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ANIMAL IMAGERY AND THE PROTAGONIST IN SELECTED NOVELS OF GALDÓS'S PRE- AND POST-NATURALISTIC PERIODS

It is well known that when Galdós entered his second period, that of his so-called “mitigated naturalism,” he followed Zola’s technique of using animal imagery to trace the downward dehumanizing trajectory of those protagonists who were flawed by bad heredity and often forced to live in ever-deteriorating environments. *La desheredada* and *Lo prohibido* are the best examples of this phenomenon. Then, after showing an already animalized protagonist struggling in the Social-Darwinistic environment of Restoration Madrid in *Miau*, Galdós later moved into his “naturalismo espiritual” period, where, in *Nazarín* and *Misericordia*, he presents much stronger protagonists, now not flawed by bad heredity or physical handicaps yet still living in an animalistic environment, but with the ability, nevertheless, to rise triumphantly over this circumstance.¹

With Stephen Miller’s 2001 publication of Galdós’s prenovelistic sketchbook *Atlas zoológico*, we now know that as early as circa 1866-67 he was drawing people with reptile, bird, and mammal features. However, there has been no sustained investigation of the use of animal imagery in Don Benito’s early fictional works, which precede the advent of naturalism. A similar lacuna exists regarding the novels following Galdós’s “naturalismo espiritual” period. Consequently, the present study aims to initiate study into the rich variety of the main animal imagery systems affecting the protagonists created by Galdós before and after Zola caused him “sentir y pensar mucho sus novelas” (qtd. Shoemaker, *La crítica literaria* 88). The works under consideration are *La Fontana de Oro* (1870), the *Episodio Nacional* entitled *El Grande Oriente* (1876), *Doña Perfecta* (1876), *Gloria* (1876-77), *Marianela* (1877), *El abuelo* (1897), *Casandra* (1905), and *El caballero encantado* (1909).

However, we should first note that the works of Galdós’s much-admired predecessor Balzac are replete with animal imagery. Borrowing much from the zoologists and the zoologist-influenced physiognomists of this time, Balzac states in the “Avant-Propos” to his *Comédie humaine* that the basic idea for this work “vint d’une comparaison entre l’Humanité et l’Animalité” (3). Consequently, the richness and variety of human-animal comparisons in Balzac’s works is well known and has been repeatedly explicated.² Here we shall, therefore, limit ourselves in passing to some appropriate similarities and differences.

¹ For details concerning animal imagery in Galdós’s naturalistic, Social Darwinistic, and *naturalismo espiritual* periods, see the following by Chamberlin: “Vamos a ver las fieras” (27-34), “Social Darwinism” (299-305), and “Animal Imagery” (9-14).

² See especially Mileham (76-86); Thérien (193-208); Prendergast (152-62); Demetz (399-408); and Fess (140-43).

Already in Galdós's first novel, *La Fontana de Oro*, one sees the establishment of a clear pattern of characterization and interpersonal struggle which will be repeated in *El Grande Oriente* and *Doña Perfecta*. In each of these works idealistic, clean-cut protagonists must defend themselves against other characters, who are from the outset, or subsequently become, animal-like (as are sometimes Balzac's villains and their associates [Pasco 56]). In *La Fontana de Oro*, the villain is definitely the royalist fanatic Elías Orejón, the uncle of the male protagonist (Lázaro) and guardian of the heroine (Clara). Near the middle of the novel Elías is reinforced by "Las tres ruinas" (Salomé, Paz, and Paulita Porreño), to whom Elías entrusts the care of his ward Clara.

As did Balzac on several occasions, Galdós gives Elías Orejón a face suggesting a bird of prey.³ Additionally, the physical description of this character might well have been inspired by similar drawings in Johann Casper Lavater's *L'Art de connaître les hommes par la physionomie* (Vol. 9, 128, 152), a work which Galdós knew well:⁴

Su nariz corva y fina era [. . .] enteramente igual al pico de un ave de rapiña. [...] Su mirada era como la mirada de los pájaros nocturnos, intensa, luminosa y más siniestra por el contraste oscuro de sus grandes cejas, por la elasticidad y sutileza de sus párpados sombríos que en la oscuridad se dilataban mostrando dos pupilas muy claras. Estas, además de ver mucho, parecían que iluminaban lo que veían [. . .]. Los dedos parecían por lo angulosos, garras de pájaro rapaz. [Finalmente había] una serie de círculos concéntricos alrededor de los ojos, que remataban en semejanza con un lechuzo. (II, 21)

This owl-like image is reinforced by the similar perceptions of two important characters: Claudio Bozmediano (XX, 93) and Lázaro (XXV, 107). (One Galdosian critic prefers to consider Elías a vampire, and a translator uses the term "vulture.")⁵ Within the novel itself Bozmediano also refers to Elías emphatically as "animal" (III, 31) and "fiera" (XIII, 67; XX, 94). A speaker at the Fontana de Oro's political club charges that Elías is "una culebra que se desliza entre nosotros" (XXII, 98) and the narrator reports him smiling "como acostumbra los chacales y las zorras en quienes ha puesto la Naturaleza una contradicción diabólica en el rostro" (XXXIV, 143).

Elías ultimately fails, both in his fight against the Liberals and also against the young lovers. Late in the novel the reader is treated to the good fun of seeing him receive his comeuppance as he is repeatedly denigrated to the status of nothing more fearsome than a house dog. This new imagery is introduced as the narrator presents King Fernando VII sitting at a table with Elías, "su perro favorito" (XLI, 325). Later when the monarch has become angry with Elías, the latter is seen "alejado del rey como el perro que ha recibido un palo de su amo" (XI, 177). Finally Elías himself – with canine imagery – asks

³ For a list of Balzacian characters resembling birds of prey, see Mileham (135, n. 6).

⁴ Galdós seemingly combines two different Lavater animal-human depictions: the beaked-nose bird of prey (Vol. 9, 152) and the owl (Vol. 9, 128).

⁵ Petit considers Elías to have "certains traits du vampire traditionnel" (34, n. 23) and Rubin uses the term "vulture" when translating into English "ave de rapiña" (II, 34).

the king to exculpate him: “[. . .] Señor, ya os he servido como un perro” (XLI, 177).

