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REALISM AND THE FANTASTIC: REVISING THE HISTORY OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY SPANISH LITERATURE

EL REALISMO Y LO FANTÁSTICO: REVISIÓN DE LA HISTORIA DE LA LITERATURA ESPAÑOLA DECIMONÓNICA

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Resumen: La literatura española del siglo XIX revela, década tras década, continuidades derivadas de los impulsos revolucionarios en la política y la estética. Lo fantástico ocupó un lugar fundamental en estas continuidades. Sin embargo, al abogar por el "realismo", Galdós y Pardo Bazán reescribieron definitivamente la historia de la literatura para sus propios fines, ocluyendo una gran masa de literatura e ideología inventivas del XIX, tildada ya de extravagante y carente de serenidad. Esta gran supresión incluyó lo fantástico, junto con un amplio espectro de exploraciones literarias y políticas de la libertad imaginativa al que aquello pertenecía. Aunque se leen demasiado a menudo como relatos cuasi-literales, sus ensayos constituían intervenciones polémicas en prolongados debates sobre la libertad y la creatividad. Su "realismo" aspiraba a encontrar un nuevo equilibrio entre la serenidad y la fantasía –meta que comparte con escritores literarios y políticos de todo el siglo. Puede que generen cierta perplejidad ahora los aspectos aparentemente "no realistas" y fantásticos de la práctica "realista", ejemplificados en *El amigo Manso*. Pero, re-situado entre los debates decimonónicos, el "realismo" español es un intento, no de suprimir la fantasía ni lo fantástico, sino de reinventarlos y, de reimaginar así la historia y la sociedad españolas e imperiales.

Palabras claves: Romanticismo, Benito Pérez Galdós, Emilia Pardo Bazán, "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea*", El amigo Manso*, *La cuestión palpitante*

Abstract: Nineteenth-century Spanish literature was characterized by decades-long continuities stemming from revolutionary political and aesthetic impulses. The fantastic was central to these continuities. However, in advocating for "Realism", Galdós and Pardo Bazán successfully rewrote literary history to their own ends, occluding swathes of inventive nineteenth-century literature and ideology, deemed extravagant and lacking serenity. The great deletion included the fantastic, along with a spectrum of literary and political explorations of imaginative freedom to which it belonged. Too often taken as near-literal accounts, Galdós and Pardo Bazán's essays were polemical interventions in long-standing debates. Their "Realism" primarily aimed for a new balance of serenity and *fantasía*, a quest shared with literary writers, historians,

and politicians throughout the century. The apparently "non-realist" and fantastical aspects of "realist" practice, as exemplified in *El amigo Manso,* may seem perplexing. But, re-situated amid nineteenth-century debates, Spanish "Realism" is an attempt, not to suppress either *fantasía* or the fantastic but to re-invent them, and so re-imagine Spanish and imperial history and society.

Keywords: Romanticism, Benito Pérez Galdós, Emilia Pardo Bazán, "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea*", El amigo Manso*, *La cuestión palpitante*.

Here are two different versions of the history of nineteenth-century Spanish literature.

Version 1. The high point came with the Realist period, after the 1868 Revolution, and reached its culmination in the 1880s and 1890s with the works of Galdós, Pardo Bazán, and Alas. Before that, there was an abortive, short-lived radical Romantic period in the mid-1830s, and a prolonged period of literary conservatism punctuated only by the poetry of Bécquer and Castro in the 1860s, and by some *costumbrista* prose. Across the sorry panorama of those long decades, there was nothing qualitatively comparable to the literature of the fantastic found in European writers like Hoffmann or Nodier. Afterwards, Realism was in the ascendant.

Version 2. Across the decades, there was a sustained level of literary creativity and achievement. This stemmed from debate about revolutionary political and aesthetic invocations of creative freedom, and relatedly from critical explorations of identity. There was a succession of inventive writers who experimented with literary structure. Women writers throughout the century produced prose of dazzling literary and intellectual originality. Commercial writers creatively explored literary voice and structure in relation to media technologies. The latter part of the nineteenth-century was not a period apart, but a continuation of this dynamic cultural environment. The literature of the fantastic played an important role in these continuities, from Ros de Olano's "La noche de máscaras: Cuento fantástico" (1840) and *El doctor Lañuela* (1863), through Ovejas's poetic "Fantasías" of the 1840s, to Castro's enigmatic *El Caballero de las Botas Azules* (1867) whose titular footwear has "el brillo fantástico de los cuentos de hadas", and, later, Galdós's *El amigo Manso* (1882), whose protagonist is summoned by magic from a limbo realm and returns to a spiritual life amid the clouds.

I propose the latter as an alternative, more credible version of the history of Spanish nineteenth-century literature, and of the place of the fantastic within it. In this version, the fantastic is deeply embedded in the wider consideration of human freedom, its opportunities, and perils.

It is useful to distinguish between different ways in which literary critics may use a term such as the *fantastic*. On the one hand, scholars might employ such categories as *the fantastic* only where they have a clear definition, based on fundamental distinguishing characteristics, enabling it to be sharply identified (a

differentia specifica). This would be an ostensibly critical definition - that is to say, it claims to provide warranted judgements about what may helpfully be categorised as such. According to its proponents, a critical definition would be free of the claim that a text is an example of a category (*the fantastic)* whenever its author claims that it is. Todorov's much-debated study of what he calls *fantastic literature* is perhaps the most influential example of such an approach. Todorov (1970) dissects the difference between the *fantastic*, the *strange*, and the *marvellous*, arguing that the distinctiveness of a genre of the *fantastic* can lie only in its ambiguous hesitation between what is and is not ordinarily real.

On the other hand, it might be supposed that a term like the *fantastic* will have a contested and heterogeneous history. Specific uses of such a term can institutionalize themselves within academic debates as if they were warranted abstractions, whereas they may stem from genealogies that occlude other historical vantage points. By recovering a plurality of potential uses of such terms, scholars provide rich resources that enable us to debate and re-imagine, helping us break free from and expose unwarranted limitations on definitions. The critical force of such an approach comes, not from final definitions, but from the outpouring of rival historical possibilities that nurture debate, without assuming there will ever be a final resolution. The historical usage of specific words (like *fantastic*) may play an important role, but so will clusters of related terms, the tracing of family resemblances, and the identification of derivations from uses of the term in question. For example, Ros's novel *El doctor Lañuela* (1863) is neither presented as nor uses the word *fantastic*, but it contains evocations of things that were historically identified as such (notably, Hoffmann's tales) (Payán, 2022: 230, 237, 239-41).

These diverse approaches to the *fantastic* involve opposing presuppositions about how to use categories and about what it is to have a critical outlook. Arguably, it is ultimately impossible to mediate between them. That said, the definitional approach assumes that categories like the *fantastic* must be rooted in a set of principles, sharply distinguishable from all others. It is not obvious that such an appeal to a radical principle is necessary. The alternative approach makes no such assumption: without abandoning our critical faculties, it suspends judgement on whether there could be a final "correct answer". It does not reject vital insights such as Todorov's, but rather values and embraces them as part of the dynamic outpouring of rival possibilities.

The present essay takes a critical historical approach. It sets the significance of the Spanish nineteenth-century *fantastic* firmly within a larger nineteenth-century debate, ultimately stemming from the question of human creative freedom in politics and aesthetics. The latter debate informed the development of a literature of the fantastic but culminated in polemical declarations that were to obscure its importance, and even its existence, for decades. I will examine the interplay between the history of these debates and the problematic historiography of nineteenth-century Spanish literature. At the heart of the historiographical issue are the two versions of nineteenth-century literary history that I outlined at the outset. In the first version, literary writing is broadly categorised as "Re-

alist" or otherwise. Works categorised as "not-Realist" are only of intermittent importance, and, mainly, the "not-Realist" literature was a failure; whereas, the "Realist" works were a sustained triumph. In the second version, the "not-Realist" works – from *cuentos fantásticos* to popular melodramas – are substantially revalued. The sharp distinction between two parts of the century, and between "Realist" and "not-Realist", becomes extremely blurred.

