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Realist Strategies: The Function of the Child in Novels by Galdós

Michael Adam Carroll

University of Colorado Boulder, michael.carroll@colorado.edu

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REALIST STRATEGIES:
THE FUNCTION OF THE CHILD IN NOVELS BY GALDÓS

by

Michael Adam Carroll

BA, College of the Holy Cross, 2007
MA, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2010

A thesis submitted to the
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Realist Strategies: The Function of the Child in Novels by Galdós
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____________________________
Dr. Ricardo Landeira

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Dr. Javier Krauel

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
This dissertation explores the function of the child in the *Novelas españolas contemporáneas* (1881-97) by Benito Pérez Galdós, Spain’s foremost nineteenth-century author. Children play a central role in the genre of realism, from Charles Dickens, to Emily Brönte, and Henry James. Galdós follows in this tradition, but sets his work apart by placing the child at the margin of the stories he tells, rather than as protagonists. While critics have tended to view these marginalized children as either verifications of social issues contemporary to the novelist or as symbols that underscore themes, this dissertation analyzes children by considering how they socially affect adults and how characters perceive them. In this respect, this project takes a narratological approach, and argues that narrators and adult characters in the *Novelas* produce the child figure, a living vessel that contains the social identities and structural positions of those that observe children. The dissertation examines how the absence, presence, and death of children impact *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886-7), the *Torquemada* tetralogy (1889-95), *La de Bringas* (1884), and *Miau* (1888).

The dissertation contributes to studies on Galdós by demonstrating that the adult-child relation organizes plot and impacts the characterization of characters, which fills the gap in the literature between humanist and structuralist readings. Galdós capitalizes on the child figure’s aesthetic distance, and stresses the significance of the child—especially the male heir—as a part of the survival of the bourgeois family in Madrid. These novels renovate the figure of the child and situate Galdós alongside other major European novelists.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

I. Purpose of the Study

In the novel of the European nineteenth century, the survival of a family hinges on the child, and especially the male heir. Children perpetuate social class, inheritance, and legitimize the marriage of the bourgeoisie, yet the child in realism appears portrayed as physically unrealistic. Critics have suggested these children of fiction as angelic and demonic, representations of good and evil, truth and deceit. Others have disputed these symbolic children as anything but plausible representations of human characters. Charles Dickens’ Little Nell from *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840) remains one of the most divisive. A. C. Swinburne, writing over seven decades after the novel’s publication, argues that Nell represents an unrealistic childhood and that the girl might as well be a two-headed baby (182-3). On the other hand, some reportedly cried when they read of her death, including Lord Francis Jeffrey, editor of the *Edinburgh Review* (Tomalin 113-4). Many have agreed that children in the nineteenth-century novel function as figures, detached from the humanity they critique.¹ More recently, though, scholars have suggested that the child becomes a figure when interacting with and observed by others: the child figure embodies the historical and personal imagination of the novelists that create it and the characters that gaze at it.²

Scholars of the Spanish realist novel have echoed the phenomenon of conflicting yet suggestive images of children, especially in Benito Pérez Galdós’ *Novelas españolas contemporáneas* (1881-97), his influential series of interlocking social novels.³ Upon the publishing of *La desheredada* (1881), for example, noted critic Leopoldo Alas “Clarín” reacted to the depiction of street orphans: “angelitos cínicos… presentados con elocuente realidad…

¹

²

³
sugieren reflexiones tristísimas” (*La literatura* 136). These foundlings function as characters and symbols; they appear realistic and aesthetically distant. In current studies, scholars have attempted to understand the elusive nature of children in Galdós by categorizing them as previous critics have. Gabriel Cabrejas uses the labels of the divine (predictive) and bourgeois (social) for children in the *Novelas*.4 Jeffrey S. Zamostny situates the visions of Isabelita in *La de Bringas* (1884) as premonitory of her parents’ failing marriage and the nation’s crumbling government. Lisa Surwillo’s cultural studies work on *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886-7) proposes that the foundlings in the story represent Galdós’ criticism of Spain’s broken class system. Others have approached the *Torquemada* (1889-95) tetralogy with a similar reading, understanding the illness and death of children as a loss of national economic and political capital.5 Although these studies develop helpful categories for children that reveal aesthetic dimensions and social concerns in Galdós, they overlook the problematic relationship between adults and children, as well as the child’s ability to straddle material reality and the metaphorical realm.

This dissertation argues that the narrators and adult characters of the *Novelas*, through their observation of and interaction with children, produce the child figure. The figure of the child operates as a living vessel that contains the identities and structural positions belonging to those who engage children. This notion fills the gap in the literature between reading the child as a verification of external social data and as an aesthetically determined symbol by exploring what associates children to their social *milieu* and to the metaphorical images used to describe them. Rather than only reflect a character’s moral flaw or underpin Spain’s social reality, the child figure functions as a complex of “socioformal” information that stores the images that social beings impose upon it.6 Galdós strategically grounds the child figure in material reality—
setting—while those that gaze at it constantly reimagine it. Without their own point of view, yet always observed, these children serve to characterize the focalizing agents.\(^7\)

