

A Further Consideration of Carnal Appetites in *Fortunata y Jacinta*

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Sarah E. King's article, «Food Imagery in *Fortunata y Jacinta*» (*Anales Galdosianos*, 18 [1983]), is a valuable contribution and helps us appreciate previously unhighlighted aspects of Naturalism in Galdós' masterpiece. In King's well-balanced study, the discussion of *carne* and carnal appetites is, appropriately, only one facet of a much larger consideration. A supplemental and more definitive study of Galdós' references to *carne* and carnal appetites, therefore, seems appropriate -especially when one considers that the *carne* theme is such a lively and important aspect of the author's creativity throughout all four volumes of *Fortunata y Jacinta*. And most important, we can now show that in chapter one (book one), Galdós initiates his entire system of carnal references after a deliberate and significant change of imagery- from the reading of books (in his first or alpha manuscript) to the enjoyment of *carne* (in his beta or final manuscript).

In chapter one of both the alpha and the beta manuscripts -just before Juanito drives his mother nearly frantic with his first sexual adventures- Galdós' narrator signals to the reader that a major change is coming in regard to Juanito. In alpha he says: «Los libros que Juanito estudió desde el día en que cayó del burro de sus estudios, eran los que están impresos en carne y encuadernados en tela de batista».⁸² This is an amusing and effective metaphor which leads directly to the intended point of communication: Juanito gave up reading for women. The metaphor of reading, however, has only limited possibilities for playful elaboration across the pages of a four-volume novel⁸³. This is especially true in comparison with the idea of the enjoyment of *carne*, which contains the potential for development in both its gastronomic and erotic connotations.

Sarah King captures the essence of Galdós' (new beta) metaphor, the first reference to food in volume one, when she says: «We are treated [here] to one of the Delfin's little philosophical gems concerning the nature of life as opposed to literature. The analogy as Juanito outlines it... is that to fully enjoy life is comparable to partaking of a juicy meal, while reading about living is more akin to hearing in minute detail a second-hand account of someone else's gastronomical adventures»⁸⁴.

Because the idea of the «meal of life» and Juanito's «youthful hunger for life»⁸⁵ is expressed exclusively in terms of meat -and specifically *chuletas*, a precise kind of meat which will recur several times in connection with other characters- it will be helpful at this juncture to look at the beta text itself. The narrator explains that Juanito's decision to stop reading is caused by the fact that «el mundo tangible y gustable le seducía más... 'Vivir es relacionarse, gozar y padecer, desear, aborrecer y amar'... Decía [Juanito] —52→ que entre dos maneras de vivir, observaba él la diferencia que hay entre comerse una chuleta y que le vengan a contar a uno, cómo y cuándo se la ha comido otro, haciendo el cuento muy a lo vivo se entiende, y

describiendo la cara que ponía, el gusto que le daba la masticación, la gana con que tragaba y el reposo con que digería» (p. 108).

A subsequent eating of *chuletas*, with a graphic description of almost exactly the details enunciated by Juanito, occurs in chapter eight and is repeated in chapter nine (book one). These scenes involving the character José Ido del Sagrario are quite important. Because they serve as a distorting mirror to Juanito Santa Cruz and to his behavior, we shall (following Galdós' chronology), postpone their consideration until a further look at the *Delfín* himself.

Having eliminated the word *carne* as he changed the metaphor in beta from his earlier *libros* now to *chuletas*, Galdós also avoids using the word *carne* itself throughout volume one whenever he is speaking of Juanito. He prefers to speak of Juanito's interest in the fair sex and his infidelities as a matter of appetite.

Tenía Santa Cruz en altísimo grado las triquiñuelas del artista de la vida, que sabe disponer las cosas del mejor modo posible para sistematizar y refinar sus dichas. Sacaba partido de todo, distribuyendo los goces y ajustándolos a esas misteriosas mareas del humano apetito que, cuando se acentúan, significan una organización viciosa. En el fondo de la naturaleza humana hay también, como en la superficie social, una sucesión de modas, períodos en que es de rigor cambiar de apetitos. Juan tenía temporadas. En épocas periódicas y casi fijas se hastiaba de sus correrías, y entonces su mujer, tan mona y cariñosa, le ilusionaba como si fuera la mujer de otro. Así lo muy antiguo y conocido se convierte en nuevo.

