"[E]L HOMBRE SE NOS REVELA MEJOR": THE PLACE OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE VISUAL ARTS IN *MISERICORDIA*

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Stephen Miller's exhaustive study of Galdós's sketch albums, *Galdós gráfico*, also serves to catalogue the visual material found in the library of the Casa-Museo Pérez Galdós. Among the collection are thirteen volumes of clippings, mainly etchings and other visual material, primarily taken from periodical literature, and three albums of photographic *carte de visite*, or collectible photo-cards (Miller 139; 160). The volumes of clippings, all in good condition, are filled with diverse materials, juxtaposed with complete indifference to thematic or chronological order (153). This indifference translates into the elimination of many of the titles and other identifying features from the clippings (144-45). The volumes of clippings probably date from 1880, a year in which Galdós does not publish anything, in part because he spent the year planning an illustrated edition of the *Episodios nacionales* (158-59). In his study, Miller also suggests that the volumes reflect Galdós's general interest in documenting his contemporary reality (159-60).

In comparison to the jumbled albums of clippings, the photograph albums are thematically organized, and in varying condition, with the worst being that of the volume dedicated to literary and cultural figures of note (161). Although Miller casts doubt on Galdós's role in collecting the images, due to the several hands in which the inscriptions are written, two of the three volumes bear his *ex libris*, and the first replicates certain preoccupations present in his albums of clippings (161).

Critical attention to visual technologies and their relationship to Galdosian narrative has largely been focused on the kinds of items found in the first set of volumes (that is, etchings and the like), rather than the photograph albums, which are in worn condition, and could be considered cheaper, thus poorly made, mass-produced, and therefore uninteresting in comparison to the sketchbooks and albums of clippings. Rather than a lack of value, however, the worn condition of the photo albums, in contrast to the near-pristine albums of clippings, might suggest their constant use as another means of visualizing contemporary reality. Additionally, if one compares the large selection of clippings and the small collection of albums, it appears that repetition is less the province of photography than of other, more time-consuming forms of visual representation. If the clippings are eclectic and repetitive, the photographs are selective and unique.

Discounting the photo albums for the collection of clippings is a response to cues we find within the narrative theory of the nineteenth century, and within later critical suppositions about the relationship between the narrative of the time and photography, in both of which the disjunction between photography and artistry is strictly maintained.[1] Galdós's reliance on painterly metaphors within his novelistic theory leads critics to focus on painting and etching within Galdosian narrative. As a result, the presence of the photograph in Galdós's novels is unexplored. Yet photography too subtends his narrative theory, primarily in the ways in which

he describes his contemporaries as a mutable crowd, one seemingly best captured by the camera's lens.

In what follows, I explore how the tension between rapid movement and artistic discourse plays out in *Misericordia* (1897), concluded only two months after Galdós's February 7th address to the Real Academia Española, *La sociedad presente como materia novelable*. *Misericordia* can be read as a hybrid creation, as painterly metaphor in the novel gives way to and is underlined by photographic imagery.[2] I contend that the less exact and more time-consuming visual arts, such as painting and engraving, serve as the metaphor for the repetitive gesture on which the narrative of *Misericordia* is constructed. If the painter or etcher retraces lines to create a picture and construct meaning, so too does the novelist gradually build narrative structure and characterization through the accumulation of lines.[3] This accumulation, when done to excess, results in little more than cliché.[4]

In this I differ from the usual formulation of photography as an inherently repetitive genre. I suggest instead that repetition in *Misericordia* originates in earlier visual arts related to etching and printing—cliché and stereotype, the former of which only recently conceptually linked to photography. And photography does in Galdós's novel what etching and related arts do not: capture the movement of modernity, the unrepeatable event.[5]

Reading Visual Cues in Galdosian Literary Theory

Galdós's inaugural discourse to the *Real Academia Española*, given, as noted, two months before the completion of *Misericordia*, reflects on the rapidity and constant movement in literary style and tastes:

> Porque si en el orden científico la rapidez con que se suceden los inventos, ó las aplicaciones de los agentes físicos, hace que los asombros de hoy sean vulgaridades mañana, y que todo prodigioso descubrimiento sea pronto obscurecido por nuevas maravillas de la mecánica y de la industria, del mismo modo, en el orden literario, parece que es ley la volubilidad de la opinión estética, y de continuo la vemos pasar ante nuestros ojos, fugaz y antojadiza, como las modas de vestir. Y así, en brevísimo tiempo, saltamos del idealismo nebuloso a los extremos de la naturalidad: hoy amamos el detalle menudo, mañana las líneas amplias y vigorosas […].[6] (*La sociedad* 22)

Galdós links narrative tastes to shifts in fashion, and introduces both with reference to technological evolution. Just as scientific progress makes the wonders of today "vulgaridades" upon the morrow, so too do the mutable public's demands determine what counts as fashionable in both narrative and clothing (22). These shifts in taste and custom would seem to demand an equal rapidity in the writing process itself, for the author must keep abreast of the times. Galdós's observation significantly comes dressed in language suggestive of painting ("detalle menudo"; "líneas amplias y vigorosas"), while highlighting rapid aesthetic shifts as the hallmark of contemporary society (22). The constant alterations in the tastes of late-nineteenth century audiences are reflections of the protean nature of society itself: "En resumen: la misma confusión evolutiva que advertimos en la sociedad, primera materia del arte novelesco, se nos

traduce en éste por la indecisión de sus ideales, por lo variable de sus formas […]" (23).

Galdós considers rapidly changing aesthetics as a sign of social decay and a loss of distinction, which he describes as a process of "nivelización" that will result in a "muchedumbre caótica" (21; 19). Ways of speaking are becoming standardized, and cities and people are losing their long-held physiognomies, which are no longer "máscaras moldeadas" (20). Human beings and urban landscapes are undergoing a kind of metamorphosis in which both color and form are leeched away, and society as Galdós knows and sees it is in the process of decomposition ("descomposición social") (19-23; reference to p. 23).