The first version of nineteenth-century Spanish literary history originates not least in two influential essays: Galdós' "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea" and Pardo Bazán's *La cuestión palpitante* (1882-83). I do not mean to suggest that these are its only sources, or that these two essays represented the fixed and final opinion of their authors, less still that literary practice in later decades followed their guidelines, or that scholars uncritically agreed with their aesthetics. My point, rather, is that the canon of nineteenth-century Spanish literature as it was consolidated from at least the mid-twentieth – and the categories on which it rested – matches closely with these two essays. It is beyond the scope of the present essay to trace the precise path of how that influence occurred and it may be far from wholly traceable: sources for historiographical patterns are not always acknowledged. At a minimum, scholars habitually read those two essays because they came to be considered fundamental to understanding nineteenth-century literary thought. *La cuestión palpitante* is "undoubtedly […] the high point of the debate [on naturalism]" (Henn, 1988: 145); "Observaciones…" is a "seminal essay" (DuPont, 2006, 20). The convergence between sustained attention to those essays and the notion of the superiority of the "Realist" period is apparent, for example, in Rodgers' study of Galdós's Realism: discussion of the importance of the "Observaciones…" is preceded by the statement that the "emergence of the modern novel" in Spain began only after 1868 (1985: 19). Once established, the institutionalized historiography became extremely robust. In the course of an incisive consideration of the critical fate of the nineteenth-century novel, Gold remarks that later Hispanists paid "scant lip service" to the wider variety of literature while "leaving unchallenged the canon as inherited from previous generations" (1993: 194).[1]

In this article, I will reconsider that particular point of origin. Famously, both essays advocate for attention to "reality" in literature. Without underplaying their novelty, I will present them as purposeful interventions in decades-long debates. When they invoked a notion of "reality", they did so primarily to reframe a long-running discussion about the merits of serenity as opposed to passion and the imagination. This observation has considerable explanatory power as regards how both essays emerge from the preceding decades, how continuities appear between a work such as *El amigo Manso* and earlier nineteenth-century fantastic literature, and why the term "Realist" could lead to perplexity or at least to research questions. I will show how Galdós and Pardo Bazán polemically re-wrote the history of nineteenth-century literature to their own ends: Pardo Bazán's *La*

1 The vicissitudes involved in establishing the present canon of Realist writing in Spain are alluded to by a range of critics including Gilman (1981: 251-2), Hemingway (1983: 1), Biggane (2000: 7).

cuestión palpitante was, of course, conceived as a work of polemic, and stirred immediate debate (Burdiel, 2019: 168-72; Tolliver, 1998: 22). I will examine how they constructed their distinction between works based or not based in "reality". This distinction undermined and even erased works categorised as not being based in "reality". (For the sake of stylistic ease, from this point, I will use the terms "Realist" and "non-Realist" to describe the putative distinction between these kinds of literature: Galdós himself did not initially use the word *Realist* (Rodgers, 1985), preferring *realidad*, *realismo*, *verdad*, and *verdadero*.)

Manifestly, the *fantastic* would be at risk of falling into the "not-real" category: Todorov's own definition requires something that escapes ordinary reality. Consequently, any nineteenth-century Spanish efforts at such a literature risked the same historiographical fate as other "not-Realist" works. In fact, Galdós and Pardo Bazán do not simply marginalize such efforts by earlier writers. In their surveys of nineteenth-century Spanish literature, Galdós and Pardo Bazán do not mention them at all, silencing their very existence. This is not because they were discussing the novel, and the fantastic sometimes appeared in other genres. Both reference a range of genres and the names of authors associated with them. Nor is it because such works had simply been forgotten by the 1870s and 1880s. Let us take an unproblematic case of engagement with the literature of the fantastic as generally understood: the prose of Antonio Ros de Olano, who explicitly subtitled an early story "La noche de máscaras" as *cuento fantástico* and directly engaged with Hoffmann's fantastic writings in his "El escribano Martín Peláez": "un nuevo género cultivado con especialidad en Alemania […] se llamaba *fantástico*" (1841: 68). Ros was a well-known public figure, and his work continued to be referenced late in the century. For example, in an article of 31 May 1884 published in *Las Américas*, Ros is praised as superior to Hoffmann, and as a practitioner of the absolute comic (Medina, 1884: 3). Writing on 23 July 1886 in *La Época*, Alarcón asserts that Ros was one of those Romantic writers who "subsisten por derecho propio […] en la admiración del pueblo español" (1886: 2). Ros's long prose work *El doctor Lañuela* was still on sale from booksellers in 1880, as the adverts section of *La Iberia* of 6 August shows. Given how well-read Pardo Bazán was, and how many writers she cites, the omission of Ros and others seems extremely pointed.

Many important literary works linked to the fantastic were thereby struck out of the historiography of nineteenth-century Spanish literature. The twentieth century would pass before most of them returned to literary memory anything but intermittently. At the same time, the use of the term "Realism" – and even "Naturalism" – led to some perplexing categorisations that begged explanation, leading to much scholarly reflection. Pardo Bazán declares that Galdós's *El amigo Manso* and *La desheredada* (1881) mark a decisive turning point in his fiction and confirm his "desposorios con el realismo" (1893: 273). Notoriously, *El amigo Manso* fits awkwardly with "Realism", given that, at a minimum, it contains what Alas called an "elemento fantástico". Alas found himself trying to justify *El amigo Manso* not just as a Realist but as a Naturalist novel by comparing its fantastical narrative frame to the intricate, abstract picture frames around "Re-

alist" paintings (1980: 67). Likewise, more recent scholars have wrestled with how a "Realist" writer like Galdós was so often concerned with a range of effects that seem to run contrary to art as a mirror of external reality: from the fantasy aspects of Manso, to the fictional priest who becomes real in *Misericordia*, to the myth-like messianic Nazarín, to the many unsettling interjections on the subject of what is real and what is imaginary. Similar issues arise with Pardo Bazán's retrospective use of the category "Realist". Among her list of exemplary Golden-Age "Realist" works are Cervantes's *Coloquio de los perros* – in which two dogs have an extended conversation –, and Vélez de Guevara's *El diablo cojuelo*, which features the Devil carrying a magician through the skies over Madrid (1893: 109). Readers might pause too when she claims Shakespeare took "Realism" further than Zola, and that the Bible is the supreme epic of literary "Realism" (1893: 291, 70). Among Pardo Bazán's own multifarious fiction are tales that Patricia García (2019) classifies in the literature of the fantastic.[2] As Tolliver observes, scholars' concern to locate naturalistic Realism in her fiction led to neglect of vast swathes of her work (1998: 20; see also Biggane, 2000: 13).

Both the deletions from the canon and the intriguing uses of the category "Realist" find considerable explanation in nineteenth-century usage of the word *fantástico*, especially its relationship with a cluster of keywords including *fantasía*, *imaginación*, *ideal*, and vocabulary concerned with the passions. The same factors illuminate how the historiographical fate of the *fantástico* became so bound up with that of genres as apparently dissimilar to it as melodrama. The definitions in the 1884 dictionary of the Real Academia, published at the supposed high point of "Realist" fiction, are very much in line with others through the century. The *fantástico* is defined as "Quimérico, fingido, que no tiene realidad, y consiste solo en la imaginación; Perteneciente a la fantasía". It is a manifestation of the *imaginación* and/or of *fantasía*. Its semantic field ranges from things that are in some sense fundamentally "unreal" to – more neutrally – expressions of *fantasía*. Both *fantasía* and the *imaginación* are closely related to one another and are ultimately linked to the creation and use of imagery, and more broadly to mental experience. *Fantasía* is the "Facultad que tiene el alma de reproducir por medio de imágenes las cosas pasadas o lejanas, de representar las ideales en forma sensible o de idealizar las reales; Imagen formada por la fantasía; Grado superior de la imaginación; la imaginación en cuanto inventa o produce". *Fantasía* thus range from the purely imaginary to things that are grounded in warranted ideas or external realities. In *fantasía*, the *ideal* may transform the *real* or vice-versa. *Fantasía* may involve fictional writing but might also involve flights of the thinking mind: "Ficción, cuento, novela o pensamiento elevado e ingenioso"(1884: 488).

The *imaginación* – literally the faculty of producing imagery – is a key basis of both *fantasía* and the *fantástico*, and again spans both things that are "real" or grounded in thought or belief (*ideales*) and things that are in some way fundamentally unreal: "Facultad del alma que representa las imágenes de las cosas

2 At the time of writing, I do not have access to García's recent study of the urban fantastic.

reales o ideales. Aprensión falsa o juicio y discurso de una cosa que no hay en realidad o no tiene fundamento" (1884: 585). The *ideal* in turn – literally, the adjective from "idea" – ranges from things that are founded on ideas – and thence potentially grounded in reason –, through to those that are purely *fantasía*: "Perteneciente o relativo a la idea; Que no es físico, real o verdadero, sino que está puramente en la fantasía" (1884: 582-83). Because of its potential departure from things with a "fundamento", *imaginación* – like *ideal* – has an association with the meaning of *pasión* where this involves disorders or perturbations of the mind, and even excess affection: "Cualquier perturbación o afecto desordenado del ánimo; Excesiva inclinación o preferencia de una persona a otra" (1884: 797).