At the climax of the novel Elías’s allies, the Porreño women, also undergo a transformation, but theirs is more dramatic. In contrast to Elías, their introductory portraits, while unpleasant, had not been animalistic. Yet the potential for animalization is ever present. For example, Salomé’s thin eyebrows move “como dos culebras” (XV, 74), Paulita’s eyes have an occasion to shine with “vivacidad felina” (XXIII, 103), and Salomé’s “uñas de lechuza” appear in Clara’s dream (XXVIII, 163). Galdós also uses mythological images in conjunction with the Porreños. Collectively the two sisters and a niece, in their watchdog-guarding of Clara, remind the narrator of a “Cerbero femenino de tres cabezas y tres cuerpos” (XXVII, 114).⁶ The protagonists’ ally Bozmediano perceives the Porreños as “grifos” (XX, 92), while other characters and the narrator prefer the denomination “arpías” (XX, 93; XXIX, 120, 122). In fact, it is at this level of half-human and half-animal being (“arpías” and “esfinjes”) that full-fledged animality finally bursts forth (XLII, 179, 183). Two of the Porreños become “bestias feroces” as they fight on all fours over a secret hoard of gold coins. When Salomé, “la pantera,” closes in on her niece Paz, the latter attacks “como los carnívoros.” However, she is no more effective than a “foca,” as Salomé’s claws dig eight bleeding furrows across Paz’s face, allowing the aunt to escape with the gold coins (XLII, 183-84). This animal-like fight marks the end of the Porreños’s unity and consequently their domination of Clara. Thus the novel’s remaining chapter, its denouement, can supply details which confirm that the non-animalized⁷ protagonists have truly triumphed over the forces of reaction, evil, and animality⁸ – and consequently are rewarded with long years of peaceful and happy matrimony.

A variation of the technique seen in *La Fontana de Oro* – that of intensifying the climactic struggle between the forces of good and evil by means of animalization – may be observed in the *Episodio* entitled *El Grande Oriente*. Now, instead of animalizing existing characters (as had been the case with the Porreño women), Galdós introduces a new, completely animalized character near the middle of the novel for this purpose. And we may be sure of his animality, for his surname is Regato. Moreover, he definitely both looks and acts like a cat:

⁶ In Greek and Roman mythology the watchdog Cerberus had three heads (and sometimes the tail of a serpent). He permitted new spirits to enter the realm of the dead, but allowed none to leave. Certainly Galdós’s depiction of the Porreños’ dwelling is, figuratively speaking, such a world of the dead.

Other mythological characterizations are griffins (head and wings of an eagle and body of a lion), harpies (half-women and half-bird) and sphinxes (human head and body of a lion with wings).

⁷ That is, they are never likened by the narrator to animals. Rather than character delineation, Salomé’s calling Clara “una víbora” (XXXV, 147) serves only to underscore the intense animosity which the Porreños feel toward the helpless young lady before they expel her into the streets.

⁸ In addition to individual characters, crowds can also become animalistic. For example, when Lázaro is beaten and being expelled from the Fontana de Oro, he feels “cogido, como si una culebra se le enroscara echándole fuertes nudos y apretándole en sus robustos anillos” (XXII, 99).

Moreno y curtido el rostro a excepción de la frente, que era muy blanca. [Tenía] pobladas cejas negras y el pelo espeso y cerdoso. Vestía completamente de negro, [. . .]; afectaba la más refinada compostura, y al mirar contraía los párpados a manera de los miopes. Si los abría en momentos de sorpresa, de miedo o ira, distinguíanse los verdosos y dorados reflejos de su iris, muy parecido al de los gatos. Cuando quería hablar algo de interés, iba acercándose poco a poco al asiento de su interlocutor, y su manera de acercarse, su especialísima postura al sentarse, arrojando el codo o el hombro a la persona, eran fiel copia de los arrumacos del gato. Muchos habían observado esta semejanza, y hasta en el apellido del Regato, es decir, reiteración de las cualidades gatunas [. . .]. (X, 1475)

Subsequently, this character is repeatedly labeled “el dos veces gato” (XXII, 1520; XXIV, 1527, 1528) and his catlike eyes are emphasized (1529). At the climax of *El Grande Oriente*, “el gato ciego de ira y amenazando con la crispada zarpa el cuello del joven [protagonista . . .]. Nunca el agente [secreto del Rey] se había parecido tanto a un gato. Arañó a su enemigo y [. . .] bufaba sordamente.” Although “el gato se defendía rabiosamente,” Salvador Monsalud succeeds in shackling him and then proceeds to liberate an important character from prison (XXV, 1532).⁹

At the climax of the novel angry crowds are also an animal-like threatening force (as they had been in *La Fontana de Oro*).¹⁰ Galdós’s narrator says,

Hay un grado de ferocidad que la Naturaleza no presenta en ninguna especie de animales, sólo se ven en el hombre, único ser capaz de reunir a la barbarie del hecho las ignominias y brutalidades de la palabra. Viendo a los hombres en ciertas ocasiones de delirio, no se puede menos de considerar a la hiena como un noble animal. (XXVI, 1533)

Then, in order to penetrate the narrow entrance and corridors of Madrid’s Saladero Prison, the crowd becomes snake-like, with its head, mouth, and body described by the narrator (XXVI, 1533).

The final triumph of Salvador Monsalud over the forces of animality is considerable, for the dastardly acts of Fernando VII’s agent provocateur, “el dos veces gato,” include: undermining the Masonic liberals by founding and presiding over a rival lodge called “Los Comuneros,” collecting documents to compromise his opponents, trying to bribe the protagonist with gold, and inciting the crowd to violence and murder.

Certainly with this *personaje*, who not only looks and acts like a cat but also has an emphatically feline name (which goes beyond Balzac’s technique),¹¹

⁹ Regato reappears in *Los cien mil hijos de San Luis*. Once again he is unsuccessful in attacking Salvador Monsalud, “[quien] le hizo rodar por el suelo, bañado el rostro en sangre” (IV, 1622). On this occasion there is no mention of feline characteristics, but a character who immediately follows exhibits catlike eyes (IV, 1622-23). However, in *El terror de 1824* Regato is once again described in consonance with his initial presentation in *El Grande Oriente*: “casi tan parecido a un gato que un hombre” (IV, 1712).

¹⁰ See n. 8 above.