Society's decay is a particularly appealing state of affairs for the novelist, however, since such leveling means the loss of type:

> Perdemos los tipos, pero *el hombre se nos revela mejor*, y el Arte se avalora sólo con dar á los seres imaginarios vida más humana que social. Y nadie desconoce que, trabajando con materiales puramente humanos, el esfuerzo del ingenio para expresar la vida ha de ser más grande, y su labor más honda y difícil, como es de mayor empeño la representación plástica del desnudo que la de una figura cargada de ropajes […]. (24-25; my emphasis)

The constantly shifting society Galdós describes demands radical honesty from the artist, who is repaid by his work's value. Confronted with the naked modern subject, in both literal and metaphoric senses of the word, the artist cannot but work harder to depict the subject's true face. The artist who uses clichés relies on meaningless and exhausted tropes. The contemporary artist, in contrast, should strive to create characters that are more human than type, granting them "vida más humana que social," which can be read as a turn from social to psychological discourse, from flat characterization to interior depth (25).

Since writing the modern novel is more difficult than using cliché, however, it will take time, which means, in turn, that metaphors of painting are used as the most adequate to represent this new kind of art: "Quiero, pues, examinar brevemente ese *natural*, hablando en términos pictóricos, que extendido en derredor nuestro, nos dice y aun nos manda que le pintemos, pidiéndonos con arduosa sugestión su retrato para recrearse en él, ó abominar del artista con crítica severa" (14). The metaphorical lexicon of painting–*natural*, *pictóricos, pintemos, retrato*–emphasizes the line that Galdós takes with regard to the novelist's art, which at the same time seems to be in dissonance with the rapidity of the ever-shifting society that Galdós describes in his lecture. The disparity between *brevemente* and *pintemos* signals a conflict between painterly and photographic views of reality that will play itself out in *Misericordia*. By describing narrative in terms of painting yet signaling rapidity as the characteristic trait of the social world the narrative depicts, Galdós unwittingly evidences a contradiction between contemporary society's constant movement, the preterit customs to which his characters are still attached, and the slow tempo of the novelistic genre, described in painterly terms. I would suggest instead that photography is an apt metaphor for the art of fiction in Galdós's time and, furthermore, that this metaphor forms part of the unconscious of *Misericordia*'s narrative.

Key to any distinction between painterly and photographic visions is the term *revelar*, which acquires an additional meaning in the 1899 edition of the *Diccionario* of the Real

Academia Española: "Hacer visible la imagen impresa en la plancha fotográfica" (873). Although the definition proposes an agent engaged in the process of revelation ("hacer visible") (873), Galdós's phrasing expresses passivity, as if the image will reveal itself to the modern author ("el hombre se nos revela mejor") (Galdós, *La sociedad* 25). This passivity makes sense in the rapidly-moving modernity that Galdós as novelist observes, but it does not mesh well with the artistic activity described in *La sociedad*. Rather than the scripting hand, the author becomes an observing–at best, capturing–eye, thus eliminating the creative space in which the author traditionally intervenes.[7]

In addition, the singularity of revelation echoes the logic of the modern city, in which contingency trumps routine, and the unexpected face is more often seen than a familiar type. In "La novela en el tranvía," Galdós describes "aquel breve conocimiento con personas que no hemos visto y que probablemente no volveremos a ver" as both "singular" and as an echo of human existence ("Se parece aquello a la vida humana") (78). In a similar vein, Walter Benjamin, writing about one of Baudelaire's sonnets, describes how the poet's body "twitch[es] spasmodically" upon seeing a beautiful woman, not because the "image has taken possession of every fiber of his being," but because "of the shock with which an imperious desire suddenly overcomes a lonely man" (*Paris 77)*. This "shock" is not about the sublime rapture of the image, but the suddenness of the image's appearance and disappearance. If the crowd subsequently separates the poet from his desire's object, the very existence of the multitude is the necessary condition of desire's existence, or its possibility. And the possibility of capturing the moment occurs at the pace of the crowd's movement, as Ramón de Mesonero Romanos described in 1862:

> Ahora, por el contrario, al paso que el artista ha ido sintiendo enervadas con la edad sus fuerzas y su imaginación, la sociedad del siglo se ha rejuvenecido y vigorizado, en términos de cambiar á cada paso y en cada día de colorido, de fisonomía, de intención. –En vano el pintor fatigado la persigue y estudia, espiando sus movimientos, sus actitudes, sus tendencias; –trabajo inútil; –la sociedad se le escapa de la vista; el modelo se le deshace entre las manos; imposible sorprenderle en un momento de reposo; y sólo echando mano de los progresos velocíferos de la época, del vapor, de la fotografía y de la chispa eléctrica, puede acaso alcanzar á seguir su senda rápida é indecisa; puede fijar sus volubles facciones en el lienzo; puede entablar con ella instantánea y mental comunicacion. (ix-x)

In this passage, Mesonero Romanos narrates the contrast between an enervated artist and a rejuvenated and mutable public. The artist's fatigue can be ascribed precisely to the citizenry's vigorously shifting forms and faces. In Mesonero's description of this state of affairs, the model continually comes undone in the artist's hands ("el modelo se le deshace entre las manos"), and the use of cliché becomes impossible. The only way to bridge the gap between artist and subject is by taking advantage of modern means of depiction, photography among them. Faced with such technical advances, the artist, read here as both author and painter, will eventually give up the old tools of his office for new ones, better fitted to the times.[8] Photography permits

the author or artist to understand the era and establish "instantánea y mental comunicación" with it–even if the end result is a more traditional work of art, affixed to a canvas (Mesonero Romanos x).

If Mesonero Romanos recognizes in 1862 that the possibility of capturing the moment has to occur at the crowd's pace–and at the speed of a shutter's click–then Galdós's 1897 speech, which eschews photography as a metaphor for the literary arts, seems almost deliberately antiquated, even clichéd. If the figure of the author in Galdós's *La sociedad* is that of a painter, one bent on capturing the color and form of a society rapidly losing both, Mesonero Romanos's authorial voice explains the exhaustion that such a painter-author might feel, faced with a vigorous and lively public.