Overall, there is a dynamic but non-reductive relationship between *fantástico*, *fantasía, imaginación*, *ideal* and *pasión*. Across this cluster of keywords there is an unsettled and unstable relationship with reality and with properly grounded thoughts. Juan Jesús Payán has eloquently shown that the European notion of a literature of the fantastic was contentious, heterogeneous, and the subject of rival definitions, from the moment of its formulation in the early nineteenth century. Payán's observation is consistent with the unstable relationship among keywords that I identify above. In his response to Hoffmann in 1827, Walter Scott assigned the *fantastic* to a pure irrationality in contrast with French writers who saw the genre as a blend of recognizable reality with inexplicable occurrences. Spaniards entered the debate and began to offer their own formulations, initially in response to Hoffmann and to Scott (Payán, 2022: 114-33). David Roas (2002) has shown in erudite depth the extent of Hoffmann's influence and presence in Spain at this juncture, and the emulation of his work. In the important review article on Hoffmann published in 1839 by the influential critic Enrique Gil y Carraso – and widely circulated in his collected works –, we can clearly see the association between *fantasía* and *imaginación,* and how the *fantástico* is seen as an extension of the latter two: "Hoffmann, que al crepúsculo actual añadía las brumas del misticismo alemán y las nubes de su imaginación y de su temperamento irritable, tenía que aparecer forzosamente como un hombre fantástico. […] ¿Quién no ve en la mayor parte de las fantasías de nuestro escritor una idea trascendental o un misterio de nuestro ser disfrazado con los ropajes vaporosos de sus fábulas?"(1883: 52-54). Through this association, Gil y Carrasco links the notion of the *fantástico* to an expression of mental states and ideas, inflected by local cultural characteristics. It is at the edge between emotional disturbance ("temperamento irritable") and the expression of widely held ideas and ideologies (the "crepúsculo actual" and "una idea trascendental o un misterio de nuestro ser").

In his own "La noche de máscaras" (1840), and in his "El escribano Martín Palaez" (1841), Ros links the *fantastic* and Hoffmann to a limit-point of narrative and discursive structure and sense, in which he likewise implicates both Spanish folkloric storytelling and imagery derived from contemporary political ideologies (Ginger, 1999: 234-37, 301-31). Ildefonso Ovejas's literary theory – widely available in the nineteenth century as the serially reprinted prologue

to the complete works of Zorrilla – explicitly linked the "*cuento fantástico*" derived from Hoffmann to the potential for fragmentation of literary structure. Ovejas had been the first literary critic in Spain to theorize the work of Ros, and wrote important fragmentary poems (Ovejas, 2022). According to Ovejas, in an agitated but thinking mind, *fantasía* may juxtapose seemingly disconnected imagery: "el poeta nos presenta imágenes sin correspondencia con la forma de objetos materiales […] pasando a hacer uso de la fantasía que es la facultad de expresar por imágenes las percepciones razonadas […] (E)s una serie, una hilación de comparaciones, cada una de las cuales representa un pensamiento parte del complejo […] una serie de cuadros incongruentes al parecer acaso pero conducentes todos al mismo objeto". Authors of such works write in "un estado de gran sobrexcitación" (Zorrilla, 1847: xxviii-xxx). Payán aptly suggests that the characteristics associated with the literature of the fantastic in Spain, as thus conceived in Spain, may reasonably be seen in a range of texts that are not explicitly described as *fantástico* such as Castro's *cuento extraño*, *El caballero de las botas azules* (Payán, 2022: 229-82).

The earlier nineteenth-century literature of the fantastic was, then, at the extremes of – and belonged to – a wider spectrum in which *fantasía*, *imaginación*, ideas and passions, were in tense interplay with one another and with a grounded sense of reality or reason. Put another way, the fantastic could involve both the very heights of the creative imagination and yet risk the very deepest mental disturbance. In contrast, Galdós and Pardo Bazán's notion of "Realism" was conceived explicitly as a corrective to the various dangers of *fantasía*, *imaginación*, the *ideal* and, by extension, imaginative literature infused with violent passions. Seeking to diagnose a supposed failure of the Spanish nineteenth-century novel to date, Galdós observed of his contemporary compatriots: "somos unos idealistas desaforados, y más nos agrada imaginar que observar" (1870: 163). He complains of the (alleged) prevailing literary taste for extreme melodrama and disturbed conduct that "El público ha dicho: 'Quiero traidores pálidos y de mirada siniestra, modistas angelicales, meretrices con aureola, duquesas averiadas, jorobados románticos, adulterios, extremos de amor y odio,' y le han dado todo esto". Galdós encapsulates these trends in his phrase "la novela de impresiones y movimiento", as if suggesting some out-of-control, ungrounded dynamism of actions and emotional effects. These are "extravagantes libros": literally, books that go astray (1870: 164). In revealing contrast, Galdós says of the "true" novel that "no se cría sino en los períodos de serenidad" (1870: 163). It is a "producto natural y espontáneo de los tiempos serenos" (1870: 168). Arguably, this serene disposition is as fundamental to Galdós's notion of literary "Realism", value, and "truth" as are the distinctions between representational constructs and reality, or between fiction and empirical fact on which so much scholarly discussion of the writer has fruitfully turned (for example, Gold 1993; Labanyi 2000; Turner 2003). Galdós freely acknowledges that risibly literary characters have counterparts in lived reality: "cuando tropezamos con algún individuo extremadamente raro, le llamamos héroe de novela". Conversely, he goes on to argue that we admire good literature and painting because are able to

say "¡Qué verdadero es esto! Parece cosa de vida" (1870: 164). The salient distinction drawn here is not between literature and lived experience, but between two different ways in which literature and lived reality can intersect. The one is unacceptably extravagant, whereas the other lacks such extravagance and is therefore "verdadero", "true".

Given the above, it is unsurprising that Galdós and Pardo Bazán's essays evince a complete loss of interest in much of the literature of the fantastic as conceived in earlier nineteenth-century Spain, especially in long prose fiction. On the spectrum of *imaginación* and *fantasía*, such works could be considered to lie at the extremes of extravagance.[3] This is not to say that Galdós and Pardo Bazán rejected the fantastic outright. As we have seen, both in their comments on the history of Realism, and in their own literary practice, their outlook is much more nuanced and complex. The problem lay with what they diagnosed as a lack of appropriate serenity in the literature of earlier decades. It is unsurprising that, by the same token, some of the most playfully self-reflective and provocative long prose pre-1870 is relegated to a name-check, innocuous mention in Pardo Bazán's more detailed *La cuestión palpitante*: notably, Miguel de los Santos Álvarez's *La protección de un sastre* and Flores's *Ayer, Hoy y Mañana* (1893: 259, 263). The negation of extreme extravagance and of disordered minds is at the heart of her succinct description of the place of Realism relative to Romantics and Naturalists: "En el realismo cabe todo, menos las exageraciones y desvaríos de dos escuelas extremas" (1893: 68). Tellingly, she asserts of Romanticism that "de él sobrevive cuanto merece, mientras sus exageraciones, extravíos y delirios pasaron como torrente de lava, abrasando el suelo y dejando en pos inútil escoria". Alongside images of wild energy, and of mental disorder, Pardo Bazán's words once more invoke aimless movement (*extraviarse*) and wild departures from order (*desvaríos*). Pardo Bazán associates "Realism" with balance, a calming of the mind, and a containment of the expression of passions: "Una literatura nueva, que ni es clásica ni romántica, pero que se origina de ambas escuelas y propende a equilibrarlas en justa proporción, va dominando y apoderándose de la segunda mitad del siglo XIX. […] Desde hace algunos años calmóse la efervescencia de los cerebros […] Nuestros grandes autores y poetas contemporáneos viven como el resto de los mortales; sus pasiones – si es que las experimentan – laten escondidas en el fondo de su alma, y no se desbordan en sus libros ni en sus versos" (1893: 90-91) Her more sympathetic statements about Zola emphasize his ordered, daily and artistic life, in contrast with the "ardiente fantasía" that predominated earlier in the century (1893: 199-200). The latter period was driven fundamentally by the *imaginación* and in that specific sense was rooted in the *ideal*: "En toda la literatura idealista que revisamos impera la imaginación, de más o menos quilates, más o menos selecta; pero siempre como facultad soberana" (1893: 138).

3 Valera took a somewhat different view, likely because his vision of long fiction was much more deeply aligned with Ros de Olano's mid-century literary practice, as I explain in my article "End of a Century 1873-74?" (Ginger 2010).