¹¹ Twenty two of Balzac’s conspirators are compared to felines (Milham 77-79), but none has a name specifically referring to cats. For Balzac’s creation of animal-based names and nicknames for characterization purposes, see Thérien (197).

Galdós has succeeded in creating a vivid and memorable character, who also incarnates some of the traditional symbolism of the cat.¹²

In *Doña Perfecta* the animal imagery is different from that of *La Fontana de Oro* and *El Grande Oriente* in that it works in conjunction with a novel-long interplay of light and darkness. The sincere, idealistic (non-animalized) protagonists are associated with light, while their opponents are associated with darkness.¹³ Thus Pepe Rey and Rosalía Polentinos must defend themselves and struggle against fanatics who become animalized in an increasing darkness – as Galdós demonstrates the causes of Spain’s recurring civil wars. Because my article has already appeared elsewhere, the following brief summary will suffice:

Early on the male protagonist, Pepe Rey, meets the man who will later kill him – Cristóbal Ramos. As had been the case with certain characters in *La Fontana de Oro*, Galdós begins his animalization of this *personaje* at the mythological level:

[Pepe Rey] vió un hombre, mejor dicho, un centauro, pues no podía concebirse más perfecta armonía entre caballo y jinete, el cual era de compleción recia y sanguínea, ojos grandes ardientes, cabeza ruda, negros bigotes, mediana edad y el aspecto, en general, brusco y provocativo, con indicios de fuerza en toda su persona. Montaba un caballo de pecho carnoso, semejante a los del Partenón [. . .]. (II, 63)

In accord with the above description, Ramos’s nickname is understandably “Caballuco.” The narrator appropriates this local sobriquet and adds one of his own: “El Centauro” (XV, 172 and *passim*). Under the pressure of events in the novel, Ramos becomes increasingly animalistic. During a confrontation between Rey and “El Centauro,” the former openly calls the latter “un animal” (XV, 173). In a subsequent confrontation, this time between Ramos and Doña Perfecta, the narrator says concerning “Caballuco” that “Su nariz expelía y recogía el aire como la de un caballo” (XXI, 230). This dehumanization occurs just before “El Centauro” roars, “Le cortaré la cabeza al señor Rey,” and Perfecta goadingly responds, “[. . .] has aullado como un lobo carnicero, [. . . tu] bestia” (XXI, 230). Such is now the feral state of the character, whom María Remedios and Perfecta will soon use to murder the protagonist Pepe Rey. First, however, the narrator reveals the increasing animality of the two women. When María Remedios (whose surname is actually Tinieblas) enters Perfecta’s darkened study, she is “[ya] no una mujer, sino un basilisco.” This creature will soon have Perfecta roaring like an animal. Finally, “Las dos mujeres se deslizaron por la escalera como dos víboras.” Then Perfecta’s eyes acquire “la singular videncia de la raza felina,” as she gives the command to murder Pepe (XXXI, 300).

Not only is the male protagonist destroyed by the forces of darkness and animality, but his feminine counterpart is as well. Rosalía must spend the rest

¹² For the symbolism of the cat as a doer of various evil deeds, with links to hell, see Chevalier and Gheerbrant (169); for hypocrisy, Burke (149); for the black cat as bad luck, Cirlot (62). For Balzac’s penchant for making conspirators feline, see n. 11 above.

¹³ For details, see Chamberlin, “*Doña Perfecta: Light and Darkness*” (57-70).

of her life in a mental institution. The stress she had to endure as she too struggled against bestial forces is clearly shown when Ramos appears to her in a dream as a terrifying dragon, and the priest Don Inocencio (whose surname is also Tinieblas) appears as an “ave inverosímil” (XXIV, 250). Thus, in contrast to *La Fontana de Oro* and *El Grande Oriente*, the forces of obscurantism triumph in *Doña Perfecta*, written in 1876, the same year that Spain concluded its Second Carlist War. Clearly Galdós made good use of animal imagery as part of this thesis novel, which details the causes of Spain’s recurring civil wars.¹⁴

In *Gloria* (1876-77) one sees a complete change in the use of animal imagery. Now the eponymous protagonist herself is delineated as animal-like. However, in contrast to Elías Orejón in *La Fontana de Oro*, who was a ferocious bird of prey, and the priest Don Inocencio in *Doña Perfecta*, who was a caricatured pretentious and cowardly bird (XXIV, 251), Gloria is a sympathetic bird-like character with whom the reader can readily bond emotionally. Ornithological imagery is used repeatedly from her introductory presentation onward. Initially, the narrator says, “[P]odía decirse de ella lo del poeta: ‘Hasta cuando el pájaro anda se le conoce que tiene alas’” (I, iv, 507). A second trope not only reinforces, but puts more movement and speed into the bird-like image: “Gloria corrió como un pájaro alegre que siente en su alma el ansia de trinar” (I, iv, 511). In the third comparison, Galdós says simply, “Gloria volaba a la biblioteca” (I, iv, 511).

The reader learns that the “alas” referred to in the first citation above also concern wings of the intellect and spirit. Gloria has had intellectual and religious conflicts with her father, and he has forbidden further reading and discussion. Thus the reader can understand that Gloria “tenía cortadas las alas. Así la hemos hallado” (I, vi, 514). Although her father has indeed clipped her wings somewhat – and Gloria later admits, “Yo me dejé cortar las alas, cuando me han vuelto a crecer, he hecho como si no las tuviera” (qtd. by Condé 18)¹⁵ – one learns as the novel progresses that Gloria still “movía con más vigor a cada instante las alas de su latitudinarismo” (I, xxi, 567). However, she has been put on notice: “Mi padre me ha dicho varias veces si no corto las alas del pensamiento voy a ser muy desgraciada” (I, xii, 524).

Even when working in the kitchen, “su alma como dice el Salmista, *escapaba al monte cual ave*” (I, xxi, 541). Gloria is so bird-like that upon retiring at night, “De su brazo derecho hacía una aureola dentro de la cual metía la cabeza, escondiendo el rostro como lo esconde el pájaro bajo el ala” (I, xxvi, 555). And when Gloria has an especially difficult problem to think about, Galdós effects a background which includes no animals except for birds. The latter aid in setting the mood and hint at a special affinity between Gloria and the birds: “Hasta los pájaros habían callado; y sólo dos o tres cuchicheaban algún secreto o refunfuñaban alguna disputa en las últimas ramas de los plátanos” (I, xii, 523). The special affinity between Gloria and her feathered friends is later made clear to the reader, when Galdós says concerning the birds outside Gloria’s window:

¹⁴ A summary of these causes is made explicit by Chamberlin, “*Doña Perfecta: Light and Darkness*” (64-65), as well as in Hauck [(91-113)].