The Galdós of 1897 also seems less attached to movement than the Galdós we see in 1865 and 1870. In his "Revista de la Semana" from December 31, 1865, Galdós wrote that photography "[m]atará el retrato al oleo, no habrá más Van Dyck en el mundo" (*Prosa* 667). In 1870, he would call for a novel that combined the "rapidez" of photography with the "belleza" of painting ("Noticias literarias," *Prosa* 26), even though he generally decried the "feverish composition" of serial novelists in his studies on fiction (Ríos-Font 45; also see Ríos-Font 44-46). The Galdós of 1897, however, appeals to painterly metaphors, repeating as he does so a commonplace about the relationship between art and literature, as well as marking the distance between those commonplaces and the reality the novelist inhabits. Like many of the characters of *Misericordia*, Galdós reiterates the enchantment of past ways of seeing at the same time that he unwittingly describes their obsolescence, clinging to painting and related arts when photography has already come to subtend or supplant them.

Cliché and Revelation in *Misericordia*

Emblematic of my analysis is the description of the portrait of don Carlos Moreno Trujillo's dead wife. The portrait is embedded within a rhetoric of obsolescence, indicative of the relationship between pictorial art, photography, and narrative in *Misericordia*.

> La pared del centro ostentaba el retrato de Doña Pura, cubierto con una gasa negra, en marco que parecía de oro puro. Otros retratos de fotografía, que debían de ser de las hijas, yernos y nietecillos de D. Carlos, veíanse en diversas partes de la estancia. Junto al cuadro grande, y pegadas a él, como las ofrendas o ex-votos en el altar, pendían multitud de coronas de trapo con figuradas rosas, violetas y narcisos, y luengas cintas negras con letras de oro. Eran las coronas que había llevado la señora en su entierro, y que D. Carlos quiso conservar en casa, porque no se estropeasen en la intemperie del camposanto. Sobre la chimenea, nunca encendida, había un reloj de bronce con figuras, que no andaba, y no lejos de allí un almanaque americano, en la fecha del día anterior. (129)

The portrait of Doña Pura is, like other artifacts of mourning, a feature of nineteenth-century middle-class life, one that shows a quite understandable attachment on don Carlos's part to his deceased wife.[9] Although the weight given this particular portrait brings to mind its consolatory effect, its context intimates its importance as a means of representation. The description

of the portrait highlights the distinction between being and seeming; it reflects upon representation and authenticity. Doña Pura's portrait is covered in gauze, which duplicates on a textual level the veiling effect that the narrative provides, bent as it is on describing everything surrounding the portrait rather than the painting itself. The portrait is decorated by a frame that appears to be made of gold, suggesting that its nature is disguised, and that its reality is therefore hard to fix. Instead of signifying closure, the frame points the reader to other displays of artifice, primarily woven crowns that bear crafted flowers. *Figuradas* makes clear some of the difficulties in reading this passage, the term implying simultaneously the presence of something within a description; and something that has been constructed. *Figuradas* highlights the flowers' existence–that is, as something named in the account–, yet could also indicate something that should be taken for flowers, but is a fabrication. By means of these false flowers and ribbons bearing writing, the narrative blurs the distinction between content, frame, and *hors* frame material. It also distorts the line between writing and the pictorial, wrapping one into the other and spilling over in multiplying clichés of mourning. Hazel Gold's observation that Galdosian frames "[…] resist formal closure, duplicate themselves in abyssal structures, or perversely circumscribe an empty field, thereby admonishing readers they must look elsewhere for a repository of stable meaning," is applicable to this passage (*Reframing 3).*

In contrast to the portrait, the photographs are dealt with parenthetically. The passage's descriptive force is focused on the painting, which draws attention to itself both by the preponderance of its decoration, already discussed, and verbal cues as to its importance. Rather than being seen ("veíanse") as the photographs are, the painting draws the spectator's attention by force ("ostentaba") (*Misericordia* 129). The portrait dominates the room through its positioning and ornamentation, whereas the photographs are scattered throughout the study; they do not excite critical attention.

The difference between painting and photographs recalls Roland Barthes' distinction between denotation and signification of "the real." Whereas the portrait seems to denote the real while still maintaining decorative and symbolic functions, the photographs "signify" the real ("Reality" 148).[10] The painted portrait is not included simply because it would be expected in the world the novel depicts, as a standard feature of the nineteenth-century parlor. Rather, in its symbolic and tropic suggestiveness, the portrait is an invitation to further interpretation through its constant references to appearance, veiling, figuration and substitution. The photographs, on the other hand, simply *are*; they seem not to require further interpretive practice, except in contradistinction to the painted portrait. They are objects that, in their multiplicity and by their quotidian nature, go beyond representing the real to *become* the real (Barthes 148). Their placement in the description complicates the critical turn so often taken with respect to this novel, a turn dependent on verbal duplications as opposed to visual styles. This complication reflects certain crucial problems with the distinctions often made between high (painting) and low (photography) forms of culture, and between art and commerce.

On the surface, the scene in don Carlos's study appears to confirm the suppositions held about the importance of art objects versus commercially reproduced images. The very multiplicity of the photographs, and the simultaneous miserliness of their description, suggest the photograph's lack of aura because of its positioning as a mass-produced good in a mar-

ket economy. Walter Benjamin describes how the photograph denies power and historicity, thereby negating any sense of aura to it (*Work* 27). Benjamin's exception for the "fleeting expression of a human face" (*Work* 27) in the photographic portrait is hardly warranted, given that the "masificación" of the portrait, and other "modalidades de la misma," are key features of nineteenth century photographic practice (Fontanella 210).[11] One of the casualties of the dissemination of photography is the painted portrait in miniature, largely due to the greatly reduced costs of the former (López Mondéjar 50).