The serene disposition of "Realism" does not involve abandoning the spectrum of *fantasía*, *imaginación*, *ideal* and passions. That would be to engage in yet another form of extremism: Pardo Bazán criticizes the contemporary British novel because its excessive pursuits of sobriety "la impiden volar por los espacios sublimes que cruzó la libre y rauda fantasía de Shakespeare y Cervantes" (1893: 244-45). She underlines her preference for the Goncourt Brothers, and a devotion to their image-rich "altar propio, riquísimo, bizantino, dorado y con curiosas pinturas" (in words she borrows from Zola) (1893: 169; Hemingway, 1983: 5). The *imaginación* is literally the domain of images, as we have seen. She states her admiration for the Romantics in their own right across a range of genres, the Spanish Romantics included: "recordamos también la época romántica como fecha gloriosa, experimentamos todavía su influencia y tardaremos bastante en eximirnos de ella. […] ¡Tiempos heroicos de la literatura moderna! Sólo la ciega intolerancia podrá desconocer su valor y considerarlos únicamente como preparación para la edad Realista que empieza" (1893: 83). Even in the works of the popular melodramatic novelist Fernández y González, whose success she views as ephemeral, Pardo Bazán admires the "riquísima fantasía y variada paleta descriptiva y numerosa invención" (1893: 256-57). As several critics have observed, Pardo Bazán would continue to wrestle with the Romantic legacy in her own fiction (Tolliver (1998: 14, 143); Henn (1998: 208)).

Galdós and Pardo Bazán's aim was to reconceive *imaginación* and *fantasía* from the disposition of serenity. When Galdós draws his distinction between the two ways that literature and lived experience could coincide, he does so specifically in recognition of the literary imagination's role in human life: "La verdad es que existe un mundo de novela. En todas las imaginaciones hay el recuerdo, la visión de una sociedad que hemos conocido en nuestras lecturas" (1870: 164). His hostility to the "novela de impresiones y movimiento" concerns the way in which emotional and physical dynamism and agitation was evoked, not their importance to literature. In the world of the middle classes – to his mind, the world truly distinctive to the nineteenth century –, he specifically seeks "la incesante agitación" and – in overtly theatrical terms – "esta turbación honda, esta lucha incesante de principios y hechos que constituye el maravilloso drama de la vida actual" (1870: 167).

Understood in this light, *realismo* could, theoretically, encompass what Alas called the "elemento fantástico": after all, Pardo Bazán said that everything could be harboured within Realism. The test applied would not be whether something was "fantástico", but whether it was at odds with a grounded sense of serenity. If the earlier nineteenth-century Spanish literature of the fantastic was ignored, this was because it was at the extravagant extremes of the spectrum of *fantasía*, *imaginación*, *ideal* and passions. Perhaps suggestively, in occasional twentieth-century efforts to rehabilitate Ros and others, the term "los raros" was used (Gimferrer, 1985): the word echoes both Galdós's reference to "algún individuo extremadamente raro" and the later notion of "weird fiction" in which there is no "safeguard" for humanity (Lovecraft, 2000). In principle, if the chimeras of *fantasía* could be rendered with serenity, rather than as weird fiction,

literature with fantastic elements could be reclaimed, now re-conceived as an exploration of "realismo".

Even as Pardo Bazán and Galdós set themselves apart from previous decades, they were actually reworking and echoing the most fundamental terms of debate from those earlier years. The continuing fascination with such trends is suggested by Galdós's interest in Hoffmann (Gilman 1981: 203). Their anxiety about *fantasía*'s mental disturbance, its wayward extravagance, deliriums, *extravíos* and *desvaríos* – its ungroundedness – is the same fear ambiguously expressed, for example, in Ros's earliest fantastic short fiction. In those texts, insanity and illness build through meandering, metamorphosing pursuit, disrupting *argumento*. When Ovejas advocated for Ros – and Hoffmann, Goya, and Faust –, his line of defence was that the apparently fragmentary fantastic expressed a *lógica* found at the heart of *fantasía.* That is to say, he was trying to show how the fantastic could be properly grounded, rather than being merely wayward (Ginger, 1999: 227-50, 301-27).

Both Galdós and Pardo Bazán were responding to a long debate about the role of human creative freedom, and its capacity to liberate, but also to oppress and destroy by breaching previously given rules and foundations. In his famous article "Literatura" (1836), Larra succinctly stated the centrality of *imaginación* – that creative capacity to make images – and relatedly of *pasión*, to the project of liberty: there must be "*Libertad* en literatura, como en las artes, como en la industria, como en el comercio, como en la conciencia", "Porque las pasiones en el hombre siempre serán *verdades*, porque la imaginación misma ¿qué es sino una *verdad*, más hermosa?" (1961: 982-83). Throughout the century, there was a heterogeneous discussion about the (supposed) eruption of energetic emotional forces of the imagination in political revolution and in literary innovation. The question was how to reconcile such forces with some kind of grounded order. For the purposes of the present article, a full summary of the debate would be excessive; salient examples suffice. As early as 1820, the Benthamite liberal Toribio Núñez spoke gravely of "las acaloradas imaginaciones del último siglo" (1820: 4). Looking back on the revolutionary era in his *El espíritu del siglo* (1835-1851), the conservative statesman Francisco Martínez de la Rosa pondered the dangers of the "imaginación ardiente", especially the overheated "imaginación del pueblo" (1962: 212, 85). Pleading a similar case for a sober middle course, the philosopher Tomás García Luna proclaimed in 1843 that the nineteenth century "no es el siglo de las exageraciones" (1843: 51-52). Larra mocked those who sought such a middle way, for trying to achieve an "entusiasmo frío y racional" (1962: 1165). In opposition to moderates in 1840-41, the leading Progressive Liberal, Joaquín María López demanded that passion not be killed off even as reason must preside the rebuilding of society after the energetic destruction wrought by revolution. If, on the one hand, the language of political theory should avoid the "imaginación", a country's political arrangements fail if they form "un ser abstracto, que ni habla al corazón ni a la imaginación" (1856-57: 8-11, 127). Not dissimilarly, the leftist historian Miguel Agustín Príncipe combined his warnings about the dangers of revolutionary passion with his rec-

ognition of the need for such emotion, and with his complaint that Habsburg and Bourbon despotism had repressed Spaniards' "risueña imaginación" (1845-48: I, 532, II, 151). His more conservative liberal opponent the Conde de Toreno back in 1836-38 had also mused the advantages and disadvantages of Spanish passion in war against the French and in revolution, at once a source of disorder and of inspiration (1953: 107, 223, 244). Writing in 1872, his later prologuist Leopoldo Augusto de Cueto praised Toreno because he was not carried away by "los extravíos de la imaginación" (1953: L)

If political thinkers addressed the spectrum of *imaginación* and of passion, so did literary critics and theorists, especially in response to the works of Hugo and Dumas, and more broadly of the "Romantics". Since at least Allison Peers, scholars have known that many writers, alarmed by the threat of excesses and of insufficiently robust literary and ethical criteria (as they saw it), sought a middle course between supposedly unfettered freedom and rigid order (Peers 1940). The debate was complex and multidirectional. Even those most overtly defending Hugo did so on the grounds that his work brought a new kind of reason and order, encompassed in his own twin demand for liberty and the law. The Progressive Liberal Salas y Quiroga praised Hugo's unlimited, unbounded *imaginación* – "no conoce más ley ni más barrera que su imaginación" (1834: x) –, while associating him with the triumph of ethical *filosofía*: "Filosofía: VÍCTOR HUGO no tiene un verso sin ella, una frase que no tenga un fin moral" (1837-38; no. 25, 6-7). Decades later, Bécquer's "Introducción sinfónica" (1868) offers a resonant example of the overlap between the language of revolutionary politics and literature. The author recounts his struggles with the "sediciones de los rebeldes hijos de mi imaginación". These he describes as "los extravagantes hijos de mi fantasía" who "pugnan por dilatar su fantástica existencia" (1998: 123-24).

Pardo Bazán's complaints about nineteenth-century excesses of the imagination, and her calls for restraint are, therefore, echoes of similar remarks published again and again since the 1820s. So is the very notion that the time of extravagance is now concluding. Such assertions could occur even in the most experimental literature of the fantastic: Berzosa, the prologuist of *El doctor Lañuela*, praised Ros because "entre el atildado clasicismo de magistrales convenciones, y el intonso romanticismo con el extravío por regla, se desliza el verdadero poeta" (Ros de Olano, 1863: 10). In his "Observaciones…", Galdós likewise intervenes in these long standing political and literary debates. He explicitly repeats the view expressed by other commentators that "somos en todo unos soñadores que no sabemos descender de las regiones del más sublime extravío, y en literatura como en política, nos vamos por esas nubes montados en nuestros hipógrifos". He attributes the absence of attention to reality to the disrupted political state of postrevolutionary society: "las continuas crisis que atravesamos, y que no nos han dado punto de reposo" (1870: 163).