(p. 225)

And further, «Jamás hizo [Juanito] locuras, y si alguna vez sus apetitos le llevaron a ciertas pendientes, supo agarrarse a tiempo para evitar un resbalón» (p. 226).

Galdós, however, has not forgotten about his original association (in alpha) of Juanito and the word *carne*. It recurs (I, 10) when Galdós describes the annual Christmas Eve feast in the Santa Cruz home. Even on the literal, gastronomical level, Juanito's personal appetite is insistent and differentiates him from others. Of all those present at the banquet, only Galdós' philanderer has meat -rather than the traditional seafood dishes. («Sólo se sirvió carne para Juan» [p. 307].)

Gilman has correctly noted that Juanito is «dedicated only to polishing his external image and satisfying discreetly his biological needs»⁸⁶. In spite of Juanito's discretion and his smugness, both the metaphor of *carne*, and a tremendous sexual energy connected to it, are but repressed beneath the surface. By the end of book one, Juanito's carnal appetite will be completely out of control.

First, however, the reader is treated to a preliminary exposé of the darker side of insistent masculine carnal appetite by means of the bizarre character, José Ido del Sagrario. We have demonstrated elsewhere that Galdós very carefully followed a musical pattern known as sonata

form as he wrote the first volume of *Fortunata y Jacinta*⁸⁷. Therefore at the juncture where Ido appears, a very marked variation -the more daring, the better- —53→ is to be expected⁸⁸. And Galdós fulfills this expectation by transforming what was only shortly before expressed euphemistically and metaphorically in terms of elegant appetites into a variation, which now operates on the level of the literal and the repugnant.

Moreover, Galdós' embodying the inverse aspects of the carnal appetite in Ido manifests his skillful integration of contemporary *madrileño* culture into the novel. Concurrent with the creation of *Fortunata y Jacinta* there existed a well-known *costumbrista* sketch depicting a poverty-stricken man gazing wistfully at (unobtainable) meat on display in a shop window. This sketch appeared in the *obra cumbre* of the *costumbrista* movement, *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* (1843) and was often reprinted⁸⁹. It is our belief that when Galdós needed a variation on the theme of carnal appetites, he thought of this popular sketch and perceived the opportunity to give his (contemporary) reader the pleasurable bonus of recognizing a well-known referent (as he does in the case of other characters in the novel also). Pedro Ortiz Armengol has included this sketch in his excellent 1979 deluxe edition of *Fortunata y Jacinta* as an illustrative adjunct to chapter eight, which describes Ido's first «borrachera de carne». It is certainly most appropriate at this juncture, and Ortiz Armengol adds in a note (concerning the similarity in physical appearance of the man in the sketch and Galdós' character), «José Ido del Sagrario, pintoresco personaje a quien, sin mayores esfuerzos de imaginación, podemos ver representado en... [esta] elocuente estampa... sacada de las *Escenas Matritenses*» (p. 1070).

It is significant to note that only after the creation of Ido in the alpha manuscript did Galdós (when writing beta) decide to change his important metaphor in the opening chapter regarding Juanito, and now in such a way that it harmonized well with Ido's behavior concerning *chuletas*. The well-known *costumbrista* sketch had amused many a viewer (and still does even as far away as the Soviet Union)⁹⁰. Galdós does that but then goes on to do much more by making the episode part of a whole system of references to *carne*, which recur throughout his masterpiece.

In order to follow the thread of these carnal references, let us return to Ido's first appearance in the novel (I, 8). It occurs, as we know, shortly after Galdós' discussion of Juanito's *apetitos*. Whereas Juanito has been able to keep his carnal desires under complete control, Ido is just the opposite. He has no control at all. When he calls at the Santa Cruz home selling book subscriptions, Jacinta perceives that he is extremely hungry and offers him a *chuleta*. Juanito, having previously enjoyed watching Ido's bizarre behavior, insists on a second *chuleta*. When they are served, Ido springs «sobre las chuletas como un tigre» (p. 236), and after eating, Ido is even more of an «animal feroz» (p. 237). The strange effects of eating meat also produce in Ido a grotesque «borrachera de carne», and, whenever he is in this state, he becomes completely unhinged, obsessed with the idea that his wife is an adulteress.