The scattering of unadorned photographs in don Carlos's study versus the one richly decorated portrait implies the relative value of each group, a value driven home by narrative economies at play in this particular passage. The portrait is artisanal, sumptuously adorned, and covered in more verbiage, and therefore appears to be more valuable than the spread of photographs.[12] The value of the portrait, in narrative terms, also accounts for the proliferation of objects surrounding it, objects which imply both the process of mourning, and the exhaustion of painting as a genre. An unlit chimney, an unwound clock, and an almanac that is consistently turned to the previous day's entry bracket the portrait, signifying a fixity and morbidity that not only applies to the sitter, but also to the custom of painting portraits–recall Benina's description of the marvels of the rapidity of the photographic portrait, mentioned earlier in this essay (*Misericordia* 141). Wrapped in funeral weeds attached to "luengas cintas negras," the painting substitutes for don Carlos's lost spouse, but implies by that very substitution the metonymic process of technological development: some other *techne* will come to take the portrait's place, just as the younger generation eventually will crowd out its ancestors (129). Even though the photograph's victory as the preferred means of representation is assured, narrative investment in the portrait conveys a struggle between the two forms of depiction that plays itself out in Galdosian narrative theory and practice.

This tension is present from the novel's outset. Its opening passage, focused on the Janus-like church of San Sebastián, had already communicated a sense of painting and etching as preterit visions of contemporary realities. The description of the two-faced building, commented on by Peter Bly, Geoffrey Ribbans, Nicholas Round, Pierre Ullman, and Diane Urey, among others, illustrates one of *Misericordia*'s major themes, the bifurcated nature of the novel's characters and title.[13] With the exception of a handful of scholars, however, the church's deliberately *costumbrista* presentation has been all but ignored.[14]

> En la cara del Sur campea, sobre una puerta chabacana, la imagen barroca del santo mártir, retorcida en actitud más danzante que religiosa; en la del norte, desnuda de ornatos, pobre y vulgar, se alza la torre, de la cual podría creerse que se pone en jarras, soltándole cuatro frescas a la Plaza del Ángel. Por una y otra banda, las caras o fachadas tienen anchuras, quiere decirse, patios cercados de verjas mohosas, y en ellos tiestos con lindos arbustos, y un mercado de flores que recrea la vista. En ninguna parte como aquí advertiréis el encanto, la simpatía, el ángel, dicho sea en andaluz, que despiden de sí, como tenue fragancia, las cosas vulgares, o algunas de las infinitas cosas vulgares que hay en el mundo. Feo y pedestre como un pliego de aleluyas o como los romances de ciego, el edificio bifronte, con su torre *barbiana*, el cupulín de la capilla de la Novena, los irregulares techos y cortados muros, con su afeite barato de ocre, sus patios floridos, sus hierros mohosos en la calle y en el alto

> campanario, ofrece un conjunto gracioso, picante, *majo*, por decirlo de una vez. Es un rinconcito de Madrid que debemos conservar cariñosamente, como anticuarios coleccionistas, porque la caricatura monumental también es un arte. Admiremos en este San Sebastián, heredero de los tiempos viejos, la estampa ridícula y tosca, y guardémoslo como un lindo mamarracho (62-63).

The excessiveness of the descriptive passage creates the irony that Urey points to in her study, cataloguing the "intertextuality" of the passage as "the architecture of the language of description, of the portrait of the heroine, of the Madrid of the novel, and of the novelesque structure as a totality" (60). While the language provides notable winks in the reader's direction, with an abundance of "oxymoron[ic]" terms such as "lindo mamarracho," as Urey mentions (62), or "caricatura monumental" (my own note), what has not been commented on in this portrait is how ways of seeing are linked to repetition, and how out of place they will come to seem as the novel progresses. This parodic description of the Church must be read in awkward tension with Galdós's 1897 evocation of painting as the most appropriate form of art to capture contemporary realities. If in *Misericordia* the narrative voice mockingly adopts a *costumbrista* tone to paint the opening scene as a kind of quaint collectible, as I will argue below, then Galdós's continual reference to painterly metaphor in the contemporary speech to the Real Academia seems quaintly framed as well, rejecting photorealism for laboriously redrawn characterization. *Misericordia* shows how Galdosian narrative navigates the uneasy path between these two poles, and how parody can display both affection toward and critique of the parodied object.

Visual clichés pile up in the description of San Sebastián: the dancing saint and waspish tower watch over tranquil patios that host a flower market, whose sole purpose is to delight the vision ("recrea la vista") (*Misericordia* 62). The patios are part of an overall image of picturesque tranquility, reinforced by the repetitive mention of both mossy ironwork and flower-filled patios. These decorative elements are thematically echoed in the use of *costumbrista* terms from Andalusia and Madrid, which tie visual reiterations to verbal echoes, *angel* and *majo* expressing similar concepts of attractiveness and charm. The presentation of San Sebastián is old-fashioned, doubly so because it is a kind of clichéd picturesque drawing among other collectable forms of art. It is not simply old; it is past date–and, as a result, full of clichés that typically circulate in poetic descriptions of run-down churchyards. In particular, the poorly painted walls and mossy ironwork suggest mid-century catalogues of Spain's monumental ruins, such as Genaro Pérez Villaamil and Patricio de la Escosura's *España artística y monumental* (3 volumes; 1842-44), and Francisco Javier Parcerisa's series *Recuerdos y bellezas de España* (12 volumes; 1839-65), as well as Galdós's own volumes of clippings. Texts such as *Recuerdos* displayed the "poética y monumental fisonomía" (Parcerisa 211) of each of the regions covered, and were aimed at precisely the sort of audience that would collect illustrated magazines in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Ariño Colás 73-4). Lou Charnon-Deutsch describes how "frameable portraits" and other pictorial elements in such periodicals "[…] helped to transform the illustrated magazine into a permanent fixture of a bourgeois consumer society eager to Europeanize its tastes and satisfy its drive for the acquisition of mass-produced goods" (17).[15] If the images in such periodicals have enduring value, then part of that that value lies in demonstrating the typicity and quaintness of the local as a banal sort of commodity.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the Church of San Sebastián is described as a type meant to be archived as if by "anticuarios coleccionistas" (*Misericordia* 63). The genres and forms of depiction that the church invokes imply both the transmission and duplication of picturesque images, and of their exhaustion as bearers of meaning. The images circulate in multiples; like the church, they are some of the "infinitas cosas vulgares" that exist in the world of the novel (62). But these means of viewing the vulgar church also show their age, as the church's painted walls give indication that the image the narrative voice develops is out of sync with contemporary modes of seeing. The "afeite barato de ocre" which adorns the churchyard suggests the yellowing of printed images, whether they be *estampas* or *aleluyas*, and implies their lack of utility as means of visualizing modernity (63).