The process of observing children becomes what this dissertation advances as “child’s play,” a word-to-word interaction between narrator and character that yields social and structural details. Child’s play provides a flexible and non-polemical term to examine Galdós’ strategies in illustrating the figure of the infant that extends beyond the limitations of categories. It opens access to Galdós’ narrators and characters and to their subjective use of language when they narrate the infant. Child’s play also allows the reader to approach this and other nineteenth-century literature with a tool that distinguishes between a characterized human child and a child that performs the duties of a literary device. Noël Valis and Agnes Moncy Gullón have written in-depth studies on children in the Spanish realist novel. Valis explores the role of absent and dead children in Clarín’s \textit{Su único hijo} (1894), and briefly compares the text to Galdós’ \textit{Fortunata y Jacinta} and \textit{La de Bringas} (“Death”). Moncy Gullón identifies a series of animalistic images of children that connect Fortunata to Jacinta, and pays close attention to the motifs’ structural implications. These excellent studies unfortunately conflate the function of absent, present, and dead children as well as characters’ reactions to these distinct realities. The purpose of child’s play is to extract these differences and to examine their impact on character and structure.

On a larger scale, and as noted through this project’s use of child’s play, this dissertation seeks to associate and juxtapose Galdós’ strategy of depicting children to other European authors. The Spanish novelist inherits from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s angelic Mignon, the Brontë sisters’ embattled children, and Dickens’ urban foundlings, but he does so with one caveat—Galdós shifts the child from the symbolic center of the story to the edges of narrative.
The role of children in the Novelas dwarfs in comparison to Oliver Twist, Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, and even to the brief yet melodramatic role of Mignon. Henry James, a contemporary to the Spanish novelist, writes the child similarly to Galdós in *The Turn of the Screw* (1897), where Miles and Flora remain relevant, but receive no interior characterization. Although this element of correlating European authors remains secondary in the dissertation, it throws light on Galdós’ significance in the history of the novel, which studies of the child have ignored. The Spanish novelist emulates and renovates, as well as contributes to the evolution of the child figure in realist prose.

II. Scope of the Study

This project examines *Fortunata y Jacinta*, the Torquemada series, and *La de Bringas*, as well as *Miau* (1888). The first three novels exemplify Galdós’ strategy of the child figure in characterization and organizing the plots of his texts with the images of children. *Miau*, on the other hand, demonstrates an instance in which the author develops a true child character, Luisito, who expresses emotions and is granted a reactive conscience. This last addition provides balance to the study and offers the reader a chance to understand the difference between an aesthetically manipulated child that serves to characterize and build story, and a child that performs the role of a character. These four novels remain some of Galdós most examined, allowing the dissertation to intervene in current debates regarding the child. This project offers a minimized scope of Galdós’ works with the goal of investigating how the child figure plays out in the entirety of a novel and of avoiding overgeneralizations. This approach promotes a careful investigation of the changing dimensions and limitations of the imagery of children that previous analyses have discounted.
There are particular limits to this study. For example, this dissertation investigates the imagined, lost, dead, sick, and healthy child, rather than treat the passage from childhood to adulthood. The coming-of-age story, or *Bildungsroman*, found in such characters as the young peregrine student Felipe in *El Doctor Centeno* (1883) and the eponymous *David Copperfield* (1850), implies characters that mature in body and mind, receive a point of view, and interact with their social surroundings in the story. The child figure, as observed through child’s play, suggests that narrators and characters observe and objectify children whose inner life and conscious state the novel leaves unrepresented. The child figure changes in shape and function in the narrative, which erodes its anthropomorphism. As a second note, both boys and girls are examined, with the admission that the former outnumber the latter, not by choice but by the author’s own predilection of depicting male children and especially male heirs. This point highlights the social pressures of lineage and reproduction in these novels, and connects these two elements to the child figure as an aesthetic production. Thirdly, this project avoids cataloguing every single infant and foundling that appears in the households and streets of Galdós’ Madrid. Lastly, the Oedipal motif and the child-like adult, which have been studied before, will receive little attention. A section on the concept and history of the child is provided below, which informs this project’s notion of how Galdós and other European writers have developed the figure of the child.

Each of the chapters maintains the following tripartite pattern. A first section examines the role of the narrator in relation to the child figure. Galdós’ ambivalent and Cervantine-like narrators personally introduce themselves in the opening pages of these works, appearing and disappearing in the narrative. They directly influence the novel’s structure and incorporate the images of infants in their plan. Second, the ensuing parts explore how adult characters take on
the role of the focalizing agent, discovering and obsessing over children they desire, lose or imagine. Finally, each chapter recognizes the macabre nature of children at the closing of these novels—the child as a *figura mortis* that rears its head in when character near death.

Chapter 1 treats the role of the absent child in *Fortunata y Jacinta*. It details the narrator’s use of an image system predicated on the child to structure the novel. Critics have analyzed the closing elements of this work, but have yet to connect its conclusion to the opening frames. The child figure operates as a motif and desire that links the beginning to the ending of the novel. The second section studies Jacinta’s intense voyage of attempting to adopt Juanito’s heir apparent between Chapters 5 and 10 in Part I of *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Many have commented on how Jacinta is deceived, but little attention has been paid to how she enjoys a protagonist-like role in this sequence due to her extreme interaction with children. Current theories on the affect inform this section, in particular the relation between subject and world. The final section explores the deaths of Mauricia *la Dura*, Moreno-Isla, and Fortunata. These deaths have been examined separately, but no study has examined how they connect. The infant-as-*figura-mortis* allows Galdós to capture these three characters’ last moments.