All this is great sport for Juanito, the complacent and self-satisfied gentleman adulterer. He does not perceive, however, that the repugnance of an uncontrollable appetite for *carne* (and its unfairness to the wife) is being demonstrated in his very own home, and in a way that terrifies his wife (foreshadowing —54→ her reactions to his own uncontrollable behavior in the final chapter of volume one).

Male desire for *carne* is often uncontrollable, but the responsibility really rests with the individual himself, Galdós seems to be saying in chapter nine. Even Ido cannot shift the blame

to others, as we see when Galdós reinforces his characterization of Ido and provides an amusing reprise. This time Ido goes to a café, and, although he knows how adversely meat will affect him, he cannot resist ordering it. As he approaches the door, he remembers that his physician had advised him «siempre comer carne y cuanto más cruda mejor. De lo más hondo de su naturaleza salía un bramido que le pedía ¡carne, carne, carne! Era una voz, un prurito irresistible, una imperiosa necesidad orgánica, como la que sienten los borrachos cuando están privados del fuego y de la picazón del alcohol» (p. 262). Inside the café he notices that «no lejos de donde estaba [sentado]... había un rescoldo dentro de un enorme brasero y encima una parrilla casi tan grande como la reja de una ventana. Allí se asaban las chuletas de ternera, que con la chamusquina en tan viva lumbre, despedían un olor apetito» (p. 262). It is at this point that Ido orders *chuletas*, which soon brings on another of his «borracheras de carne». Then he rushes home to accuse his wife of adultery, creating a public spectacle of himself and causing distress to his wife and daughter. Very important, we note that Juanito's wife is again present «y estaba aterrada» (p. 270).

In displacing the blame for his own lack of control onto his wife, Ido not only seems to personify the masculine double standard (as does Juanito)⁹¹, but also demonstrates once again the ease with which Galdós utilizes the double entendre inherent in the word *carne*, moving quickly from the literal connotations of meat to the figurative ones of human flesh. This phenomenon is often humorous and certainly so in the remark of Ido's wife, which closes this second «borrachera de carne» episode. «Bien dicen... que la carne es uno de los enemigos del alma» (p. 271).

Unlike Ido, Juanito has no trouble keeping his carnal desires under control -until the final chapter of book one. Then he also loses control when he learns that Fortunata, more beautiful than ever, has returned to Madrid. Seeking to recapture past joys of the flesh, Juanito searches the streets of Madrid for her every night with «afán amoroso» and «frenesí» (pp. 333, 334)⁹². This search includes visits to many brothels in the south Madrid slums, and the depths of Juanito's past erotic aberrations are now revealed as we learn that he has often been in many of these places before. The final (numbered) section of volume one's last chapter is framed with the image of Juanito as hunter and Fortunata as implied *carne animalista*. In the initial paragraph Juanito is «cabizbajo... como el cazador impaciente que se desperna de monte en monte sin ver pasar alimaña cazable» (p. 332); and in the final paragraph, he is still «el cazador... que sale de caza... por esas calles, noche tras noche. ¿En dónde estará la res? Tira por aquí, tira por allá, y nada. La res no cae» (p. 335). Only the onset of pneumonia is powerful enough to stop Juanito's compulsive hunt and close book one⁹³.

The problem of carnal appetites continues in book two. The male protagonist of this volume, Maxi Rubín, certainly lacks Juanito's libidinal drive. In fact, in the latter part of the alpha manuscript Galdós had repeatedly —55→ designated Maxi as «impotente». In beta the author suppresses this word and more subtly conveys the problem of Maxi's increasing impotency by the symbolism of a functioning/nonfunctioning windmill⁹⁴. Maxi's relationship to *carne* also serves to corroborate our understanding of his personal dilemma. Fortunata wishes Maxi could «echar más pecho y más carnes, ser más hombre en una palabra» (p. 384). On this same day, prior to their marriage, Fortunata prepares a meal for Maxi. His appetite is still good. In fact, she serves «un poco de cordero,... chuletas de ternera [y] dos reales de menudillos» (p. 384). While they are eating the *chuletas* (the kind of meat mentioned in chapter one), however, Fortunata notices how ugly Maxi really is and that «aquel cuerpo... no