Realismo is thus characterized by a two-edged relationship with preceding decades. In DuPont's words, putatively Realist writers had "romantic skeletons in their cupboard" (2006: 26). On the one hand, Galdós and Pardo Bazán offer a reformulation, if not a recapitulation, of the deepest concerns of earlier years,

as if now refracted through the latest effort at serene balance. On the other hand, *realismo* aggressively asserts its difference from that immediate past, and draws a stark line of periodisation. While ostensibly valuing the contribution of Romantics and their successors, Pardo Bazán is clear that hardly any of their texts really meet the test of time, because of their dated extravagance: Chateaubriand and Lamartine's prose works are "marchitas", and Hugo's "destartaladas" (1893: 132). "El romanticismo tuvo ritos, a los cuales, en el año de 1882, nadie se sujetaría sin que le retozase la risa en el cuerpo," she declares (1893: 93). This is not just a question of changing fashions: the logic of her argument is that "realismo" is inherently superior and enduring because of its inclusive equanimity. Galdós ostensibly tempers his rejection of the earlier decades by distinguishing other genres from the sorry fate of the novel: he praises the Spanish lyric poets of the century and the "brillante período del teatro contemporáneo" (1870: 162). But he is careful to associate the true spirit of the nineteenth century with "Realist" long prose fiction. It is as if the Spanish literary century will only begin in earnest once the "Realist" novel and its serenity triumphs. With the present predominance of "sublime extravío", it is "como si no estuviéramos en el siglo XIX y en un rincón de esta vieja Europa, que ya se va aficionando mucho a la realidad" (1870: 163). By making an association between the "Realist" novel and the middle classes, Galdós presents the former as the authentic – and politically legitimate – literature of the nineteenth century: "Ella [la clase media] es hoy la base del orden social; ella asume por su iniciativa y por su inteligencia la soberanía de las naciones, y en ella está el hombre del siglo XIX" (1870: 167).

The rejection of preceding decades of aimless emotional extravagance was no doubt a good fit with the taste of many twentieth-century literary and political intellectuals. Across a considerable spectrum of critical opinion – including T. S. Eliot's impersonal theory of poetry in 1919 (1998: 27-33; Kumar Sarker, 2008: 39), the New Critics Wimsatt and Beardsley's affective fallacy outlined in 1949 (Wimsatt, 1989: 21-39; Siebers, 1993: 38), and Paul DeMan's analysis of the rhetoric of Romanticism (1984) –, there was deep suspicion of any direct association between literature and the outpouring of emotion. Literature was widely held to be a construct made of literary material – whether historic or semiotic. Emotional outbursts unwittingly revealed their own (risible) performative theatricality, whereas good literature and criticism openly acknowledged its own distance from sentimentality. The temper of Galdós's writing and his (supposed) ironic references to novelistic and theatrical performances of emotion proved especially appealing to those schooled in post-structuralism (for example, Gullón, 1991). In turn, many politically minded historians – from conservative liberals to Marxists – sought out the specific reasons for Spanish liberalism's fall in its formative nineteenth-century years from 1808 onwards. They often shared the view that intellectual life had been characterized by hollow, rhetorically emotional posturing that did not engage with the concrete reality of Spanish society. Raymond Carr approvingly quoted an (unnamed) politician who stated that Spanish liberalism was "not very clear, not always logical, afflicted with a certain mysticism". Carr said of Spanish Progressive Liberal politics that "the

vaguer these beliefs, the more easily they covered the cracks in the social base". Carr (1982: 167). Eloy Terrón eloquently described this (supposed) detachment from concrete realities as the "confusionismo dominante" (Terrón, 1969: 171). There were, of course, many intervening steps and nuances in these various historiographical discussions beyond the scope of the present article. But – at a minimum – the combination of such political and literary viewpoints could offer encouragement for reading Pardo Bazán and Galdós's essays as much more literal descriptions of the Spanish nineteenth century than they actually were. By extension, such an outlook offered little by way of an invitation to re-examine the preceding critical debates and literature in relation to which they wrote.

The "Realist" re-writing of nineteenth-century literary history delivered a further twist of the knife to Spanish fantastic prose of earlier decades. As Galdós and Pardo Bazán viewed those years through the lens of their own values, they placed *costumbrista* writing on a high pedestal. It was the closest kind of literary prose they could find to their own sensibility. For Pardo Bazán the Realist novel is the truly nineteenth-century form of literature – "el género […] más propio de nuestro siglo" (1893: 271) –, and its only antecedents in nineteenth-century Spain are the *costrumbristas*: "Cuando tanta novela de aquella época pasó para no volver, los escritos ligeros de Fígaro y del Curioso Parlante se conservan en toda su frescura, porque los embalsama la mirra preciosa de la verdad". It is here that "empieza el realismo español contemporáneo" (1893: 267). The culmination of Galdós' *"*Observaciones…" is a long paean to a not especially interesting *costumbrista*, Ventura Ruiz Aguilera (Rodgers, 1985: 29). Unlike elsewhere in Europe, where such writing has been if anything undervalued and eclipsed in retrospect (Lauster, 2007), Spanish literary history ended up giving extensive treatment to occasional and collected short articles on social customs (notably those by Mesonero Romanos), as well as to longer fiction that evoked the charms of traditional rural behaviour (especially Fernán Caballero). These works were to occupy a curious position: at once elevated to a lofty height above all other prose before 1870 and yet damned with faint praise. If the supreme nineteenth-century genre is the Realist novel, then such writings are no more than embryonic precursors. As Galdós puts it, the vogue for *costumbrismo* is typical of the "lenta y laboriosa prueba" that precedes "los grandes períodos de la literatura novelesca" (1870: 168).

Highly influential twentieth-century studies of the 1800s consolidated these trends, such that fantastic prose was removed all but entirely from view. By the time of Montesinos's canonical study of the nineteenth-century novel (1960), and Shaw's widely read literary history of the period (1972), *costumbrista* writing appeared at the core of serious literary prose of the early to mid-century. It supposedly led to the "Realist" novel, while evidencing a sustained failure to produce "proper" novels before 1870. *Costumbrismo* was thus (supposed) proof of the *retraso* of most Spanish nineteenth-century prose, prior to the arrival of Galdós, Alas, and Pardo Bazán. The alleged evidence of *retraso* chimed once more with the historical notion that there was some original failure in Spanish nineteenth-century liberal culture. As regards literary prose, the claim rested on

a double movement. On the one hand, the prominence of *costumbrismo* was integral to the conclusion – voiced from Peers to Shaw – that early to mid-nineteenth-century Spanish literature largely faded into anodyne conservatism. On the other hand, the very over-emphasis on *costumbrismo* drew attention away from the many prose works that would have undermined such a conclusion, and would have pointed instead to a lively, critically-minded, dynamic culture.

Fantastic prose had played a prominent role in Spanish literary innovation, as we have seen. Ros had radically undone the structuring of narrative around *argumento*; Ovejas had proposed a bold theory of literary fragmentation in his much-reprinted study of Zorrilla; Castro had profoundly probed the relationship of desire and literary plot, and of text and discoverable meaning (Charnon-Deutsch 2010: 85-112; Ríos-Font, 1997). The legacy of "Realism"'s valuing of *costumbrismo* meant that many of these works were hard to find and rediscover. But their fate was not unique, nor could it be. Sitting on the extreme point of the much wider nineteenth-century spectrum of *fantasía*, *imaginación*, the *ideal*, and passions that the "Realists" were seeking to reshape, they were eclipsed as part of that spectrum, along with many other works that were considered to lie on it. Antonio Flores – with his disruptive explorations of media representation, his probing of the underbelly of social corruption, and his satirical future world of science fiction and spiritualist communication with the dead (Haidt 2011; Lawless, 2018) –, was rarely considered in sophisticated ways by literary critics. Attention was sporadic even after Fontanella (1982) championed his work in the early eighties. After the numerous nineteenth-century editions of his works, Flores's monumental *Ayer, Hoy y Mañana* seems never to have been reissued in the twentieth. Miguel de los Santos Álvarez's short stories and novel (*La protección de un sastre*), with their grotesquely ludic, deathly re-conception of sentimental prose, their pre-echoes of *esperpento* (Ginger 1999: 285-99) met a similar fate, and were no longer reprinted after the 1920s.

The resemblance between these authors and Ros, Ovejas, and Castro might be thought to be their extreme flights of fantasy or a vanguard threat to literary structure or both. But in "Realism"'s reconfiguration of literary history, they all ended up in much the same bucket as any number of other instances of prose *fantasía* – of extravagant imagination – in a much wider sense, with which they might otherwise appear to have little in common. Notably, this includes melodramatic prose by women writers and by commercial authors. In Spain between 1920 and 1960, there seem to have been no stand-alone editions of Gómez de Avellaneda's novel *Sab*; Courtney Tarr even listed it among novels that "barely merit mention" (1939: 25). It is now, of course, regarded as a groundbreaking foundational fiction of racial identity and oppression (Sommer, 1993: 114-37). Until very recently, the leading commercial writers Ayguals de Izco and Fernández y González were regarded as historical examples of a publishing phenomenon (Ferreras, 1972), rather than as innovators in political literature, in multiple media creations or in the interplay of oral and literary voice, as they would now often be seen (Andreu Miralles, 2020; Díaz Lage 2021). The impact of Galdós's condemnation of them was long-lasting (Martí-López 2003: 67).