¹⁵ Condé documents this quotation as being from the *Obras completas*, 1973 edition, which I have not been able to consult. (I am unable to confirm it in my 1960 edition.)

En los alambres venían a posarse todas las mañanas algunos pájaros, que habían encontrado muy bueno aquel casi invisible punto de descanso en medio de los aires, y desde allí contemplaban la casa y la ventana abierta, donde aparecía la señorita de Lantigua para saludar el día y bendecir a Dios. Esta no creía que aquellos graciosos seres fueran las almas de sus hermanos, acompañados de las de otros niños, porque no podía creer tal cosa; pero en su mente se asociaba aquel espectáculo con el recuerdo de las dos personas, quienes Caifás [el sacristán] había llevado al cementerio en azules cajas. Ello es que uno y otro día miraba con amor a los pájaros del alambre, sintiendo no verlos cuando los alejaba la lluvia. A tan rara ilusión contribuía la circunstancia de haber sobre el cementerio de Ficóbriga una gran arboleda, que era el cuartel general de aquellos vagabundos. Gloria los veía salir de allí en bandadas y volver a la caída de la tarde, haciendo gran ruido, hasta que, vencidos del sueño, callaban dentro del espeso ramaje, y el cementerio se quedaba sin música. (I, xxix, 563)

On this particular morning, the narrator goes on to say, Gloria definitely projected her sadness onto the birds:

En vez de sonreír ante las avecillas que en el alambre la esperaban, creyó ver la figura de sus dos hermanos muertos, que se le acercaban tal como estaban en las cajas azules del día del entierro. [. . .] Pero venían con los ojos abiertos [. . .]. Señalando la tierra, le decían: “Sólo aquí se está bien”. (I, xxix, 563)

The narrator immediately returns his attention specifically to Gloria and compares her to a bird: “Mirando luego a la torre de la iglesia, experimentó viva sensación de miedo y antipatía. La torre era una idea [el catolicismo ultraconservador e intransigente] y el espíritu de la joven chocó, rebotando con dolor en aquella idea, como el ave ciega que tropieza en un muro” (I, xix, 563). Later when Gloria discovers her pregnancy, her wings are now not clipped, but seemingly broken. Crushed spiritually, intellectually, and physically, she withdraws entirely from all social contact: “Sólo la vieron los pájaros alineados en el alambre o los que, volando o piando, pasaban” (II, iii, 593).

Although many of Gloria’s family and acquaintances still fail to perceive her fundamental problem, the physician who attends Gloria in her final illness fully understands his patient. Dr. Nicomedes, who likes to give his diagnoses with “las más gallardas figuras,” affirms, “El corazón de Gloria era un caballo desbocado;¹⁶ su pensamiento, un pájaro que habiendo remontado mucho el vuelo, se había cansado y no hallaba monte en que depositarse y tenía que seguir volando o dejarse caer” (II, xxx, 670). Because it is futile for Gloria to “seguir volando” (both Christian and Jewish family pressures forbid her and Daniel Morton from marrying outside their respective faiths), Galdós’s denouement for his eponymous protagonist is the other alternative offered by Dr. Nicomedes, “dejarse caer.” That is to say, she must die. She does so, and it

¹⁶ The “caballo desbocado” is a time-honored trope in Spanish literature for unbridled passion. In addition to the physician’s characterization of Gloria, Galdós also associates a runaway horse with Daniel Morton and the latter’s intimacy with the title protagonist (XXXV, 576).

is ironically on Easter morning, at the very moment when the priest of a nearby church can be heard intoning “*Gloria, in excelsis Deo*” (II, xxxii, 680).

Catherine Jagoe points out that in addition to being like a bird, Gloria deserves to be considered as another winged creature: a domesticated nineteenth-century “ángel del hogar” – one formed by her traditionalist neo-Catholic family (59-73). Further, in a feminist reading of *Gloria*, Lisa Condé points out that the title protagonist is one of a series of winged characters (a favorite type for women authors) in Galdós’s works. These Galdosian characters include the protagonist in *Tristana* and Isidora in the play *Voluntad*. Condé also affirms that Isidora is the victorious “*mujer nueva* of the future,” explaining that, “[W]here Gloria’s wings, struggling to develop in the early part of the novel are crushed by her fall from innocence, the wings of [. . .] Isidora in *Voluntad* are conversely allowed to expand and mature *subsequent* to her ‘fall,’ reflecting the desired change in social attitudes promoted by the new dramatist” (20).

Finally, it is important to note (beyond the scope of Jagoe’s and Condé’s studies) that the bird imagery employed so successfully in *Gloria* is but a prelude to the extensive tour de force of ornithological imagery which will characterize Fortunata and Plácido Estupiñá in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, where Galdós sustains as subtext a delightful parody of Aristophanes’ *The Birds*.¹⁷

However, one does not have to wait until *Fortunata y Jacinta*, for in his next novel, *Marianela*, Galdós again uses bird imagery in the presentation and delineation of the eponymous female protagonist. Once again the unfortunate female is compared to a bird because of her winged imagination and flights of fancy, but now there is a physical resemblance to a bird as well. We learn of this similarity as Marianela gazes into a pool of water and sees her own: “imagen mezquina, con los ojuelos negros, la tez pecosa, la naricilla picada, aunque no sin gracia; el cabello escaso y la móvil fisonomía de un pájaro. Alargó su cuerpo para verse el busto y lo halló deplorablemente desairado” (VII, 707).

When Marianela listens to her beloved, Pablo Penáguilas, she “abría el pico como el pájaro que acecha el vuelo de la mosca que quiere cazar” (VII, 705). Oh why, she wonders, does not God give wings to humans so that they can fly like the birds. “Si tuviéramos alas,” she tells Pablo, “te cogería en mi piquito para llevarte por esos mundos y subirte a lo más alto de las nubes” (VII, 705). This wish underscores one of Marianela’s most ardent desires. Because Pablo is blind, he is unable to see how deformed and underdeveloped Marianela is. Consequently, if she could get him alone to herself and keep him on a higher plane of evaluation, then she would not have the fear of losing Pablo’s love (which, in the end, she does).