parecía de carne, sino de cordilla» (p. 385). By the time they have progressed to the «arroz con menudillos», Fortunata experiences an even more violent dislike for Maxi. But the marriage eventually does take place, and then Maxi becomes totally impotent and later mentally ill. Along with other symptoms, Maxi loses his appetite. His colleague at the pharmacy, Segismundo Ballester, advises «carne cruda» (p. 697), but unlike Ido (in the gastronomical sense) and Juanito (in the sexual sense), Maxi has no interest at all in «carne cruda». Eventually in volume four, Maxi comes to be in such a sad state that Fortunata has to cut him «pedacitos de carne» and feed him «menudillos con el tenedor» (pp. 814, 815).

Galdós is even more explicit with his interplay of gastronomic and erotic appetites in the case of Maxi's brother, Nicolás Rubín. The latter is the celibate cleric who, ironically, advises Fortunata on how to cope with her own carnal desires, as well as those of the men in her life. Having now no desire to be playfully subtle, Galdós, the perennial anticleric, aggressively blasts the whole idea of the celibate clergy as marriage counsellors by establishing Father Rubín's own relationship to *carne*.

La belleza femenina no le conmovía o le conmovía muy poco, razón por la cual su castidad carecía de mérito. La carne que a él le tentaba era otra, la de ternera por ejemplo, y la de cerdo más, en buenas magras, chuletas riñonadas o solomillo bien puesto con guisantes. Más pronto se le iban los ojos detrás de un jamón que de una cadera, por succulenta que ésta fuese, y la *falda* para él era la que da nombre al guisado. Jactábase de inapetencia mujeril.

(p. 424)

Father Rubín is, according to Galdós, «frigidísimo... [y] glacial». «Entendía de amor tanto como de herrar mosquitos» (p. 473). «Era... la persona más inepta para el oficio a que se dedicaba» (p. 425).

Practicaba su apostolado por fórmulas rutinarias o rancios aforismos de libros escritos por santos a la manera de él, y había hecho inmensos daños a la humanidad arrastrando a doncellas incautas a la soledad de un convento, tramando casamientos entre personas que no se querían, y desgobernando, en fin, la máquina admirable de las pasiones. Era como los médicos que han estudiado el cuerpo humano en un atlas de Anatomía. Tenía recetas charlatánicas para todo, y las aplicaba al buen tun tun, haciendo estragos por dondequiera que pasaba.

(p. 425)

Father Rubín says he understands that in Fortunata's emotional life Juanito Santa Cruz is «el único por quien de veras siente apetito de amores» (p. 423). Nevertheless, he turns right around and tells her that this is all wrong and that physical attraction is «perversión, es vicio... El verdadero amor es el espiritual,... o sea, en las simpatías de alma con alma» (pp. 424-25). —56→ Thus, in sharp contrast to a physician whom Maxi later consults, Father Rubín is totally oblivious to the fact that his brother is unsuited for matrimony. And Fortunata, impressed by the prestige of Father Rubín's calling, allows herself to be talked into marriage - one which leads to her husband's insanity and ultimately to her own death.

Before reaching the latter point, however, Galdós allows Fortunata to share with the reader her own reactions to *carne*. We have already noted that even before her marriage to Maxi, Fortunata identified with *carne* as she looked at Maxi with revulsion and said to herself: «Primero me hacen a mí en pedacitos como éstos que casarme con semejante hombre» (p. 385). Then, after her marriage, she realizes: «me han engañado... me han llevado al casorio, como llevan una res al matadero, y cuando quise recordar, ya estaba degollada» (p. 516). Then Fortunata learns in volume three from Evaristo Feijoo, a kindly protector-lover, that she should be even more aware of her own carnal needs. As part of his «curso de filosofía práctica», Feijoo tells Fortunata: «Ojo al corazón es lo primero que te digo... Hay que dar al corazón sus miajitas de carne; es fiera, y las hambres largas le ponen furioso» (p. 620).

