p., 1977. 355-85.

———. "La mujer en el siglo XIX: Notas bibliográficas." *Cuadernos Bibliográficos* 31 (1974): 141-98; 32 (1975): 109-50; 37 (1978): 163-206; 38 (1979): 181-211.

———. "Revistas españolas femeninas del siglo XIX." *Homenaje a don Agustín Millares Carlo*. 2 vols. Las Palmas: Caja Insular de Ahorros de Gran Canaria, 1975. I: 401-45.

Sinnigen, John H. "Individual, Class, and Society in *Fortunata y Jacinta*." *Galdós Studies* II. Ed. Robert J. Weber. London: Tamesis, 1974. 49-68.

Sinués de Marco, María del Pilar. *El ángel del hogar*. 1859. 7th ed. 2 vols. Madrid, n.d.

———. *La mujer en nuestros días*. Madrid, 1878.

Tanner, Tony. *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1979.

Turner, Harriet S. "Family Ties and Tyrannies: A Reassessment of Jacinta." *Hispanic Review* 51 (1983): 1-21.

Utt, Roger L. "'El pájaro voló': observaciones sobre un leitmotif en *Fortunata y Jacinta*." *Anales Galdosianos* 9 (1974): 37-50.

Whiston, James. "Las pruebas corregidas de *Fortunata y Jacinta*." *Actas del Segundo Congreso Internacional de Estudios Galdosianos*. 2 vols. Las Palmas: Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria, 1978. 1: 258-65.

Zahareas, Anthony. "El sentido de la tragedia en *Fortunata y Jacinta*." *Anales Galdosianos* 3 (1968): 25-34.