Chapter 2 analyzes the *Torquemada* tetralogy, and opens by comparing its structural and thematic elements to *Fortunata y Jacinta*. In particular, it demonstrates Torquemada and Jacinta’s similar desires of seeking a son, but establishes the different natures of their quests: one has yet to conceive, the other has lost a son to illness. The loss of a child tends to appear as a later plotline, as with Mignon and Little Nell’s deaths. *Torquemada*, on the contrary, begins its cycle with the illness and passing of Valentín. The following section treats Torquemada’s ironic decline in protagonicity during his social rise in middle-class Madrid in the 1880’s. Critics have commented on the protagonist’s moral flaws and his deferral to characters like Cruz and Donoso,
but little work has been done regarding his relationship with the portrait of his dead son. This chapter contends that Torquemada’s séances with this portrait take him away from the major action of the tetralogy, yet these intimate episodes also ironically humanize him. This section pays particular attention to Galdós’ use of pictorialist description and the physiognomy of Valentín’s image. The last section suggests Valentín II as a physiological and literary phenomenon, a grotesque figure that interrupts the realist poetics of the series. He reprises the role of figura mortis between Torquemada en el purgatorio (1894) and Torquemada y San Pedro (1895), seeing Rafael, Fidela, and Torquemada to their deaths.

Chapter 3 studies the presence of legitimate children in La de Bringas. In particular, it explores how the narrator manipulates the figure of the child by taking advantage of the fact that adults seem largely disinterested in their own children. Scholars have recognized this novel as one of Galdós’ most well organized and experimental in its changing visual-spatial presentations. The first section intervenes in current debates on the mise en abyme to investigate how this game between space and vision and the emotional distance of parents toward their children transforms promotes the child figure. The second section addresses the metatextual frames of La de Bringas. Many have explored the frame in La de Bringas, but studies have overlooked how the narrator and characters manipulate the presence of children in domestic and public settings to set up angles of vision and interpersonal conflict. The final section analyzes the character of Luisito Cadalso from Miau and contrasts this boy to the child figure in La de Bringas. Critics have attempted to compare Luisito to Isabelita, but express frustration in this process. This section offers a contrast of these and other children from La de Bringas, which advances Luisito as a character rather than a figure.
III. Child’s Play: A History of the Child and its Image

Valis has written a brief history of the child in literature (“Death”), though she focuses primarily on the *figura mortis*. This section provides a broader context to the evolution of the image of the child in literature. In particular, it discusses what predates Galdós and what he adds to the concept of child’s play. The idea of what an infant is and how long childhood lasts have experienced a contested history. This critical ambivalence has enriched the arts and especially literature between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Galdós writes from a privileged position, nearly two hundred years of aesthetic and social debates yielding an elastic image of the child that he continues to develop in his novel.

Historicizing the infant has proven difficult for sociologists and historians. A boom of study and polemic surges in the 1960’s and continued for three decades. It was propelled, in part, by the French medievalist Philippe Ariès’ *Centuries of Childhood* (1962), often criticized for its blanket statements and decontextualized ideas on child history. Many conclude that his use of paintings and portraits of children to advance an anthropological analysis of childhood limits his findings. Ariès examines family portraits containing images of children dressed as adults. From these and other images, the scholar proposes that adults include infants in family responsibilities and labor as early as the age of seven. Ariès concludes that the modern concept of childhood, viewed today as a sacred time of innocence, does not begin to appear until fifteenth-century Europe (125).

More recently, though, Colin Heywood and Hugh Cunningham have helped rescue Ariès’ contribution, and have emphasized that the perception of what childhood is constantly evolves throughout history. The scholars suggest that the distance between childhood and adulthood remains a shifting cultural and historical phenomenon. Children are human beings, Cunningham
writes, while childhood emerges as a changing set of ideas and images (1), an abstraction socially and subjectively constructed (Heywood 9-10). Ludmilla Jordanova further explains: “Our capacity to sentimentalize, identify with, project onto, and reify children is almost infinite,” because everyone was once a child, and the child always disappears into adulthood, as if it waits to be rediscovered by the historian (79). These scholars understand that the child and its stage of childhood remain open for re-interpretation. Ironically, Ariès’ initial observations unintentionally hit on what these critics underpin: aesthetic representations of children function as subjective creations of those that perceive and produce them—child’s play. The infant remains locked in a flexible and imaginative childhood until the adult deems it no longer an infant. Child’s play grants artists an unprecedented creative license, which issues a gap to fill and a child figure with which to fill it. Child’s play becomes in the arts, and especially in literature, a kind of childhood where the child moves and grows with respect to the observer.

Similar to the medieval family portraits in Ariès’ study, poets and novelists of the Romantic and realist periods develop a relationship between subject and object, between the narrator (painter) and the protagonist (adult/parent) who play a part in dressing the infant (child figure) into a personal and social construct. Put differently, the process of child’s play privileges the “how” of and the “who” does the depiction rather than the child itself. Galdós and his predecessors take advantage of the child’s ambivalent social status to constantly expand its function in literature. Peter Coveney’s foundational book, *The Image of Childhood*, recognizes the changing image of the child in literature, attributing its shifting figure to Rousseau’s *Emile* (1762) and to the publication of John Locke’s letters on the education of children. These French thinkers, along with the Romantic poets, punctuate childhood as something special, different than and alien to adulthood. Coveney suggests the gap between childhood and
adulthood increases during the late eighteenth century, and calls adults’ observation of this sacred time the “cult of sensibility” (41). Childhood is no longer viewed as a preparation for the adult experience, but quarantined as a stage in life (Cunningham 58). It is within this ideal of the puerile that child’s play flourishes.