Like Gloria, who reflected the human desire to fly free of religious intransigence and shackling, *Marianela*’s protagonist has also been said, by some critics, to represent one of the religious stages in mankind’s experience. Joaquín Casaldueiro comments, “Su característica espiritual es su imaginación y su tendencia de personificar todas las fuerzas y elementos de la Naturaleza” (229), agreeing with Dr. Golfín’s view in the novel that “Se halla en la situación de los pueblos primitivos [. . .]. Está en la época del pastoreo” (IX, 714).

¹⁷ For details, see Chamberlin, “Aristophanes’ *The Birds*” (165-80).

Further, Walter Pattison (after an examination of the underlinings and marginal comments in the books of Galdós's personal library) believes that the main characters in *Marianela* were created to represent and personify the three stages of mankind's development according to the philosophy of Auguste Comte: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positivistic. Pattison states, "Marianela, the unlovely child-woman, who explains the world through myths invented by her imagination, represents the theological stage of the Comptian system." (115). Consequently, it seems appropriate for her to be characterized as having not only a winged imagination but also a "fisionomía [. . .] de un pájaro" (VII, 707).

Marianela's fiance, the blind Pablo Penáguilas represents the metaphysical stage: "Since the metaphysical stage of man is transitory, passing into the positivistic, Pablo must gain contact with reality by regaining his sight. Since the modern world has no place for mythology and uncontrolled speculation, Marianela must die" (Pattison 136). As a transition figure, the blind Pablo is accorded no employment of bird imagery – except for his surname: Penáguilas.

However in *Marianela*, one does see for the first time in the novels we are examining an important positive male character who is characterized by means of sustained animal imagery: Dr. Teodoro Golfín, the surgeon who removes Pablo Penáguilas's congenital cataracts. Traditionally the lion has been regarded as the king of beasts, and Galdós clearly utilizes this notion, for Dr. Golfín is not only "el rey de los hombres" (XVII, 733), but he is also first designated as "el rey de los animales." The full portraiture of Golfín is as follows:

Era un hombre de facciones bastas, moreno, de fisionomía tan inteligente como sensual, labios gruesos, pelo negro y erizado, mirar centelleante, naturaleza incansable, constitución fuerte, si bien algo gastado por el clima americano. Su cara, grande y redonda; su frente huesuda, su melena rebelde, aunque corta; el fuego de sus ojos, sus gruesas manos, habían sido motivo para que dijeran de él: "Es un león negro". En efecto, parecía un león, y, como el rey de los animales, no dejaba de manifestar a cada momento la estimación en que a sí mismo se tenía. (IX, 711)

Galdós kept the lion image in mind throughout *Marianela* as he worked with this character. For example, he says concerning Dr. Golfín's manner of speaking that it is "tan suya como las melenas negras y la cabeza de león" (X, 717). Moreover, to shake Golfín's hand is like being in contact with "la zarpa de un león" (XI, 721). And when stressed the doctor is seen "golpeándose el cráneo melenudo con su zarpa de león" (XI, 754). Importantly, Dr. Golfín saves Marianela from suicide by springing "como un león" (XVIII, 739), and subsequently "como fiera que echa la zarpa la detuvo fuertemente por la muñeca" (XIX, 743).

Although Golfín cannot grant Marianela happiness or keep her from dying, a didactic lesson is, however, successfully presented (echoing somewhat, perhaps, a fable told by means of animals). Having now broken his previous tendency to animalize exclusively villainous male characters, Galdós will build upon the success of his positive lion-like creation in *Marianela* to create twenty years later the eponymous protagonist in *El abuelo*.

Having now considered five novels of Galdós's *primera época*, let us move to three written during the post *naturalismo espiritual* period. The same year (1897) that Galdós wrote *Misericordia*, a novel in which the protagonist (Benina) survives and triumphs over an animalistic environment without becoming animalized, Galdós created *El abuelo*. Now the aristocratic protagonist, Rodrigo de Arista-Potestad, Conde de Albrit, is from the beginning of the novel likened to the king of beasts; he is a "león." In fact, the Count is the personification of his family's coat of arms: "león rampante con bandolera en la garra y el lema «Potestas Virtus»" (VIII, 77). Even before his first appearance other characters refer to him as "el león de Albrit" (I, iv, 22 and *passim*) or simply "el león" (I, iv, 39 and *passim*). There also is repeated mention of his "melena" (IV, xiv, 89; V, vii, 101), as well as reference to his abode as a "leonera" (III, iii, 51). Albrit breaks out of his "jaula" (IV, xiv, 89), but realizes that his opponents want to again "enjaularme" (IV, xii, 82). Other characters have no fear of openly calling Albrit a "león" in direct address (II, v, 40, 45 and *passim*), or referring to aspects of his behavior as a "leonada" (V, iii, 95). Two characters accept the challenge of confronting him, as they voice an echo from *Don Quijote*: "leoncitos a mí" (II, iv, 39; IV, x, 81). Certainly, the protagonist considers himself a "león" and repeatedly says so (IV, ii, 71 and *passim*). Moreover, the old Count asserts "Dios me ha hecho fiero, y fiero he de morir" (II, v, 40). A total of eight additional characters refer to Albrit as "león,"¹⁸ and he himself repeatedly refers to other characters as lesser animals. For example, he has no inhibitions about calling Senén "serpiente" (V, vii, 107), subsequent to an earlier upbraiding in which he insisted, "[T]ienes estómago de buitres, epidermis de cocodrilo, tentáculos de pulpo" (IV, ii, 71).

The principal opponent of the Conde de Albrit, who is also characterized by means of animal imagery, is his daughter-in-law Lucrecia Richmond, Condesa Viuda de Laín. Her potential for feral behavior is conveyed upon her first appearance: "Sus ojos son grandes, oscuros, con ráfagas de oro y el mirar sereno y triste, como de tigre enjaulado que dormita sin acordarse de que es fiera" (II, i, 31). Count Albrit, however, perceives her as of a different – but equally dangerous – feline species. As he readies himself late in the novel for his final confrontation with her, he boasts, "‘Tête à tête’ la ‘pantera’ y el ‘león’ [y] yo pondré" (V, ii, 94).