The "Realist" rewriting of national literary history extended to the relationship between earlier centuries and the nineteenth. At stake was the relationship over the *longue durée* between the development of literature in Castilian, and *fantasía*, *imaginación* and the passions. The earlier nineteenth-century Spanish literature of the fantastic directly and indirectly evoked historic sources. Alongside Hoffmann, Ros's "El escribano" evokes the "historias fabulosas" of Spanish folktales as a parallel source for the fantastic. Even when the character Martín tells an absurdly parodic version of a Hoffmanesque tale, he draws clearly on the Cervantine source of Don Quij33ote's battle with sheep. As Payán shows, such Cervantine sources are apparent too in Castro's *Caballero de las Botas Azules* and its book-obsessed characters in need of a cure. Payán notes how Salvador Bermúdez de Castro explicitly suggested that Spanish Golden Age literature, and its religious mysteries, provided an earlier source for the fantastic to which contemporary writers might return. Such was the inspiration for Zorrilla's ventures into a peculiarly Spanish literature of the fantastic (2022: 125-30, 133-50, 229-82). Ovejas alludes to Goya's *Caprichos*, in his description of the fantastic's fragmentary narrative structure, just as in his fantastical epic poem *Aspiración* he echoes San Juan de la Cruz's mystical "noche oscura" with his own "noche umbría" (2022: 18, 29).

The Spanish fantastic could be associated with specific stylistic traits derived from the Golden Age. When Gil y Carrasco speaks of Hoffmann becoming an "hombre fantástico" because "al crepúsculo actual añadía las brumas del misticismo alemán y las nubes de su imaginación", his words invite us to consider what would happen if other national outlooks – Spanish, say – were combined with the *imaginación* and the contemporary twilight era. Ros de Olano's "Libro de memorias de Elisa" (1841) archly links fragmentary, imagistic writing – characteristic of his fantastic narratives – with the supposed traits of Andalusian poetry. He contrasts the latter with the putatively profound, reasoned verses of the Germans. Lacking "cierto orden en las ideas", the Andalusian "las [sensaciones] arroja palpitantes del corazón a la boca y su palabra es fácil, hiperbólica y está salpicada de imágenes" (1841: 211). Ovejas's highly imagistic successions of fragments in his published verse likewise fit well with such a description, as it does with the Pindaric practice of much Golden-Age poetry (Ginger, 1999: 228, 337).

The acceptable limit point of the *imaginación* – that faculty of producing images – and of *fantasía* were at the heart of debates on the historical legacy of Spanish literature, and had been since the latter part of the eighteenth century. When the then-neoclassicist Mora opposed Böhl von Faber's Romantic apology for Golden-Age literature, he objected, not to the German's praise for Spain's propensity for *imaginación*, *fantasía*, and passionate creativity, but to being too indulgent of these things, relative to respect for rules. In 1814, Mora declared: "¿Quién es el que puede dudar que la naturaleza ha creado en España, especialmente en orillas del Guadalquivir, los genios más análogos para las bellezas de la imaginación? ¿Dónde se encuentran en Europa tanta multitud de ingenios fogosos y agradables como los que en la *risueña* Andalucía han honrado la

poesía con la fecundad de su fantasía […] con acumuladas y brillantes imágenes […]?". The question for Mora – as for many others – was how to balance such a sensibility with some semblance of reasoned order (Navas Ruiz, 1971: 24). It was widely felt that such tendencies ultimately degenerated into excesses in the over-intricate imagery of *conceptismo* and *culteranismo*, and in the more flagrant departures from the unities in Golden-Age drama. This lack of ordered clarity was associated with the path to national decadence and decline, with a lack of enlightened thought (Glendinning, 1972: 22-23; Sebold, 1985: 65-99). A wariness remained about such dangers even once it was more widely accepted that the Spanish *imaginación* and *fantasía* should be embraced in their own right, and not as concessions from classical rules. In the late 1820s, the great Spanish defender of Golden-Age literary structure and style, Agustín Durán, continued to lament that "Abusando de sus propias riquezas, llegó a exagerarlas y prodigarlas de tal modo que las convirtió en defectos y los defectos en vicios intolerables" (1828: 13). In the 1830s, Larra was still troubled that Golden-Age literature, "imaginación toda", was "más brillante que sólida" (1961: 976-77).

Durán's influential study of Spanish sensibilities, presented as a prologue to his edition of Spanish balladry (1828-32), centered on the interplay between sobriety and the *imaginación* and *fantasía*. In his mind, literature concerned with supernatural phenomena was closely associated with *fantasía* and the *imaginación*. Durán argued that before the sixteenth century and during the conflict with the Islamic states of Iberia, Spanish verse offered "narraciones sencillas y áridas de hechos que carecen del brillo de una imaginación verdaderamente poética". This aesthetically displeasing severity, he argued, derived from a hostility to Arabic culture's propensity to "lo maravilloso". There were therefore "ni fadas, ni genios, ni encantadores". Heroes were brave, but never enchanted. Only towards the end of the sixteenth century, long after the defeat of Andalusian Islam, could the Iberian legacy of *fantasía* and *imaginación*, bequeathed by the Arabs, be incorporated into a newly reconstructed Spanish sensibility in an "amalgama y fusión de las partes heterogéneas". It was then that Spanish poets "vertieron raudales de imaginación y fantasía" and embraced "aquella rica inventiva, aquella gala y soltura, aquellas formas libres y fáciles, aquel lujo de colorido y de estilo" (1849: LXI). For Durán – as, in varying ways, for many after him –, this was the most valuable achievement of Spanish literature and should be a reference point for nineteenth-century writers. Modern day poets, he proclaimed could find there "una multitud de modelos abundantes de bella, rica y briosa fantasía, que enalteciendo su imaginación, le sirvan para engalanar su ingenio" (1849: X-XI). Durán's guidance could lead as easily to a literature of the fantastic that leapt in fragments from image to image, as it could to a literature of the fantastic that drew on exoticizing Orientalisms. Once again, "lo maravilloso" would be but an extreme instance of a much wider spectrum of luxuriant *fantasía* and *imaginación*.

In his "Observaciones…", Galdós intervenes directly and explicitly in this ongoing debate about Spanish sensibility, *imaginación* and *fantasía*. He does so in order to overturn the long-established tenets of literary scholarship. Galdós

sets these up as a straw man: "Las personas dadas a la investigación" – he says – claim that "los Españoles somos poco observadores, y carecemos por lo tanto de la principal virtud para la creación de la novela moderna. La fantasía andaluza y castellana, que ha creado la más rica poesía popular que existe en la civilización cristiana, la literatura mística, y el gran teatro del siglo XVII, es completamente incapaz para el caso." Galdós goes on flatly to contradict Durán, and his predecessors and successors, by affirming that this *fantasía andaluza y castellana* was actually a transient phenomenon, and was never, in fact, the main characteristic of Spain's culminating aesthetic achievements. In saying this, he radically reaffirms the association between national decline and excess *imaginación* and *fantasía*, and sees the latter as a by-product of the former: "la citada disposición es más bien accidental, hija sin duda de condiciones del tiempo, que innata y característica. Examinando la cualidad de la observación en nuestros escritores, veremos que Cervantes, la más grande personalidad producida por esta tierra, la poseía en tal alto grado, que de seguro no se hallará en antiguos ni modernos quien le aventaje, ni aun le iguale. […] La aptitud existe en nuestra raza; pero sin duda esta degeneración lamentable en que vivimos, nos la eclipsa y sofoca" (1870: 162-63). Spanishness is not defined by extreme *imaginación* and *fantasía* but is rather driven to these by the absence of conditions for serenity.

This was a major about-turn. The historic touchstones of Spanish greatness were now aligned with attention to "reality" (Welge 2015: 63; Burdiel 2019: 160) as opposed to extravagant imagery and creations. As she rejected Naturalist extremism, Pardo Bazán succinctly summarized the revised position: "nuestros mejores clásicos [...] Realistas y muy Realistas eran" (1893: 232). Quite contrary to Durán, she affirms that: "Es el realismo tradición de nuestra literatura y arte en general; nuestros narradores se distinguieron por la frase gráfica y la observación franca y sincera; y desde los tiempos gloriosos de nuestra mayor prosperidad intelectual" (1892: 285). Durán and others had sought to reconnect nineteenth-century writing to a Spanish legacy of Golden-Age *fantasía* and *imaginación* from which they were separated by a period of unacceptable decadence and equally unacceptable neo-classical restraint. In her alternate historiography, Pardo Bazán sees herself and her contemporaries as reconnecting Spanish prose fiction with the legacy of Golden-Age "realismo", interrupted by a period of excess *imaginación* and *fantasía.* She momentarily toys with delegitimizing all intervening long prose fiction in Spain: "Allá por Inglaterra y Francia la novela tiene un ayer; acá en España, sólo un anteayer, si es lícito expresarse así. [...] Es tanto como decir que no hubo en España más novela que la del siglo de oro y la hoy floreciente" (1893: 255).