More recently, scholars have suggested that the child in poetry appears more figurative and elusive than in prose, as it remains strictly symbolic and without the privilege of a narrative. The works of James R. Kincaid and Franco Ferucci point up the infant as an emptied and refillable figure in these works. For Kincaid, the Romantic poets remove Christianity’s myth of original sin from the child’s image, and launch an idyllic, uncorrupted figure of children (“Dickens” 33). Ferucci has written that William Wordsworth and his contemporaries introduce a myth of beginnings and ends into the figure of the child as a way to expiate sin and reconcile the Christian Fall (126, 129). Such as an example can be found in Wordsworth’s poem: “My heart leaps up when I behold/A rainbow in the sky:/So was it when my life began/… The Child is the Father of the Man” (112). The Romantics seize childhood and recast the child’s role as carrying the burdens of memory, immortality, personality, and so on (Bloom 122-3). They also lay the literary foundation for child’s play in their poetry from which novelists inherit.

Goethe transitions the figure of the child from poetry to prose in his coming-of-age story Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship (1795). The author turns the young girl Mignon into a plot device and trope, perceived by Wilhelm as angelic in her death. Carolyn Steedman’s Strange Dislocations remains an essential contribution to summarizing and updating the critical analysis of Mignon in Wilhelm Meister and the child figure in literature in general. The critic understands this young girl as the most re-represented and transmogrified child figure in European literature. Wilhelm observes Mignon, but so have readers and critics. Between Wilhelm and the reader,
Mignon’s image has been reinterpreted in an unending gaze. Ferucci agrees, writing that Mignon’s death becomes the moment of Wilhelm’s rejuvenation in the text, the very instance of myth (118). Child’s play depends on the process and effect of focalization, cementing the narrator-character image-making bond. Steedman concludes that the child figure becomes a vehicle that expresses ideas about those who observe and construct it in the nineteenth-century novel (5).

The mechanism of child’s play, and as the figure of Mignon has shown, hollows out the child’s interior life. This vacuum and its refilling advances a problem of sexuality: the figure of the child absorbs the complexities of sex and gender from its observer, if at all, rather than experience them. Scholars inside and outside the humanities notice this restructuring of sexuality in the child during the nineteenth century. Childrearing handbooks of the time, for example, describe children as androgynous until experiencing their sexual awakening in adolescence (Cox 136-9). In literature, this equates to a coming-of-age story and the Bildungsroman, which develop the self-awareness of a character. This amount of characterization falls outside the limits of child’s play and its child figure, which, as pointed out, promotes others’ identities. However, it is worth noting that authors build ambiguous characters even in children who grow to maturation, reemphasizing that the experience of childhood remains elusive and dependent on the view of the novelist. Kincaid has argued that the narrator in Emily Brönte’s Wuthering Heights (1846) relies on allusions of rather than actual events in childhood between Heathcliff and Catherine to cultivate the repressed passion they feel for each other in adulthood. In the scholar’s view, this allows the reader to reconstruct the origin of their love and the author to leave this childhood without the blemish of sexual desire (Child-Loving 12-3). 13 Childhood
remains ambiguous and a space of complex imagery in the nineteenth-century novel, despite the characterization of a self-aware child.

Dickens’ early work, especially leading up to *David Copperfield*, has spawned much debate regarding his child characters, notably their caricature-like portrayals. Henry James often criticized the author for his overreliance on grotesque and unrealistic creatures: “He has created nothing but figure” (Review 787). More recent scholars find Dickens’ figurative children productively symbolic. These characters communicate a criticism of Victorian London, functioning as an instrument for social commentary (Coveney 92-3, 111). John Bowen proposes Little Nell as a pre-bourgeois figure, swept by the object-world that sacrifices her (18). Malcolm Andrews has written that Dickens’ long list of child figures harbor the unresolved struggles of nineteenth-century London (22). An important distinction has been made between Dickens’ psychologically developed children like David Copperfield or Pip from his later works, and his earlier allegorical child figures that explicitly manifest their metaphorical function, like Little Nell or Tiny Tim (Andrews 135, Donavan 165). Galdós appears to have noted this maturation in Dickens and develops moderation into his use of child’s play in his *Novelas contemporáneas*.14

Galdós subtly places his child figure on the margin of story, like the Greek chorus (Cabrejas 340). This strategy avoids placing unrealistic children at the center, for which James criticized Dickens.15 Effie Erickson has observed a similarity of Dickens’ child characters in Galdós’ earlier work, which features children in more significant roles.16 The characterization of infants all but disappears in his *Novelas contemporáneas*, though. Put another way, by placing the child on the outskirts of the story, Galdós can experiment with the child figure without distracting the reader, because now the child figure becomes a product of the adult’s gaze and imagination, rather than an autonomous caricature. This clear preference for child figures over
characters that are children underscores two things: that adults remain the great focus of Galdós’ social novel, and that their relationship with children plays a significant role in their characterization.17

IV. Realism, Representation, and the Figure of the Child in Galdós

Children in fiction continue to move readers and intrigue scholars. The realist novel, in particular, gives rise to the problem of children appearing real and plastic, recognizable and distorted. In the current debates on realism, which treat how the genre negotiates visual phenomena, critics have attempted to reconcile humanistic (Marxism, cultural studies) with linguistic (structuralism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction) readings. On the one hand, humanistic studies have begun to give greater weight to a work’s structure, while linguistic studies on the other have incorporated social context into their analysis of a character’s structural position. This dissertation, as presented above, explains children in Galdós by examining both the social and structural elements that appear in child’s play, the child’s interaction with the narrator and characters.