In order to increase the intensity of emotions before this upcoming lion-panther confrontation, Galdós has the Countess and her overly ambitious sycophant-employee Senén progress to the very edge of an animal-like fight. As the Countess awaits Albrit with "gatuna indolencia, sin corsé, suelto y en desorden el cabello" – and with her face and eyes showing a building "furiosa tempestad" of emotions – Senén insists on talking with her, even "sacando las uñas [. . .], erizándosele el pelo [. . .], agachándose para dar el salto, los verdes ojuelos centelleando." When the Countess reacts vigorously, Senén "en su cobardía, no hace más que "desenvainar las uñas de sus patas delanteras, [. . .] enseñar

¹⁸ The eight characters who call Albrit a lion are el Alcalde (II, iv, 38 and *passim*); la Alcaldesa (IV, xiv, 89 and *passim*); el Cura (III, xi, 67 and *passim*); Don Pío (IV, x, 81); Lucrecia (II, v, 40 and *passim*); el Prior (IV, x, 81); Senén (I, v, 22 and *passim*); and Venencia (IV, i, 70).

los colmillos y tirar levemente la zarpa.” Thereupon the triumphant Countess, after declaring, “Bastante tiempo he sufrido a este animalucho siniestro con sus garras clavadas en mí,” has one of her supporters expel Senén. This is readily accomplished with a mere “castañeteo de lengua como el que se emplea para despedir a un perro” (V, vi, 101). Thus one is treated to the repetition with an interesting variation of a dangerous feral character being reduced to a non-threatening canine status, as had been the case of Elías Orejón in *La Fontana de Oro* thirty-five years earlier.¹⁹

The above-described verbal conflict with Senén dissipates the Countess’s fury and almost immediately she finds herself in a gentler mood, looking forward to meeting with “el león” and even to “pasarle la mano por la melena” (V, vii, 101). Thus, as el Cura had communicated earlier to Albrit, “Hay panteras razonables” (V, ii, 94); so the final meeting of the Countess with Albrit can occur without any recourse to animal imagery. The novel’s main struggle, which had been announced and then intensified by means of animal imagery, ends in conciliation and reconciliation. And Dolly, who will soon forego life in Madrid to remain and care for her grandfather, is justifiably accorded the appellation “leoncita” (V, iv, 98). Additionally, *El abuelo* contains an effective collateral network of supportive animal imagery in conjunction with the secondary character Don Pío Coronado. The latter is Nell and Dolly’s teacher, and he also becomes a friend and confidant of their grandfather, the Count. In fact, at the climax of the novel Albrit and Don Pío are planning a joint suicide to escape their similar problems.

As had been the case with the protagonist, animal imagery helps to delineate Don Pío’s similar circumstances. He too is in conflict with the three women in his life. The older woman (in this case, his wife and not his daughter-in-law) is worse than a “docena de tigres” and his daughters (not his granddaughters) are “culebrones” (I, xii, 85). Thus it is no surprise that his pupils Nell and Dolly find that it is advantageous “amasarle el genio, porque es un tigre” (III, vii, 56). Don Pío, however, sees himself as of an entirely different species: “No de la raza humana, sino ovejuna, soy un cordero” (IV, xii, 83). And “cordero” had also been Albrit’s original evaluation of Don Pío (III, vi, 56).

It is certainly appropriate to ask why there should be so much, and so intense, animal imagery in *El abuelo*. Also, why should it represent such a change from the *naturalismo espiritual* novels *Nazarín* (1895) and *Misericordia* (1897), where the protagonists are not likened to animals? One of the main reasons, I believe, is that, as is generally acknowledged, Galdós was considerably influenced by Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. Although multiple similarities have been noted,²⁰ apparently no one has yet pointed out that both *Lear* and *El Abuelo* are replete with animal imagery. (Only one other Shakespearean drama has more animal imagery.²¹) Of the critics who have studied the imagery in Shake-

¹⁹ For the threefold presentation of Elías Orejón’s caninity, see pp. 3-4 of this study.

²⁰ For a summary of the similarities between *El abuelo* and *King Lear*, see Pattison, *Pérez Galdós* (138).

²¹ The only drama with more animal imagery than *Lear* is *Timon*, according to Bradley (266). The latter also gives an extensive list of animal tropes found in *Lear*, with some commentary (266-68). For the full range of Shakespearean criticism dealing with animal imagery and characterization, see Cotner.

spere's drama, one of the most helpful is Meryl Matkoff Cohen, who states that "In the Renaissance two important works concerning animals, the fables and the bestiary, undertook the specific task of moralizing. Animals were regarded as a living text from which to learn." Cohen considers *King Lear* a prime example of this phenomenon.²²

Critics are in general agreement that one of the main features of *El abuelo* is its moral lesson – one concerning which Don Benito had felt very strongly since his adolescent love for Sisita Tate. The moral lesson Don Benito wished to impart is, of course, that qualities of the human heart are far more important than honor and legitimacy of birth. Berkowitz reminds us that for some time before the appearance of *El abuelo* the press had carried hints of Galdós's intention to write a Spanish version of *King Lear* (330). Because Galdós held Shakespeare in such high regard, he might choose to imitate the Bard of Avon's success in using animal-like characters for teaching a moral lesson.²³ Moreover, he had already created a positive lion-like character with Dr. Golfín in *Marianela*; so it would be easy to raise another "king of the beasts" to the role of title protagonist. Finally, since Galdós wrote *El abuelo* as a "novela dialogada," with the thought of converting it to presentable drama, animal imagery helps underscore and intensify the interpersonal conflicts so necessary for successful theater.