When Feijoo, already sixty-nine upon assuming the role of Fortunata's protector, starts to become too old to continue as her lover, one of his first symptoms is a loss of appetite. He says to himself: «El estómago se me quiere jubilar antes que lo demás del cuerpo, y ya debes suponer que faltando el jefe de la oficina...» (p. 615). Accordingly, Feijoo decides to begin making arrangements for Fortunata to return to her husband. Fortunata would prefer to remain with Feijoo, even though their relationship will have to be platonic. She is now, however, in tune with her own feelings and knows it would be difficult: «El apetito del corazón, aquella necesidad de querer fuerte, le daba sus desazones de tiempo en tiempo, produciéndole la ilusión de estar como encarcelada y puesta a pan y agua» (p. 623).

She does eventually agree to a reconciliation with Maxi, concerning whom Feijoo tells her: «Anoche le vi,... ha echado carnes y hasta me pareció que tiene un aire más arrogantillo, más...» (p. 636). Notwithstanding this, Fortunata's second trial at living with the impotent Maxi certainly turns out to be an *hambre larga*, and her need for physical love becomes so insistent that, just before renewing her intimacy with Juanito Santa Cruz, she experiences a very erotic dream.

There are two mentions of *carne* in this dream. The first occurs early on as Fortunata is walking past a tavern, «en cuya puerta está la gran parrilla de asar chuletas, y debajo el enorme hogar lleno de fuego. La tal taberna tiene para ella recuerdos que le sacan tiras del corazón» (pp. 720-21). Here one sees *chuletas*, again the very class of meat that Juanito had originally spoken about (I, 1) -and which drives Ido crazy. In addition we have Fortunata's personal identification with this kind of meat and, very significantly, the accompanying feeling, which sums up her dilemma. Since Fortunata was always a passionate woman, it is no surprise that her psyche should have recourse early on in the dream to two important symbols: *chuletas* (the form of *carne* preferred by the novel's male characters) and *fuego*. The latter symbol (which is reinforced by other pertinent symbols in the dream) reflects her —57→ present state of passionate desire for sexual gratification⁹⁵. Along with her passion, nevertheless, there are also feelings of pain: «recuerdos que le sacan tiras del corazón». This is understandable, for in spite

of her great capacity for love, Fortunata has had very bad luck with men. Not only did she suffer seduction and abandonment by Juanito, as well as continual frustration with her impotent husband, but she has also been forced at times to work as a prostitute. In this occupation her clients were always «*lo peor de cada casa*» (p. 361); so it is understandable that she sometimes picked up men on the street (p. 596)⁹⁶. Perhaps she even worked out of this very tavern, or a similar one. In any case, the important point here is her feelings of pain induced by the sight of the slowly simmering meat.

The second reference to *carne* in this same dream of Fortunata's occurs in the central portion, where there is a traffic jam caused by two commercial vehicles. The first of these unhappy vehicles seems to represent Fortunata's present marriage, while the other represents her life outside of marriage. Unfortunately, the alternative to staying with Maxi seems to be only as commercially exploitable «meat», for the second vehicle is exclusively «un carro de la carne, con los cuartos de vaca chorreando sangre» (p. 721). Neither of these alternatives has any appeal for Fortunata. She cannot remain faithful to her impotent husband; nor can she return to being on her own, prostituting herself as commercial *carne*. Thus it is understandable that the two confronting vehicles cause a traffic jam; and no one, least of all Fortunata, can go forward. There is no solution until the end of the dream, when Juanito Santa Cruz appears and announces that he is aspiring to become a «cobrador del tranvía» (p. 721). Fortunata's response is very positive; teaming up again with Juanito (the only man she has ever loved) would give her the means to speed right past the traffic jam, thus avoiding the two previously presented, equally unacceptable, alternatives for her life.

Within two days after her erotic dream (and while still living in Maxi's home), Fortunata again becomes intimate with Juanito⁹⁷. During this last liaison of Fortunata and her lover, her wish to become pregnant («la idea, la pícara idea») is fulfilled, and the long-desired Santa Cruz heir is assured; or as Maxi says: «El hijo que llevas en tus entrañas... ha querido encarnarse» (p. 817).