This theoretical middle ground nears Galdós’ own novelistic approach, his novels explicitly renovating the conventions of realism while depicting contemporary Madrid.18 In 1870, the Spanish novelist criticized writers of mass-market novels for imitating Dumas and Soulié and because they failed to observe their own social reality. To make his point, Galdós values less what appears sensational (“parece cosa de novela”) in life to what appears life-like (“Parece cosa de la vida”) in the novel; he demands that Spain create “la novela de verdad y de caracteres, espejo fiel de la sociedad en que vivimos” (“Observaciones” 223-4). Cervantes, the painter Velázquez, and Dickens fulfill this calling for Galdós.19 Nearly three decades later, however, in his acceptance speech to the Real Academia, the Spanish novelist expresses the
difficulty that art encounters in depicting reality: “Hasta los rostros humanos no son ya lo que eran, . . . el Arte nos ofrece un fenómeno extraño que demuestra la inconsistencia de las ideas en el mundo” (“Discurso” 12). The surface of reality and the truth that lies below it, which Galdós assumed the novel could flesh out, have experienced an epistemological shift. The child figure, elaborated in the four selected texts and at the Spanish novelist’s peak between these two theoretical poles, demonstrates this emerging problem between the espejo and la inconsistencia de las ideas, between material reality and the dilemmas of representing it.

Regarding realism, critics in the humanistic tradition have gone in search of this mirror, though this proves especially difficult when treating a figure like the child, whose surface and essence appear at constant odds. James, who depicts many children in his novels, has asserted that developing a child’s conscience should be as concrete—or as easy to represent—as the islands of the Spanish Main (“The Art of Fiction” 180). It would seem, nevertheless, that in novels like Brönte’s Wuthering Heights—as observed earlier—and even in James’ own What Maisie Knew (1897), material reality and the elusive stage of childhood require different reference points, as well as a different level of emotional engagement in the language. Historicist studies embark on a similar journey to James’ claim. Erich Auerbach’s influential Mimesis finds the social and psychological elements of history reflected in the novel, while György Lukács understands Sir Walter Scott and Honoré Balzac’s works as reactions to the emerging bourgeoisie.

Others have attempted to explicate this notion of reflection in the language of realism. Richard Pearce proposes that realist prose operates within a “single economy” and “closed system” that represents visual reality (337, 340). D. A. Williams has called realist literature a scaled-down, or one-to-one, version of reality (257). The self-defeating problem of realist prose
quickly arises, though, which underpins how “absolute description is impossible” (Irwin 5). Michael Irwin’s excellent study on portraiture recommends, however, a controlled economy of language that fosters the allusion to material reality over the illusion of metaphor. Criticism experiences a turn in realism, from promoting the use of detail as a mode of achieving accuracy, to warning against the overuse of detail. Irwin himself specifically cautions against Dickens’ use of metaphor when describing children, because it distances the child from plausible representation (28-32). In a more recent study, Peter Brooks’ *Realist Vision* advances that realism manifests a desire to reproduce the visual world it depicts, and that it uses language to mediate this desire (2-3, 5-6). This study eschews a fundamental problem: that written language cannot satisfy this desire nor can it fully reproduce the visual, as some postructuralists have responded (Foucault 3-8, Said 100-1). Specifically, humanistic and literal readings of the realist novel overlook that the children of novelists like Dickens and Galdós suggest implausible figures that function within the plausible setting of material reality. Realist prose serves the child figure just as much as Émile Zola’s open-air markets and Balzac’s catalogues of quotidian objects.

The linguistic approach, as it reacts to humanistic studies, appears to initially favor an analysis of the child in nineteenth-century literature. Structuralists accept the self-defeating project of description in the realist novel, which grows in length as the author surrounds metonymy with metaphor, like child’s play. For Roland Barthes, these novelists de-depict reality into a pastiche (*S/Z* 55), because the real holds little power over written language (Barthes “The Reality Effect”). Jacques Derrida, through his ideas on deconstruction, separates frames in fiction (intrinsic) from the frames of reality (extrinsic) in his study “The Parergon,” and argues that the context of the referent disappears in the written language (“Signature” 2-3). The child figure could be seen to benefit from this self-contained system of language and metaphor, but it
would also unnecessarily relieve the child figure from its correspondence with material reality and human referentiality. This correspondence is what produces the phenomenon of the child figure and provokes the responses of pleasure and disgust in characters and scholars alike. Distortion in the child occurs because its representation begins to stray from yet somehow still carry remnants of the original.