In *Casandra*, twelve years later, Galdós returned to the problem of conservative fanaticism, originally seen in *La Fontana de Oro* and *Doña Perfecta*. In this "novela dialogada" the villain against whom the sincere, idealistic eponymous protagonist and her future husband must struggle is Doña Juana Samaniego. The latter feels that her late husband's wealth, which was acquired through the *desamortización* of ecclesiastical lands, must be returned to the Church rather than be used for improving agriculture, modernizing machinery, or helping individual families.²⁴

The struggle between the novel's opposing forces is so intense that each thinks of the other in animalistic terms. For example, Rogelio, after seeing his stepmother at religious services bathed in the light of a stained-glass window, says of Doña Juana, "La vi como la bárbara diosa Jagrenat, toda cubierta de esmeraldas. Su hocico repugnante de caimán dormido, pintado de verdín de las aguas, parece estar en el éxtasis digestivo..., después de comerse ración de cadáveres de naufragos" (I, X, 130). Subsequently, Rogelio also refers to Doña Juana as "monstruo" (I, x, 131), "la bestia apocalíptica" (II, iii, 145), and the daughter of "la gran víbora que sedujo a Eva" (II, iii, 148). Because Juana con-

²² Cohen (1208); see also Cotner (1733).

²³ In the prologue which Galdós wrote for José Alcalá Galiano's *Esteroscopia social*, he shows that he knew well the didactic aim of the fable, as he distinguishes it from that of satire (48).

²⁴ Juana believes that one should not make agricultural improvements, but rather bear all hardships, because "Las aguas, como los valles y los montes son de Dios y Dios sabe repartir a punto, según nos conviene, la frescura y la sequedad" (I, iii, 121). Certainly she is against any mechanical inventions that might make life easier or help Spain progress. She denies financial assistance to one family that has eight children; and regarding the protagonist herself, Juana would deprive her of her children, and then marry Rogelio to a woman of higher social standing (II, vii, 180).

trols the money that his deceased father had intended for him, Rogelio also perceives her as “esa vieja urraca [que tiene] el dinero que fue de mi padre y que me pertenece” (II, iii, 1480). Similarly, another character, Alfonso de la Cerda [sic] (also a victim of Doña Juana) refers to her as “esa esfinge sentada sobre un cofre atestado de riquezas” (II, i, 144). However, it is the protagonist, Casandra herself, who finally seizes a knife and kills the “hidra que asolaba la tierra” (III, xii, 181), “[porque querría] quitarme los cachorros” (IV, vii, 172). Subsequently, “enjaulada y guardada como una fiera” (IV, xi, 195), Casandra and her lawyer agree that her defense shall be that of a “leona que defiende sus cachorros” (IV, viii, 190). Moreover, Casandra has an excellent attorney, as the character Insúa believes, because he vigorously defends her as he “lucha como un león y mina la tierra como una serpiente” (V, x, 216).

Doña Juana, for her part, also refers to her opponents in animalistic terms. For example, her husband’s illegitimate son Rogelio’s common-law marriage to Casandra is a “casamiento de animales” (I, xv, 140). Also Doña Juana perceives the anticlerical Rogelio as a wild bird (I, xi, 132), and then as a leopard, causing another character (Rosaura) to alert Casandra that “Para coger al ‘leopardo vagabundo’, como dice doña Juana, han armado una trampa con cebo de dos millones de pesetas” (III, vii, 172). The leopard image so impresses Casandra that she subsequently reports experiencing a dream with “el leopardo en su caverna, tan loco como antes, y amándome más que antes” (IV, xi, 194). Later, as part of the denouement, Rogelio agrees to marry Casandra, which pleases her friend Rosaura: “Ahora [. . .] Casandra tendrá a su leopardo más sujeto. Por más que digan el amor deja sueltos algunos cabitos que sólo ata el matrimonio” (V, vi, 207). Finally, the problem of Doña Juana is irrevocably solved after the dead villain’s spirit reappears in disguise and “ágil como una corza” (V, xi, 218). Now all Rogelio has to do in order to send her scurrying back to the world of the dead is to shout “Casandra.”

A striking innovation not seen in any of the works previously discussed is that under the pressure of events some of the characters become devils.²⁵ Even when first introduced early in the novel Insúa is described as having a “rostro amarillo y zorruno. [. . .] Totalmente afeitado, parece un cura risueño o un amable Mefistófeles” (I, ii, 119).²⁶ Also early on Rogelio expresses the idea that everyone has an internalized devil – and he assigns a different demon to most of the major *personajes*. Then climactically, in this *novela dialogada*, as three characters appear and attempt to do evil, they lose their names and become designated exclusively as Baalbérith, Thamuz, and Moloc. One of them (Thamuz) also displays animal characteristics, as he flashes “chispas de hoguera en sus ojos gatunos” and “pone cara de tigre” (V, vii, 210). Thus we see that once again, as he had done often before, Galdós has provided in *Casandra* not only much feral intensity, but also an innovative change of technique at the novel’s climax. Now he combines *diablismo* with animality.

Two years later in *El caballero encantado* Galdós makes explicit that one of the main problems of Spain is ubiquitous *caciquismo*. For example, when absen-

²⁵ For interesting details concerning each of the devils in *Casandra*, see Behiels (94-102).

²⁶ For the importance of the repeated use of the color yellow in *Casandra*, see Chamberlin, “Galdós’ Use of Yellow” (34-35).

tee landlords (much like the protagonist Tarsis-Gil before his enchantment) raise rents, the impoverished tillers of the soil must turn desperately to the local *cacique* for exorbitant-interest loans. Thus their dehumanized, animal-like status (“El que no se vuelve loco acaba como los animales” [XVIII, 300]) becomes even worse. For example, debt-ridden, over-worked José Caminero falls dead while plowing (XVIII, 294).²⁷ Furthermore, the *cacique* can arbitrarily deprive these “siervos embrutecidos” of anyone willing to help them. Such an intervention occurs when the protagonist is aiding José and his wife “Eusebia,” because the *cacique* wishes to hire out for his own gain the hard-working Gil, when the latter has also become a “bestia para el trabajo” and a “mulo de trabajo.”²⁸ Furthermore, the political bosses often try to exploit women sexually (“Eusebia” is a case in point [VII, 246]). When Gil’s beloved Cintia-Pascuala is also so threatened, a confrontation occurs between the protagonist and the *cacique*. Although in this novel of enchantment the *cacique* (Galo Zurdo y Gaitán²⁹) “superaba en tamaño a una casa de las más grandes y afectaba a la forma y redondeces de un cerdo bien cebado,” Galdós’s hero says, “Yo, que no temo a los leones, menos temo a los cochinos” (XIX, 303), and he attacks the “ingente animal [. . . de] rostro y jeta cochinillos” (303) like a veritable Don Quijote. At the first blow he cuts the pig-like giant back to normal human size, and then kills him with dispatch (XIX, 303-04). Subsequently Galdós’s protagonist says modestly, “Yo maté a un cerdo.” (XXI, 315).