This "Realist" literary historiography appears to destroy the established foundations of a distinctively Spanish fantastic literature: luxuriant *fantasía* and *imaginación*, the *maravilloso* even, are no longer the touchstones of national sensibility. But, just as the spirit of serene "realismo" could include many different kinds of writing, and just as it prized its own version of *fantasía* and *imaginación*, so it was possible to reimagine a Spanish literature of the fantastic towards the end of the nineteenth century. Galdós's *El amigo Manso* provides us

with a case study of the effort to revisit the Spanish fantastic from the vantage point of "Realist" serenity.

El amigo Manso might best be described as an anti-fantastic novel. By this, I mean that it is like an inverted, mirror image of the earlier fantastic – in the way that an anti-hero is a version of the hero, or an anti-novel is a kind of novel. The "elemento fantástico" that Alas discerned in *El amigo Manso* plays a fundamental role in establishing who – or perhaps better, what – Manso is, and in accounting for his apparent demise. The entity who becomes Manso resides with other such fleshless "entidades" in the "Limbo". At times, the entity sleeps on a cloud. In this realm, there are all kinds of events including rebellions and military uprisings. Seraphims bring gossip of the human world. The entities are able to observe humans, and to descend into living brains and examine their thoughts. They are even able to listen to human minds by means of a telephone (the human version of which first appeared in 1878) (1884: 2, 310-11). Galdós uses black magic to transform his chosen entity into a flesh-and-blood being: a ritual involving a phial smelling of sulphur and hellish drugs, a drop of ink, burnt paper, and a flash of flame (1884: 3). This leads to the "encarnación" (1884: 308) – incarnation –, and to the declaration that opens chapter 2, "Yo soy Máximo Manso". The creature comes into earthly being at the age of thirty-five, with an extensive backstory, as if the human past itself had been altered. Eventually, the entity's earthly existence starts to break down: "yo no me parecía a mí mismo. Era a ratos sombra desfigurada del señor de Manso" (1884: 306). Galdós once more appears and carries out his black magic spell, while the entity protests at having been sent into the human world: "¿quiere usted acabar de una vez conmigo y recoger esta carne mortal en que para divertirse me ha metido? Cosa más sin gracia…" (1884: 308). The entity now returns to Limbo where it observes the novel's other characters after Manso's death.

The entity that becomes Manso matches the very dictionary definition of the *fantástico*: "Quimérico, fingido, que no tiene realidad, y consiste solo en la imaginación". The novel famously begins with the words "Yo no existo"[4]. Residing in "estos espacios de la idea donde mora todo lo que no existe", the entity declares: "Quimera soy, sueño de sueño y sombra de sombra". The humorous, playful, even ironic treatment of this "elemento fantástico" does not obviate its significance in underpinning the entire novel. The narrative frame accounts for how Manso is such a misfit in the human world, and for why he longs to be taken (back) out of it: he is never anything but "un remedo o máscara de persona viviente" (1884: 1-2). Moreover, the somewhat absurd, ludic extravagance of this aspect of the novel is absolutely in keeping with the fantastic as it had often been practised in nineteenth-century Spain. In Ros's "La noche de máscaras", for example, readers had encountered a military officer with a mirror in his stomach, smoking breadcrumbs wrapped in a maize leaf, and a woman spitting toads. Such bizarre humour had underscored the disruptive limit point of *fantasía* and

4 These words have, of course, been of much interest to the critics concerned with understanding Galdós in terms of the interplay of fiction and reality, and as a practitioner of metafiction (for example, Kronik (1993)).

the *imaginación*; it invited us to ponder that disruption.

The "elemento fantástico" is now utterly re-conceived, while remaining recognizable as such. The fantastic entity is associated with the serenity and equanimity, the apparent opposite of disruptive flights of the *imaginación* and *fantasía*, of wayward passions. When, with relief, the entity finds himself released from human form, he notes that "el sosiego me dio a entender que había dejado de ser hombre". Restored to Limbo, he delights in "el plácido reposo" that it affords (1884: 308-09). Intentionally or otherwise, this image is an inversion of Bécquer's grotesque description of entities in Limbo, in his *Introducción sinfónica,* "en extravagante procesión, pidiéndome con gestos y contorsiones que os saque a la vida de la realidad del limbo en que vivís" (1998: 125).[5] During his incarnation as Manso, the entity is the great defender of serenity and of restraint upon *imaginación.* His self-description closely matches Galdós's call for novelists to base their works on careful observation of the world: "Constantemente me congratulo de este mi carácter templado, de la condición subalterna de mi imaginación, de mi espíritu observador y práctico" (1884: 11). Manso's serenity prevents the plot from becoming an impassioned melodrama, and so restrains the wider spectrum of narrative *fantasía* to which the earlier fantastic belonged. Manso stops his married brother's illicit efforts to seduce Manso's female pupil, Irene. Triumphant, Manso crows that "lo mejor era que había conseguido mi objeto sin gritería ni violencia. No había habido drama, cosa en extremo lisonjera para todos" (1887: 224). This metamorphosis of the earlier fantastic into a new "Realist" version is aptly summarized in Alas's report of Galdós's remarks: "No le va a gustar a Vd. Vuelvo a mis sueños en este libro; es pura fantasía, un juguete. Pocos días después le hablé de su libro, y me dijo: ¿Sabe Vd. que no sale como yo creía? Sin querer vuelvo a la realidad, a la observación" (1980: 67).

The entire novel re-enacts the wrestling over *imaginación* and groundedness that had so dominated literary and political debate for decades and that had been the defining reference point for the *fantástico*. The narrative depicts the entity's struggle to bring serene order to a potentially turbulent human world. As we have seen, Galdós now located the sources of disruptive creativity, and of the marvellous, in the ordinary life of the middle classes: their "incesante agitación", and the "lucha incesante de principios y hechos que constituye el maravilloso drama de la vida actual". As the plot twists and turns, Manso observes how events threaten to disrupt groundedness, but also how the plot differs from earlier fantastical narratives: "trae mi narración cosas tan estupendas que no las va a creer nadie, y no porque en ellas entre ni un adarme de ingrediente maravilloso" (1884: 247). It is this agitated drama that ultimately corrupts and destroys the entity's human incarnation, even as Manso succeeds in preventing a melodrama from occurring. The usually serene teacher becomes wracked with unrequited desire for his pupil Irene, and with jealousy for her admirers. While he successfully restrains and represses his extravagant feelings, it is at the expense of his

5 Gilman (1981: 202-03) notes the contrast between Bécquer's vision of his inner world and Galdós's in *El amigo Manso*, observing the element of "estrangement" that combines with the "rampaging imagination" in Galdós.

own existence in the human world. The culprit is the *imaginación*. Perturbed by his feelings, Manso at one point exclaims: "Tú, imaginación, fuiste la causa de todos mis tormentos en aquella noche aciaga" (1884: 278). The agitation of everyday life, rather than the realm of the fantastical, becomes the source of *fantasía*'s departure into disturbing dreams, and into the wild fragmentation of *argumento* familiar from Ros and Ovejas, or from Bécquer's insomnia in *Introducción sinfónica*. On one occasion, Manso is faced with "el lúgubre cuadro que mi fantasía trazaba en aquella hora de la madrugada, propicia al delirio y a la fiebre". He despairs that "mis ideas estaban trastocadas, mis sentimientos barajados en desorden; unas y otras aparecían fuera de tiempo. Anarquía loca reinaba en mi espíritu" (1884: 244, 242).

Just as Galdós and Pardo Bazán sought to reconfigure decades of debate about Spain's relationship to *fantasía*, the *imaginación*, the *ideal* and wayward passions, so the anti-fantastic entity engages with post-revolutionary Spain and with the legacy of the country's longer history. Manso's efforts to school his male pupil Manuel in severe philosophy are overwhelmed by his student's preference for dazzling speech. When teacher and alum in turn address a public gathering, Manuel's words take his audience on "un paseo por las regiones fantásticas". Manuel tries to "encerrar su fantasía dentro de un plan lógico", but the observant Manso muses: "¿Y de qué hablaba? No lo sé fijamente". The capacity to unleash torrents of imagery – the very definition of the *imaginación* – has taken over: "las imágenes sucedían a las imágenes" (1884: 171-72). Manuel's talents and predilections clearly echo the decades-old claim that Spanish eloquence was prone to extremes of *imaginación* and *fantasía*, and the more specific assertion that, due to contingent historical circumstances, Spaniards tend to be "idealistas desaforados" and to *imaginar* rather than *observar*. "Ante todo, España es el país clásico de la oratoria," Manso affirms (1884: 105). Spanish nineteenth-century society exhibits "la falta de un principio de organización," he says (1884: 246). In turn, Manso is disappointed in his hope that his female pupil, Irene, will become a serene, philosophical spirit like himself. Her true interests lie elsewhere, not least in her desire for Manuel. "Mi imaginación no descansaba," she tells Manso as she confesses her affections. "Los tiempos, la raza, el ambiente no se desmentían en ella", Manso is forced to conclude. Irene lacks "aquel reposo y los maravillosos equilibrios de mujer del norte que vi en ella" (1884: 266).