Like the *estampa,* the *aleluya* served a wide variety of publics in the nineteenth century, though it primarily was a cheap, ephemeral genre, often scattered to the wind in popular festivals (Grant 308-09). As a genre not meant to last and, in effect, fading from view during the time that *Misericordia* is set, the *aleluya* is cheap, hardly fit for collecting. Part of the irony in the depiction of the church, I argue, has much to do with the wearing out of genre, and with the collection of that which should be uncollectable because it is without value and cliché.

Even the caricature, which was a quite active form of depiction in the late nineteenth century, suffered a lapse in quality during those same years. This is not to imply that caricature is not a valid form of artistry, or that it was not actively practiced in Galdós's time. In his study of contemporary caricaturists, however, José Francés describes the latter decades of the nineteenth century as a period of artistic and literary decline, one in which copying was rampant and originality on the wane (33). Though caricature was a widespread genre in the last years of the nineteenth century, with a number of publications relying on caricature as the primary form of illustration, such drawings were produced in a "ciclo de mediocridad y ramplonería," from which future artists would learn little (33). Although an argument can be made in favor of rapidity and condensation as hallmarks of the caricature and, therefore, of caricature as a modern genre (McLees 34; 33), the repetitive aspects of caricature, particularly within the Spanish context, contribute to the feeling that the genre traces old lines and old scenarios instead of developing new ones.

In her study of caricature in *Misericordia,* Marian Smolen notes how the denizens of the Church of San Sebastián are configured through the lens of this genre, "[…] como personificación de una característica estática, como si fueran de figuras también fijas […]" (65). Like the recycled and staid images that dominate the description of the Church of San Sebastián, the characters themselves are clichés and are, in turn, prone to reiteration in their unswerving daily dealings. Don Carlos Moreno Trujillo best exemplifies this general narrative and societal tendency:

> Era hombre tan extremadamente metódico, que su vida entera encajaba dentro de un programa irreductible, determinante de sus actos todos, así morales como físicos, de las graves resoluciones, así como de los pasatiempos insignificantes, y hasta del moverse y del respirar. Con un solo ejemplo se demuestra el poder de la rutinaria costumbre en aquel santo varón, y es que, viviendo en aquellos días […] en la calle de Atocha, entraba siempre por la verja de la calle de San Sebastián y puerta del Norte […]. (69-70)

Don Carlos's visit to San Sebastián is a repetition of a "rutinaria costumbre" that hardly fits geographical logic: entering the church by the door that he has always entered by, even though he lives closer to the opposite door (70). This repetition frames further repetitions: don Carlos's budgeted acts of charity; his visits to all the chapels in an unswerving order ("guardando una orden que en ninguna ocasión se alteraba"); his hearing "dos misitas, siempre dos, ni una más ni una menos"; his conversations with the sacristan; and, finally, his departing the church by the opposite door from which he entered (70-71). Although the narrative voice insists that the reader accept the act of entering San Sebastián through a determined door as synecdoche of don Carlos's life ("Con un solo ejemplo se demuestra el poder de la rutinaria costumbre en aquel santo varón"), it actually presents the reader with multiple separate repetitions, reiterating, *ad nauseam*, the meticulousness with which don Carlos retraces his steps (70).

On one level, this description of don Carlos makes of him a ridiculous personage, a characterization borne out by later narrative events.[16] At the same time, however, the narrative compulsion to repeat don Carlos's itinerary, itself a catalogue of unswerving gesture and pattern, signals the uneasy balance this narrative voice strikes between parody and sincerity. If parody "is […] to at least some extent ambivalently constructed from the target which it refunctions," according to Margaret Rose (83), then repetition can be both a sign of critique of a staid social order, and a reaffirmation of those same societal–and, it must be said, narrative–norms. In his study of parody, Simon Dentith agrees, noting that parody "can act to preserve the very forms that it attacks" (37). Although Linda Hutcheon would argue that parody is based on the difference between the original and the parodic text–this difference often being coded through irony (31)–it is not entirely clear that the narrative voice of *Misericordia* is sufficiently distinct from the repetitive discourses from which it cribs.

I would therefore argue that in spite of the mocking tone with which the narrative voice describes the Church of San Sebastián and its denizens, the same voice seems as programmatic as don Carlos, as desirous of the kinds of repetition that serve to underpin both the social order and the narrative structure of *Misericordia*. Regarding the stability of the social order, Teresa Fuentes Peris has demonstrated that don Carlos's acts of charity have the effect of the "maintenance of the *cultura de la pobreza"* (112). More importantly for my purposes, as layers of habit create unswerving personalities, layers of narrative duplication shift from repetition as critique to seemingly unalterable fictions and characterizations. Just as the social order is dependent on repetition–Almudena's comment that he expected to see don Carlos that day, "aunque se helara el cero de los *terromotos*" (*Misericordia* 68), is a clear sign of this dependence–so too does the narrative rely on caricature and cliché, tired means of visual representation, to convey meaning.