Jonathan Culler’s important work on structuralism has recognized the limits of analyzing the novel as a series of self-contained units of a plot, and admits that this type of reading fails to treat the identity and social experience of characters (206, 230). Galdós himself prized structure: “Para mi el estilo empieza en el plan... En general, los arrepentimientos que yo tengo no son por errores de estilo, sino por precipitaciones de plan.” As scholars like Gilman, Turner, Gold, and others have advanced, though, character and metaphor are two of Galdós’ cornerstones; and his narrators constantly use the latter to characterize the former. More recently, structuralists have begun to incorporate the study of character and narrator identities into their analyses. Mieke Bal writes that the act of narrating gives the narrator and character life (58), and adds: “Perception... is a psychosomatic process, strongly dependent on the position of the perceiving body” (145). The child can only become a figure when it is considered under this subject-object relation. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan points up how narration frees the subject from complete unconsciousness (22-3). Narrators construct the identity of others while they become subjects themselves during the act of telling (Rimmon-Kenan 12, 25). Under these apt reconsiderations, the narrator and character invest their personal capital in the observed child. The images used to create its figure contain the debris of those that gaze at it.

In his timely book, *The One vs. the Many*, Alex Woloch has understood this new emphasis on character and structure as an intersection between personality and position. The
critic calls it the “socioformal” conjunction, a juncture between reference and structure that addresses the vexed problem of characterization and distributive matrix of major and minor characters. Social spaces and character systems depend on each other in the novel (Woloch 12-4). Character and structure work together through the narrator-reader contract, initiated by the novel’s proem.24 One scholar has called this a “shared angle of vision” that creates the tension between reference and illusion, between recognition and metaphor (Furst All is True ix, 16-7).25 Put differently, the socioformal investigates the realist novel’s negotiation of reality and fiction. In Galdós, ambivalent and personal narrators constantly play with this narrator-reader contract, and help expose their manner of narration while they consciously treat the matter of reality.26 As this dissertation will demonstrate, the study of child’s play reveals the antimonies of realism in Galdós, as well as the complex personalities of characters, because it explores the contention between the mirror and the idea of reality.
Notes

1 This trend begins with Peter Coveney’s foundational work. Robert Pattinson has suggested the child figure as an evocative device in the novel, and traces the history of children’s aesthetic distance in Western literature. Franco Ferucci’s article offers an excellent study on the symbolic and mythological functions of children.

2 Carolyn Steedman has advanced the child figure as “a central vehicle for expressing ideas about the self and its history.” The reader must differentiate between the figure and the real child, something the scholar calls a “strange” or difficult dislocation to make (5). Ferucci’s work has also examined, in greater detail than Coveney and his successors, the adult-child relationship that child figure proposes. James R. Kincaid maintains that the one who gazes at the child hollows out childhood, refilling it with his or her desires (Child-Loving 12-3).

3 In Spain, the Revolution of 1868 brings about a socially conscious novel, observing class and political conflicts. Adult characters work through the shifting status of marriage and love, changing regimes, descending and climbing social classes—the figure of the child during this turmoil appears just as elusive. Clarín, Emilia Pardo Bazán, and José María de Pereda make up part of the realist-naturalist movement in Spain, but Galdós surfaces as the most prolific and obsessed with treating his contemporary reality. He depicts Madrid and the nation in turmoil in his series the Novelas españolas contemporáneas (1881-97), influenced in part by Honoré Balzac’s Le Comédie humaine (1830-50).

4 Gabriel Cabrejas recapitulates previous asides and older work on the child in Galdós, notably Nicholas G. Round’s study on La de Bringas (“Rosalía”)—which inaugurates the reflective notion of children—and H. L. Boudreau’s commentary on the Valentín brothers of Torquemada. Cabrejas attempts to summarize Galdós’ approach to writing children, but the study places several of the children in both the divine and bourgeois categories, which underscores the problem of labeling these living yet aesthetically active figures.

5 Teresa Fuentes Pueris’ work expounds on Galdós’ commitment to medical and scientific advances, while Round has taken a similar position regarding Torquemada, stating that the death of a child acts a great leveler of bourgeois dynasties in Galdós (“Galdós”). In Lisa Surwillo’s recent cultural studies work, she advances the Pituso and other urban child characters as a dramatization of “blackface” in Fortunata y Jacinta, a strategy she believes Galdós uses to criticize Spain’s imperialist ideology.

6 In his recent book, The One vs. the Many, Alex Woloch has emphasized the meeting of character and structure as an intersection between personality and position—the “socioformal” conjunction. This juncture associates reference and structure, the vexed problem between characterization and the distributive matrix of major and minor characters (Woloch 12-4). Lilian R. Furst’s work has taken a similar stance, and suggests the importance of setting within the novel as a cornerstone to the building the illusion of fiction and connecting to the structure of story.
Focalization plays a key role in this dissertation, especially when reading who and how subjects describe children. Focalization entails a process of vision and description, establishing the various levels of narrator and character(s) that depict observed object(s). Its process determines the narrative situation, so the reader must distinguish between a mere narrator and the complexity of focalization, in terms of the linguistic, visual or auditive aspects of the story (Bal *Narratology* 18-20). Seymour Chatman’s notions of focalization echo Mieke Bal’s of the psychosomatic elements, the former scholar breaking it down to three levels: perceptual (the sensorial), conceptual (ideology), and interest (personal investment) (151-8), all of which play a part in parsing the child figure.