Empty rhetoric, so common to politicians (and the aristocracy), is also a problem for Spain. Thus Tarsis-Gil must finally become a fish and join others for some time in a fish bowl as they undergo punishment/retraining as “pecillos, sin otra señal de vida que el ondear perenne en las curvas de cristal, sin otro lenguaje que el abrir y cerrar [silenciosamente] de bocas.” This is a perfect rejoinder to and correction for the verbal excesses of characters, who not only personify aspects of contemporary Spain in 1909, but also remind us of those at the time of the Revolución Gloriosa of 1868, so masterfully incarnated in José Manuel del Pez in *La desheredada* and *La de Bringas*.³⁰

In summing up the most important animal imagery in *El caballero encantado*, one sees that whereas the *cacique* killed the protagonist in *Doña Perfecta*, now thirty-three years later in *El caballero encantado* the reverse is true. The protago-

²⁷ La Madre (the spirit of Spain) says concerning José Caminero, “Luchó con la tierra; murió en la batalla como un héroe que no quiere sobrevivir su vencimiento. Si estuviéramos en la edad mitológica, Ceres y Triptolemo le llevarían a su lado en un lugar del Olimpio” (XVIII, 294).

²⁸ “Eusebia” (“una fiera para el trabajo”) is also interested in Gil’s animal-like qualities, but for purposes of sexual pleasure (VII, 247).

²⁹ For the traditional connotations of “Zurdo” in Spanish literature, see Gimber (166, 181, 204-05) and Chamberlin “Echoes” (91-101). There are actually multiple families of *caciques* in the novel, including “Gaitanes,” “Gaitines,” and “Gaitones” (XVII, 341). As the similarities in their surnames show, there is little to differentiate them; they are all equally pernicious, both locally and nationally.

³⁰ George Edberg says concerning Pez:

[. . .] le gustaba escucharse a sí mismo. El resultado de esta afición egoísta suya era el amontonamiento de palabras en sus discursos públicos que eran muchos. Nunca expresaba conceptos en términos precisos sino que siempre hablaba en forma triplicada. [. . .] Las palabras de Pez siempre eran medidas, su manera de hablar enfática y pomposa. Su oratoria era campanuda, un magnífico ejemplo del género ampuloso, hueco y vacío. (409)

nist now triumphs over the *cacique* after having experienced, as part of his educative experience, the same dehumanizing animalization as the exploited *labradores* and *jornaleros*. Not seen previously, but certainly appropriate in a novel of enchantment, is the fantastic shape and size of the *cacique*. The same can be said concerning the necessity of *oradores* and *habladores* becoming fish, which is a now positive echo of the idea (seen in *La desheredada* and *La de Bringas*) that Spain is a fish bowl in which “pisciforme” (*La de Bringas* L, 1670; *El caballero* XVI, 338) politicians (like the earlier surnamed Pez) can swim in any political water.

Our study of eight selected works shows that the penchant for and skill in animalizing people, seen in the pencil drawings of Don Benito’s early sketch book *Atlas zoológico*, carried over into his very first novel and continued to animate his animalistic production over the decades. *La Fontana de Oro*, which incarnates techniques in common with Balzac, initiates a trajectory of works animalizing the villains, who epitomize values which Don Benito personally opposed. This artistry intensifies interpersonal conflicts and readily facilitates the reader bonding with the idealistic, non-animalized characters, which is clearly a part of the author’s didacticism. Each work in the trajectory of *La Fontana de Oro*, *El Grande Oriente*, and *Doña Perfecta* has interesting innovations. In *El Grande Oriente* Galdós creates the character José Regato, who not only looks and acts like a cat, but is also emphatically so named. In *Doña Perfecta* the animalized characters are associated with a world of darkness in a chiaroscuro struggle of good and evil.

With *Gloria* and *Marianela* one sees a complete change in that characters of positive value are now delineated with the aid of animal imagery. The eponymous protagonists of both novels are bird-like, and reveal a Galdosian interest which will culminate in the ornithological tour de force of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, where Galdós sustains as subtext a delightful parody of Aristophanes’ *The Birds*. Additionally, one sees in *Marianela* the first important positive male character (Dr. Golfín) who is delineated with the aid of animal imagery. The success of this “king of the beasts” supporting character will be repeated when Galdós elevates a similar creation to the role of protagonist in *El abuelo*.

The novels following Galdós’s “naturalismo espiritual” period (*El abuelo*, *Casandra*, and *El caballero encantado*) show that the employment of animal imagery continues, but now with different aims. In *El abuelo*, where one sees the first positive male protagonist animalized, Galdós not only used animal imagery to intensify interpersonal conflicts but also in a fable-like manner to teach a moral lesson, about which he had strong personal feelings. In *Casandra* and *El caballero encantado* Galdós returned to campaigning for solutions to national problems. In the former work ultraconservative religiosity, inimical to Spain’s well-being, is painted in a very negative light by unpleasant animal imagery, as the latter is combined and then climactically fused with a striking innovation: demonology. In *El caballero encantado* reformist Galdós (much in the spirit of the so-called Generation of 98) continues to campaign against evils affecting his country: exploitation of agricultural workers, *caciquismo*, and empty rhetoric. In this novel of enchantment it is not surprising to see an animal of unreal, gigantic proportions.

Certainly animal imagery, including mythological creatures, is a vital facet of Galdós's creativity throughout his long career. There is no question that the animalizing of people, so prominent in his youthful pencil sketch book *Atlas zoológico*, continues in his earliest novels, long before the novels of Zola caused him "sentir y pensar mucho." However, meriting further study is artistry in common with Balzac, who described himself as a "docteur en médecine sociale, le vétérinaire de maux incurables" (53) – and whom Zola considered the first naturalist.³¹

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³¹ The first novelist whom Zola discusses in *Les Romanciers Naturalistes* is Balzac. After climactically considering Balzac's "comparaison entre l'Humanité et l'Animalité" in the "Avant-Propos" of *La Comédie humaine*, Zola affirms that "il a fondé notre roman actuel [naturalist]." Demetz concurs, stating that the encounter of natural science and literary theory in the "Avant-Propos" marks the beginning of naturalism (404).

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