References to *carne* become infrequent after this event, for, as usually occurs in real life, the primary goal of nature in endowing human beings with carnal desire has been achieved. Reproduction and preservation of the species has been accomplished. Feijoo, in his «curso de filosofía práctica», had earlier explained to Fortunata his continual understanding and tolerance whenever he might hear of a woman being unfaithful to her husband or of a young girl fleeing from her parents with a sweetheart: «Ande el mundo y crezca la especie, que para eso estamos» (p. 610).

These ideas are so fundamental in the thinking of Feijoo (like Galdós a lifelong bachelor) that he subsequently repeats them in more detail for Fortunata:

El amor es la reclamación de la especie que quiere perpetuarse, y al estímulo de esta necesidad tan conservadora como el comer, los sexos se buscan y las uniones se verifican por elección —58→ fatal, superior y extraña a todos los artificios de la Sociedad. Mirarse un hombre y una mujer. ¿Qué es? La exigencia de la especie que pide un nuevo ser, y este nuevo ser reclama de sus probables padres que le den vida. Todo lo demás es música; fatuidad y palabrería de los que han querido hacer una Sociedad en sus gabinetes, fuera de las bases inmortales de la naturaleza.

Meanwhile Juanito, ever true to his basic nature, moves on to a relationship with Aurora, a liberated woman who can offer him «[una] lozanía de carnes... pecho desproporcionadamente abultado... y las caderas y el talle bien torneados» (p. 745)⁹⁸. Enraged at aspects of this relationship, Fortunata leaves her bed too soon after childbirth; then she engages in a vigorous fight with Aurora, which, in turn, leads to her own death.

Sarah King has correctly pointed out that as the novel approaches its end, Galdós is concerned more and more with death motifs, while at the same time changing his food imagery away from positive, life-sustaining connotations⁹⁹. Although the textual references are extremely few, this same phenomenon seems to occur also in the case of the *carne* theme. Among the deaths reported late in the novel, one is that of book one's meat provider for the Santa Cruz family: «Se murió el sordo, el del puesto de carne... anoche... de repente» (p. 835). Then at the climax of the novel, Fortunata realizes that she is dying only when «el brazo se puso también como carne muerta» (p. 921). And after the often-victimized protagonist (who had been hunted as a *res*, led into matrimony as if to the *matadero*, and then had perceived one of her life options in a dream as «carne... chorreando sangre») expires from hemorrhaging, her aunt exclaims, «Ay, qué carnicería» (p. 924).

Galdós himself spoke to Narciso Oller of *Fortunata y Jacinta* as a work «ahora en el telar», implying thereby a great deal of attention to the interweaving of material¹⁰⁰. As Galdós wrote, the references to *carne* and carnal appetites were, of course, woven into the beautiful tapestry of nineteenth-century life which makes up *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Locating these references within their textual fabric, however, and then focusing upon them in their own right -as they occur across the pages of the novel- certainly helps us appreciate aspects of Galdós' creativity.

It is clear that Galdós understood well the important role that libidinal drives and carnal appetites play in the human life cycle, and he included much of this in his great novel. As part of his personal creativity, he perceived that an effective way to engage and amuse his reader, as he presented his understanding of these psycho-sexual forces, could easily be accomplished through a sustained use of the double entendre inherent in the words *carne* and carnal appetites¹⁰¹. Creative playfulness with these concepts, as he repeatedly moves back and forth from gastronomic to erotic connotations, allows him to enrich the characterization of important characters: Juanito Santa Cruz, José Ido del Sagrario, Maxi and Nicolás Rubín, Evaristo Feijoo, and even his heroine, Fortunata.

Not only does Galdós depict the role of libidinal drive in male characters, but also their double standard and, as well, the unfairness of a celibate clergy dominating married life. Then he shows the importance and the dynamics of erotic feelings that are possible in a nineteenth-century Spanish woman, even one who has been victimized both by men and the laws of society. She —59→ is seen at first reacting primarily to the carnal drives, or lack thereof, manifested by the men in her life. Then, with genuine sensitivity, Galdós allows the reader to enter Fortunata's most intimate thoughts, feelings, and dreams as she becomes aware of and

reacts to her own vital *apetitos carnales*. All this is accomplished in harmony with -and as part of a sustained thread of double entendre playfulness emanating from- a felicitous change of erotic imagery which Galdós made in chapter one as he wrote his final manuscript of *Fortunata y Jacinta*.

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