Others have studied the *adulto aniñado* and the Oedipal motif, found in characters like Juanito Santa Cruz and Maxi Rubín (Gilman “The Birth,” Turner *Galdós* 58-60, López-Baralt “Sueños,” Montesinos 217-8).

Colin Heywood aptly observes that children do not and cannot write their own history, leaving few records behind. Toys and diaries are objects created for them, manipulated by adults, and forced into the realm of the child’s experience (6).

Most notably, Harry Hendrick and Michael Anderson criticize the French scholar’s use of unreliable data and of confusing prescription with practice, avoiding a more contextualized demographic and economic approach.

For example, historians have recently recognized that Britain dressed up its history and “fight” against child labor, depicting a gallant figure like Lord Shaftesbury rescuing poor factory children from cruel employers. Cunningham suggests this process as a way for politicians to use the child’s image to provoke sympathy and collect votes through newspapers and posters (14). Heywood gives an excellent summary of various historical and critical views, including primary and secondary sources (121-4). Tellingly, families during the Industrial Revolution migrated from farming communities to urban spaces. As practiced in agriculture, they initially carried on a tradition of including children in work to help support the family. The transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, industrialization, and the institutionalization of school systems caused a shift in thought regarding children and their stages.

Rousseau compares the child to a savage who, if “raised in a desert, without books, without instruction, without women, would die there a virgin at whatever age he had reached” (333). This idea echoes Locke’s notion of the child as a *tabula rasa*, an empty slate to be filled. National schooling systems and urban, bourgeois homes were to provide this walled-off space where the infant’s mind and moral compass could be molded by family and state, the modern concept of the child constructed by someone other than the child itself.

*El sí de las niñas* (1806) serves as an early Spanish nineteenth-century example of the power and flexibility of the child’s image. Leonardo Fernández de Moratin ironically uses the term *niña* to diminish Francisca’s social and gender role as a young lady of sixteen (Casalduero 42). It demonstrates the plasticity of the term “child” and its influence over both adults and
children alike. The term cloaks the subject with an objectifying gaze. Cunningham observes the variety of words used in the Greek and Latin to signify the child. He proposes the Latin term *infans* as the most interesting, which means, “not speaking” (21). The child’s muteness allows others to speak for and over it in language and literature, language yielding child’s play at an early stage.

Effie Erickson emphasizes the importance of Dickens in Galdós’ writing and life, transcribing the following as having taken place at a dinner held in the Spanish author’s honor:

No olvidaremos nunca su despedida. Fue un banquete en el hotel Bristol. Al acabar la comida, Santos Oliver se levantó a hablar en nombre de todos, y le llamó el Dickens español. Don Benito, de pronto, se incorporó, ayudado por unos amigos, contestó, "Gracias, gracias," y entre el general silencio salió afuera. Ya en la puerta, se detuvo pálido; dijo con voz de ultratumba: “¡Adiós, señores!” Y desapareció (430).

David Simpson asserts that most of Dickens’ characters are figured, inflexible, and lacking a consciousness or inner life, despite their protagonicity (40).

The critic compares the gruel given to Oliver Twist to the garlic soup doled out to Clara in *La Fontana de Oro* (1870), and notes how both Pablo from *El Audaz* (1871) and Oliver Twist steal their mistress’ bracelets. Finally, *Gloria* (1876-7) and *Dombey and Son* (1848) depict the school experience, Erickson writes (424-6).

A similar child figure appears in other Spanish authors. Emilia Pardo Bazán’s *Los pazoos de Ulloa* (1886) advances themes of incest and family decadence in the dog-like Perucho and the near-mute Manolita, trapped in a Galician *hortus conclusus*. Alternatively, they receive an interior life in the sequel *La madre naturaleza* (1887), especially when they discover their family relation. Clarín’s *Su único hijo* (1894) depicts Bonis’ vivid fantasies of having a firstborn while his wife Emma desires to abort it. Vicente Blasco Ibáñez’s Valencian cycle of novels closes with *Cañas y barro* (1902), which concludes with a violent sequence involving Tonet committing infanticide in killing his own son and suicide in the muddy water. Along with his Spanish contemporaries, Galdós captures a darker, more flexible child image through child’s play that surpasses European authors that come before him, though he owes much to them.

Many scholars have reached this conclusion, but Hazel Gold’s *Reframing Realism* has comprehensively shown how Galdós’ *Novelas* display a constant tension between their modes of representation and what they represent.

Harriet Turner calls Galdós’ commitment to reading other European works a “writer’s workshop” (“Metaphor” 884). Stephen Gilman coins this as a “colloquium of novelists,” which allows the Spanish novelist to produce something truly all his own (Galdós 234).

Benedict Anderson’s idea of “imagined communities” borders Ian Watt’s notion of the emergent nineteenth-century novel as a cause and effect of social *milieu*. Raymond Williams’
Marxism and Literature suggests the novel as a product of capitalism literally and theoretically, the matter and manner of description speaking to sociological elements of the novel’s period.

21 Structuralists understand Ferdinand de Saussure’s contribution to linguistics as essential to an analysis of language and text, while Gérard Genette’s Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method remains a groundbreaking book on narrative, story, and their various levels of exposition from which they draw and debate.