If the social, narratological and visual order depend on repetition, then the presence of a reiterable photographic *carte de visite* at the center of *Misericordia* hardly seems surprising.[17] Frasquito Ponte y Delgado, one of the penniless *cursis* helped by Benina, uses his remaining peseta to purchase a portrait of the Empress Eugenie in "tamaño de tarjeta ordinaria." As the delirious gentleman relates: "No lo había más que en casa de Laurent, y no lo daban por menos de una peseta… Forzoso adquirirlo, demostrar a Obdulia la similitud…," a "similitud" which Frasquito had also described as a "perfecta semejanza" between Obdulia and the Spanish-born

consort of Napoleon III (196). For Frasquito, the abandoned daughter of a middle class family brought to ruin by overspending and the former empress of France "son idénticas," suggesting as he makes this claim not only the height of his delusion, but also the duplication of a duplication (196). Just as the photograph is a reiterable likeness of the Empress, one freely copied, the character (of) Obdulia can be seen as a copy of the photograph. Frasquito takes appearance for essence, and typicity for character–hardly a surprising result in a period in which commentators complained about the similarity of poses, props and accoutrements that figured in photographic portraits (López Mondéjar 57; Fernández 339; Armstrong 19).

It would be incorrect to take away from this, however, the idea of the *carte* as a copy of Obdulia, or to associate the photograph exclusively with the idea of duplication. The equation between Obdulia and the former empress is filtered through Frasquito's perception, which is colored by his illness, invested in past glories, and predetermined to find copies where there are none. Though he insists that the empress and Obdulia are "la misma persona," Benigna describes them as *somewhat* alike: "Algo se le parece en la corte de la cara; pero no es mismamente" (*Misericordia* 173*;* 196). Obdulia is, at best, a degraded variation on the original; the photograph is not her double.

The photograph itself is a copy, and yet it is unique. Even though the image of the Empress was bound to have been popular–the *carte* of her consort by Disdéri being perhaps the best-known of the nineteenth century–Frasquito only finds the photo in one place, at Jean Laurent's studio, established in 1856.[18] Although Laurent's catalogue was quite vast, its primary focus was fine art, landscape, and architectural photography, with the exception of some volumes of *tipos*, so it is unusual (though not improbable) for Frasquito to have purchased a picture of the Empress there.[19] In any case, this is the only *carte* that circulates in *Misericordia*, its price (one *peseta*, the only one Frasquito holds) indicative of its singularity. In comparison to the numerous photos scattered around don Carlos's study, this photo is accorded particular value because–or in spite–of its misreading as type.

In a novel that highlights repetition as the basis of the social order, possible repetitions that turn out to be singularities, such as the *carte*, signal the unraveling of the social plotlines on which *Misericordia* depends, in formal association with photography. Repetition is eventually rejected in the novel in favor of the singular character. Obdulia is not an empress; Benigna is herself not truly reiterable: "–Yo le suplico a usted, mi señor don Romualdo–dijo Doña Francisca enteramente trastornada ya–, […] que no haga ningún caso de las Beninas figuradas que puedan salir por ahí, y se atenga a la propia y legítima Nina […]" (*Misericordia* 269). While the irony resides in that the "propia y legítima Nina" does not exist (for Francisca identifies her as the servant of an illusory don Romualdo), Francisca means to differentiate the authentic from the duplicate, from the other Beninas "figuradas" in the account (269).[20]

Distinguishing the real from the inauthentic, the unrepeatable from the reiterable, is a marker of both the modern and photography. *Misericordia* continues to shift in its latter pages away from the kinds of repetition the novel embraces at its outset. This is significant because the act of repetition creates both the fictions of late nineteenth-century society, and the material of the novel itself. The characters most closely associated with the breaking of repetitive compulsions are Frasquito and Benina, and their distance from simple repetition is coded visually.

Frasquito's changes register in his face and aspect, and challenge conventional means of understanding character in *Misericordia*. Shortly after deciding not to dye his hair any longer, Frasquito goes out to dine at a tavern. He is seated facing a hostile heraldic painter, described as a "figurilla mecánica" who devours his meal in a repetitive, machine-like fashion (276). Painting is here linked to both antiquated custom and the glories of the past, with all three being associated with rote, mechanical gestures.

The painter's impertinent gaze causes Ponte to reflect that his different features must be the cause of the antagonism directed at him, leading him to the following conclusion: "¿Pero qué le importa a nadie que yo me *arregle* o deje de *arreglarme*? Yo hago de mi fisonomía lo que me da la gana, y no estoy obligado a dar gusto a los señores, presentándoles siempre la misma cara" (276). This refusal to meet the gaze of the spectator always in the same fashion, the negation of "the same face," is a logical response to a society in which all are uncomfortably observed and observers, as Benjamin describes the modern city, or Galdós did in his "Novela en el tranvía" (*Paris* 69; "Novela"). To this point, it must be added that the modern author can only *be* an observer, one who takes in the parade of contingent and new subjects. Rather than obeying the precepts of physiognomy, in which the contours of the face can reveal type, the modern author must be concerned with the comings-and-goings of the suddenly revealed, the "apparition" in the "crowd" (Baudelaire, cited in Benjamin, *Paris* 77). The painter of staid history, in contrast, cannot but react in hostility to a changed Ponte, as Ponte "has moved from type to character," becoming something that cannot be readily affixed within social norms (Bly, *Wisdom* 163).

In his turn, Ponte is disappointed to learn that the gentleman is not a reporter. Ponte partakes of a modernity in which calligraphic family trees–that is, an example of detailed, artistic manual labor–give way to brief newspaper items, the sort which "enabled a newspaper to have a different look every day," thus changing the spectacle for the modern reader (Benjamin, *Paris* 60).

The modern reader is similarly presented with a snap-shot of Benina that reveals something essential about her character. After being released from the Hospicio de El Pardo, Benina and Almudena stop on their journey back to Madrid, "[…] uno y otro revelando en sus demacradas rostros el hambre que habían padecido, la opresión y tristeza del forzado encierro en lo que más parece mazmorra que hospicio" (294). While Benina and Almudena had paused to see those who set them free pass by, the narrator in effect passes them by, revealing (*revelando)* to the reader a singular vision of suffering that contrasts with the pious mercy supposedly shown at poorhouses. In the context of their release, depicted as an excursion to the country for Benina's former employers and friends, the image is sudden and jarring, shifting from the possibility of scopophilic pleasure offered by the countryside to visual and verbal dismay. This is the inverse of Ponte's recognition: that the failure to present the "same face" might mean the projection of surprising and disagreeable images. In comparison to the delightfully picturesque presentation of the countryside earlier in the novel, one that explicitly invokes both landscape painting and the *estampa*, the vision of Benina and Almudena evokes photography, revealing a state of being–and an entire history–in a moment's flash (225-29).