Two contrasting possible destinies for Spain are evoked in Manso and his brother. Both are explicitly associated with the supposed rebirth of an independent Spain, and the start of the so-called Reconquest against Islamic Iberia, the emblematic location of Covadonga in Asturias. "Soy asturiano. Nací en Cangas de Onís, en la puerta de Covadonga y del monte Auseba," Manso tells us. "La nacionalidad española y yo somos hermanos" (1884: 7). From his first appearance in the novel, his brother – who has made his fortune in the Caribbean remnants of the old Spanish empire – is likewise associated with this source of Spanish nationality: "José María no tenía palabras, el primer dia, más que para hablarme de nuestra hermosa y poética Asturias" (1884: 52). The brother's arrival brings disruption to Manso's serene life, both through the immediate tur-

bulence brought by his Hispano-Caribbean family, and, subsequently, through his attempted seduction of Irene which so nearly causes a drama. Fleeing the now fraught circumstances of Cuba and its recent anti-colonial rebellion, the disruptive José María is causally linked to the very foundations of Spain's overseas empire and of the old Hispanic monarchy: "Diome la corazonada de que el arribo de aquel famillón iba a trastornar mi vida, y así el natural gusto de abrazar a mi hermano se amargaba con el presentimiento de un molestísimo desbarajuste en mis costumbres. […] Volvía mis tristes ojos a la historia, y no le perdonaba, no, a Cristóbal Colón que hubiera descubierto el Nuevo Mundo" (1884: 51, 57).[6]

The association between empire and turbulence echoes the unease among some nineteenth-century Spanish liberals about an overwhelming, destructive force of tyranny that emerged from their past history and violated all restraining boundaries. As far back as 1795-1808, in his ode to the *comunero* hero Padilla, the poet Quintana – influential throughout the nineteenth century – described the rise of Imperial Spain as a violent torrent: "aquella fuerza indómita, impaciente, / En tan estrechos términos no pudo / Contenerse, y rompió; como torrente / Llevó tras sí la agitación, la guerra, / Y fatigó con crímenes la tierra" (1978: 123). In his "El Panteón de El Escorial" (1802-1808), contemplating a succession of tyrannical imperial monarchs, Quintana likewise finds himself beset by nightmarish *fantasía* and the disturbing effects of the *imaginación*: "Mil terribles imágenes se ofrecen / A mi atemorizada fantasía" (1978: 178). In turn, Larra associated Spain's tendency to brilliant, rather than intellectually solid, imagination in the Golden Age with the transformation of internal freedom into a desire for external conquests. Imperialism became a kind of national poetics: "la gloria, poesía de las naciones conquistadoras". "El celo fundador y apostólico [que] nos llevó a descubrir nuevos mundos […] ¿Qué mucho que la España de entonces trocase su libertad interior por el dominio en el exterior" (1961: 977).

The incarnation of the entity in Manso – and the retrospective effect of giving him 35 years of prior existence back to his birth in Covadonga – suggests an alternate historical pathway for Spaniards, just as Galdós sought to render the nation's association with extravagant *imaginación* and *fantasía* merely contingent, and just as Pardo Bazán and Galdós invoked an interrupted connection between Spain and the *realismo* that they hoped now to renew. Manso appears as a nineteenth-century version of Don Quijote – a "caballero quijotero" (1884: 285)– struggling to bend a wayward world to his ethical and aesthetic dictates. The fantastical-entity-made-flesh embodies the notion that *imaginación*, *idealidad*, and *fantasía* are best expressed in Cervantine Realism.[7] But like his Golden-Age ancestor Don Quijote, Manso seems at best only partially successful in his chivalric endeavours - at least at first blush. Melodramatic *fantasía* may have been avoided, and with it the worst excesses of the passions, but Manuel,

6 Surwillo (2014) offers an in-depth discussion of the relationship of *El amigo Manso* and other novels to events in Cuba, especially as regards the legacy of imperial slavery.

7 On Spanish Realist views of *Don Quijote* as the supreme fusion of romanticism into Realism, see DuPont (2006: 223-24).

Irene, and José María (in his politics, at least) continue along their version of Spain's historical trajectory, uninterested in true serenity or grounded thought. The incarnation itself dies away, having become an "espíritu enfermo" in this world (1884: 306).

Galdos's deep concern was to find an appropriate way for literature and other realities to intersect with one another in a spirit of serenity. The world into which the entity was incarnated was not, of course, the historical world of the nineteenth-century, but rather a parallel, literary version, containing many recognizable elements of that other reality. Galdós's parallel version extends out of this novel into many other texts, as we can see in the appearance of recurrent characters such as the medical doctor Miquis, and the government employee Pez. This is, as it were, a possible Madrid – rather than the historically actual one –, a version of Madrid conceived through the Realist *imaginación*. But the plot of *El amigo Manso* intimates that attempts to re-direct Madrid's realities along the guide rails of serene *fantasía* will not be enough to secure Galdós's aims. The ending of *El amigo Manso* suggests that a more profound shift in sensibility is needed if literature and other realities are to intersect with appropriate serenity.

The anti-fantastic brings about that deeper transformation – what Rodgers once described as "a deeper and rarer beauty" (1985: 92). Just as Don Quijote finds repose on his death bed when he returns to being Alonso Quijano, so the entity can recover its serenity only when Manso dies, and it returns to the plane of the (anti-)fantastic. The return to the fantastic does not involve a severing of contact with the kind of "Realist" narrative we encountered in the tale of Manso and his companions. Rather, it involves experiencing that Realist narrative through an anti-fantastic sensibility which brings true serenity. As the novel's final words say: "Dichoso estado y regiones dichosas estas en que puedo mirar a Irene, a mi hermano, a Peña, a doña Javiera, a Calígula, a Lica y demás desgraciadas figurillas con el mismo desdén con que el hombre maduro ve los juguetes que le entretuvieron cuando era niño!" (1884: 312). Here, at last, serenity is reconciled with *fantasía*, *imaginación*, and the passions.

This sentiment points to the distinctive quality often observed by critics in many of Galdós's "Realist" novels. Once and again, reality is experienced as if transfigured and fantastical. Manso's name itself alludes to the imitation of Christ, and his story has an air of myth (Collins, 1997: 623; Rodgers 1970). To mention just a few other famous examples, in *Misericordia,* a priest whose existence was invented by one of the characters turns up at their home; in *Nazarín*, we encounter a Christ-like messianic priest in the midst of contemporary Madrid; in *Tristana*, the heroine is transformed by a quasi-mystical experience when her leg is cut off. There was plenty of raw dream-like material here for the Surrealist Luis Buñuel to embark on multiple adaptations of Galdós novels.

In "Observaciones…" and *La cuestión palpitante*, Galdós and Pardo Bazán purged the nineteenth-century Spanish canon, expelling what they saw as extravagant, disruptive expressions of *fantasía* and the *imaginación*. The approach outlined in their essays, later consolidated into the canon, occluded much of Spain's nineteenth-century literature of the fantastic, which met the same fate as

the broader spectrum of *fantasía* and *imaginación* – including melodrama – to which it ultimately belonged. Swathes of Spain's most inventive literature fell out of view. Those two essays were polemical interventions in a decades-long debate about the appropriate extent to which individuals and collectives, politically and in the arts, should exercise the creative freedom of the imagination, and about the risks of abuse attendant on such freedom, both generally, and more specifically in Spain amid the legacy of the imperial monarchy and the Golden Age. In "Observaciones…" and *La cuestión palpitante*, Galdós and Pardo Bazán sought to reconfigure that debate: "Realism" would be a bold, renewed attempt to fuse *imaginación* and *fantasía* with serenity.

Re-framing Galdós and Pardo Bazán in those terms brings dynamic continuities into view across the nineteenth-century. A rich exploration of the appropriate limits for the disruptions wrought by *fantasía* and the *imaginación* gave rise to a multi-faceted literature of the fantastic in the decades prior to Galdós and Pardo Bazán's "Realism". In the latter decades of the nineteenth-century, the new "Realism" recast the disruptive energy of the imagination's creative freedom. This opened the way to new versions of the fantastic, and to a renewed, uncertain struggle to find serenity at the furthest reaches of human creative freedom.

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