If Benina and Frasquito resist the narrative compulsion to simply repeat, other characters show themselves willing to fall prey to repetition, even if this means an alteration in their normal state of being. Juliana, Doña Francisca's daughter-in-law and the orchestrator of Benina's dismissal, seems at first the kind of character that will not reiterate, because her ideas reveal authority and are accepted readily by Doña Francisca:

> Conforme con estas ideas se mostraba Doña Francisca, asintiendo a todo, sin atreverse a contradecirla ni a oponer una sola objeción a tan juiciosos consejos. Sentíase oprimida bajo la autoridad que las ideas de Juliana revelaban con sólo expresarse, y ni la ribeteadora se daba cuenta de su influjo gobernante, ni la suegra de la pasividad con que se sometía. (287)

Though the narrator describes this as an example of "la voluntad sobre el capricho," it is also an example of the forcefulness and the immediacy of revelation (288). Just as Juliana's ideas express themselves only to take hold of Francisca's resolve instantly, so too does modern authorship in Galdós's accounting predicate itself on a certain passivity and receptiveness, the power of the image oppressing the will of the modern author.

Juliana's will, though strong, is not enough to dominate the general narrative trend toward repetition, however. She changes most significantly near the novel's close, in which she becomes a passive, uncertain creature, prone to recycling formulas. In the "Final," she insistently returns to tell Benina that she believes that her children are suffering from mortal illnesses. But Juliana's true sickness is reiteration. The narrator describes her as being preoccupied with "los más insignificantes actos de la vida," and offers her as an "[…] ejemplo de los admirables efectos de la voluntad humana en el gobierno de las grandes como de las pequeñas agrupaciones de seres" (310; 314) –in other words, she is a new don Carlos that scarcely differs from the old. Or she resembles a flawed realist narrator, given that both don Carlos and Juliana's characters are echoed in Galdós's admonition to the contemporary novelist: "Imagen de la vida es la Novela, y el arte de componerla estriba en reproducir los caracteres humanos, las pasiones, las debilidades, lo grande y lo pequeño, las almas y las fisonomías, todo lo espiritual y lo físico que nos constituye y nos rodea" (*La sociedad* 11-12). *Reproduction* in Galdós's final estimation should not be simple reiteration, but the capturing of a totality through the incorporation of all facets of life. The Galdosian impulse, made clear in *Misericordia*'s ending, is anti-reiterative, working against pleonasm. And it does so, I argue, through brief photographic flashes of character-revealing insight.

Juliana's neurotic perception of her children as sickening can only be cured by Benina, who pronounces an injunction against both worrying *and* repeating. Benina commands her: "No llores… y ahora vete a tu casa, y no vuelvas a pecar" (*Misericordia* 318). Juliana's description of her illness is made with "palabra nerviosa, afluente y un tanto hiperbólica," and it is reiterated during the course of two separate visits (317). *Afluente* is evocative not only of the content of Juliana's speech, but also of that of the novelistic discourse. Like the description of the Church of San Sebastián found at the novel's opening, Juliana's depiction of her visions is excessive, with her discourse overflowing boundaries of decorum, repeating itself as it goes.

And this discourse is–just as is Doña Francisca's unhappiness at the novel's close–caused by reiterated visions: Doña Francisca's, of the "dibujos de la estera"; Juliana's, of the death of her children (315; 316).

It is for this reason that Benina's sanction against sinning, found at the end of *Misericordia* and echoing—but not repeating—several of the Gospels, is also a valediction forbidding waste, above all excessive verbiage ("palabra […] afluente"), because such waste leads to fictions that are unsustainable (317).[21] Just as Doña Francisca threatens to spend too much of her inheritance until brought under control by Juliana, Juliana's language displays a similar lack of control until Benina commands her to stop repeating.

In contradistinction to Juliana's repetition of imaginary maladies as sign of a worn-out social order, Benina's injunction cites and reuses scriptural messages to create a new kind of meaning. Even if we read Benina's affirmation, "Yo no soy santa" as an ironic and intertextual delineation of her essential character (for she is nothing if not a saint), her order to Juliana not to sin may be understood as working on both Biblical and narratological levels (*Misericordia* 318). The Biblical intertext establishes Benina's piety and spiritual worth, but on the narratological level, her words cease repetition and, ironically, the novel itself.

If wasted words prop up fictions that cannot help but collapse under their own weight, then the attraction to those wasted words may be explained in terms of a counter-example to an ideal of narrative conciseness and "*truth*." The end of *Misericordia*, in other words, would be justified as a nod to, and the antithesis of, all that has come before, a parodic intertext ironically serving as the close to the novel's multiple repetitions. This explanation has its appeal because it implies a cohesive, although perhaps not entirely deliberate, editorial statement about the style one should use to novelize the unstable times Galdós describes in his 1897 address. Repeated images, masks, and clichés must be eliminated if the author is to describe humanity as it truly is, but these layers are what make up the narrative Galdós offers us. The moment of eliminating the recurrence of the past is the moment of *Misericordia's* ending, its injunction against repeating stilling the author's pen.

Recalling Galdós's words in both 1897 and 1870, *Misericordia*'s ending would seem to be photographic in nature—the novel's finale a rapid depiction of Benina, a character that had started out in the novel as a "rostro […] bien compuesto de líneas"–perhaps overly composed, as I have suggested—refusing simple repetition of old narratives (77). At the novel's close Benina is instead involved in a brief dialogue "de mucha sustancia o miga psicológica," a dialogue that will signal and echo the rapidity necessary to capture modern life, the small and commonplace event (the "miga") essential to the representation of the modern (317). Rather than serving as a source for repetition in *Misericordia*, the photographic here alleviates the anxious compulsion to repeat, moving rapidly to create the novel's final image. In contrast, other forms of art, such as the painting and the *estampa*, are linked both to the inception of narrative and narrative's exhaustion, to the birth and death of the novel.

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NOTES

[1] In her study, Armstrong signals a disdain of photography in Marxist-derived critical theory (1). Martin Jay traces this contempt for the photograph to nineteenth-century evaluations of photography's relationship to art (137-8). See also 122-3, in which he discusses the "leveling" and "democratization of visual experience" implicit in photography.

To cite one Spanish example of the negative reaction to photography, Menéndez Pelayo defends his friend Pereda against the calumny of being called a photographer: "el señor Pereda no es *fotógrafo* grande ni chico, porque la fotografía no es arte, y el señor Pereda es un gran artista" (in Valis 17).

[2] As were many visual arts of the time: Charnon-Deutsch discusses photography as a support for engravers; Jacobson, as an assist in painting; and Batchen, as a help to the drawer (Charnon-Deutsch 52; Jacobson; Batchen 70).

[3] See the contributions in Kahng regarding painterly repetition and copying.

[4] In this essay, I use "cliché" to denote both a literary commonplace–often signified in Spanish as "tópico"–and in reference to its original meaning, related to printing. "Clisé" appears in the 1869 *Diccionario* of the Real Academia as a relief block, often in metal, from which etchings were printed (179). "Clisé" would take on the sense of a commonplace observation in Spanish, principally under the spelling "cliché," but only registered as such in the 1970 *Diccionario* of the Real Academia. In that same edition, "cliché" is, significantly, also defined as a photographic negative (1385).

"Stereotype" or "esterotipia" is first registered in the *Diccionario* of the Real Academia in 1803 as the printing of text from metal plates, as opposed to through the use of moveable type (920). The Diccionario of 1936 gives as a further sense of "estereotipia" any repetitive gestures, words, or actions (563).

[5] Jo Labanyi notes that historical painting in the 1870s and 1880s placed "emphasis on dramatic effect," creating "a disconcerting freezing of time, which disturbs any providentialist notion of history moving inexorably towards a present thereby constructed as the realization of a manifest destiny" (68). The "freezing of time" also affected pictorial style, as Galdós complains in his summary of "La Exposición de Bellas Artes" from 1887 that historical painting is the only kind admitted. Writing about the artist Villodas, Galdós states: "[D]eploro también que estas dos cualidades y su firmeza de dibujo y su destreza en la composición no hayan sido empleados en un asunto que yo pueda sentir y comprobar por mí mismo, en un asunto derivado de esta vida que nos rodea y a la cual pertenecemos por nuestras ideas y nuestros sentimientos" (709).

[6] In this and in other quotes taken directly from nineteenth-century editions, I have respected the original orthography.

[7] In a notion that runs parallel to the idea I elucidate here, Benjamin develops the concept of photography as optical unconscious in his "Little History of Photography" (*Work* 276-77; also see Jennings 264). A more complex view of photography as a mirror of nature is offered in Batchen 56-102, esp. 62-69; and Jay 128-30.

[8] See Fernández 329.

[9] Earlier in the novel, don Carlos is described as not having shaved, because his wife was the only one who demanded it of him–and, like her portrait, his face is covered, "como de una gasa, de pelos blancos, negros y amarillos" (*Misericordia* 130).

[10] Barthes suggest that description in the realist novel (such as that of the portrait and the objects surrounding it) may serve both "aesthetic goal[s]" and "'realistic' imperatives," in which aesthetic discourse is held in check by "referential constraints" (145). Description in the realist novel is thus denotative, in which "the real" is understood as "referential" (145).

In contrast, what Barthes describes as "superfluous" or "insignificant notation" are those details, such

as the photographs, that serve no aesthetic purpose, and that "increase[e] the cost of narrative information" (141; 142; 141). For Barthes, these objects are to be understood as bypassing denotation to signify the real: "[…] eliminated from the realist speech-act as a signified of denotation, the 'real' returns to it as a signified of connotation; for, just when these details are reputed to denote the real directly, all that they do […] is *signify* it" (148).

[11] See López Mondéjar 56; 68.

[12] On Galdosian narrative economies, see Delgado 34-5; Mandrell; and, particularly, Bauer, who argues that "[…] *Misericordia* parallels monetary and narrative exchanges or economies, and traces in each the dynamics of supply and demand" (236).

[13] See Bly, *Vision* 192-5; Mandrell; Ribbans; Round 125-6; Ullman 325-34; Urey 59-63. Although Kronik does not explicitly analyze the opening of the novel, his suggestion that "everything in this novel is two-faced" is taken up by many of the subsequent critics (44).

[14] But see Bly, *Vision* 192-93; Round 157-58.

[15] Such as the *carte de visite*: the photo-albums in Galdós's collection contain "varias fotos de costumbrismo europeo del pasado entonces reciente" (Miller 162).

[16] *Misericordia* 69, n. 23; also see *Misericordia* 131-35, in which don Carlos's pomposity is brought to the fore.

[17] In the 1897 edition (Madrid: Viuda e Hijos de Tello), the *carte* is discussed on page 202; the mid-point of the novel's text, in terms of pagination, is page 196.

[18] Freund details the story behind the *carte* of Napoleon III that coincided with Disdéri's rise in popularity; McCauley disputes the essentials of the tale *(Photography* 57; *A. A. E. Disdéri* 45).

[19] See Fontanella 154. Félix González Domínguez notes that in 1858 Laurent was well known for his portraiture, though his catalogue had taken a decided turn toward local views and travel photography (12-13; 15).

[20] Kronik refers to this section of the novel as the "suspension of disbelief," in which the characters are asked to "believe in the fiction at their disposal" (48; 47).

[21] Stories in which a petitioner asks Jesus for a cure for a child sick at home may be found in Matthew 15:21-28; and Mark 7: 24-30. The injunction against sinning parallels John 8:11. Curiously, Schraibman only notes Matthew 19:17 as the intertext for Benina's declaration "Yo no soy santa," which comes just before her order to Juliana (Schraibman 503; *Misericordia* 318). Regarding Benina's saintliness, see Russell 127-28.

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