22 This line is taken from an interview conducted between Luis Bello and Galdós in response to his critics (1).

23 These critics have advanced important work on Galdós and his use of language in the novel, without ignoring the socio-personal components to story and character. Others scholars that inform this dissertation and the idea of child’s play include Peter A. Bly, Germán Gullón, Ricardo Gullón, John W. Kronik, López-Baralt, Akiko Tsuchiya, Diane F. Urey, and Noël Valis.

24 Wolfgang Iser suggests it as an “author-text-reader… dynamic interrelationship that moves toward a final result” (254-5). Victor Brombert, Martin Price, and Marianna Torgovnick’s work on the proem and closural elements of the novel also inform the chapters of this dissertation.

25 This can also be read as a tension between the real and ideal, which surfaces in the child figure. The reader might find helpful Galdós’ ties to Krausism and his commitment to epistemology. James Mandrell notes the importance in Spain of Julián Sanz del Río’s work regarding Kraus, Ideal de la humanidad para la vida (1860), which suggests that humans are not inherently evil, and that only ignorance can drive them toward it. This is where Galdós, Clarín, and Pardo Bazán search for a balance between man and God (96).

26 Galdós’ morally ambiguous narrators emphasize the epistemological problem between dream (or delusion) and reality posed by Cervantes, just as his child figure resides between the real and metaphorical. G. Gullón recognizes Galdós’ debt to Cervantes, and emphasizes the former’s use of juxtaposed images through the ironic narrator that produces interconnected metaphoric systems and a narrator-as-character (24-6, 33-4). Indeed, as another critic puts it, the closer Galdós wrote to the author of the Quijote, the better his novels became (Montesinos 7).
CHAPTER 2
ABSENT CHILDREN IN GALDÓS’ *FORTUNATA Y JACINTA*

I. Introduction

*Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886-7) remains Benito Pérez Galdós’ masterpiece. The four-volume novel centers around two families and a series of love triangles, which take place in Madrid in the wake of Spain’s Revolution (1868). The Rubín and Santa Cruz families, belonging to the lower and upper crusts of the middle class respectively, depict a nineteenth-century bourgeois experience. The novel develops many characters, but the conflicts surrounding Fortunata and Jacinta thrust the story toward its dénouement. Both women fall in love with Juanito Santa Cruz, Jacinta’s philandering husband. Both women wish to have his son, though for different reasons. The sights, sounds, and smells of Madrid’s social strata recall the works of Balzac and Zola. The narrator’s ironic presentation of characters edges Cervantine aesthetics. Comparisons and allusions abound, Galdós unafraid to test the limits of his prose.

Children in *Fortunata y Jacinta* appear often and with dramatic significance. Jacinta searches for a male heir to cement her bourgeois position, while Fortunata needs an illegitimate son to displace Jacinta. The child figure links these two women in opposition, yet allows their reconciliation in the closing episodes. Critics have focused their attention upon Fortunata, however, barely exploring Jacinta’s experience of barrenness and desire for a child.¹ Her mind and body work together to develop images of children that absorb her and the narrative space. In Jacinta’s final scene—part of the novel’s climax—she holds Juan Evaristo Segismundo, Juanito’s illegitimate son and her ultimate moment of poetic justice. The child figure undergirds Jacinta’s character and remains a key element in the novel’s overall structure.
This chapter argues that the narrator in *Fortunata y Jacinta* organizes the story of Jacinta around the image of the child. Jacinta’s character remains tied to this image system of children from beginning to end, which also allows her to enjoy moments of protagonicity when she engages children, imagined or real. Her observations of infants produce descriptions that grow in length in relation to her intensifying emotions. The narrator’s use of the child figure in moments of death throws light upon other characters as well, in particular Mauricia la Dura, Moreno-Isla, and Fortunata—characters affected by Jacinta’s relation to children. The four-volume novel achieves its structural and thematic coherence by depending on the image of children, and Jacinta remains at the center of this novelistic thrust.

This chapter contains three major parts. The first section examines the narrator’s image system of children that galvanizes *Fortunata y Jacinta*’s motifs and character associations. This series of images connects Jacinta to Barbarita, Isabel Cordero, and Fortunata. It also exposes Juanito’s ironic decline from the presumed hero of the story to a dismissed figure. As a novelistic strategy, the narrator situates this structural and thematic continuity in the opening and closing chapters. Section Two treats Jacinta’s forceful and private experience of observing the child, which lead to her moments of protagonicity. Theories of the affect explain how the narrator concedes a larger narrative platform to Jacinta as her observations of children intensify. The final section develops the child figure as a *figura mortis* that haunts yet also opens up the characters of Mauricia la Dura, Moreno-Isla, and Fortunata during their experiences of death. The image of the child inaugurates and adjourns the novel, the presence of Jacinta never far behind.
II. Opening and Closing Frames: Jacinta, the Child Figure, and the Women of *Fortunata y Jacinta*

The structure and motifs of *Fortunata y Jacinta* strengthen with each reading. The narrator sustains this unity by using the child figure as a cornerstone in his design of the first and fourth volumes. This storyteller, who reveals his ambivalence in the opening lines of the novel, predicts Juanito’s indolence and the import of Jacinta in this same narratorial gesture. This foreshadow emerges as the image of Juanito’s lovechild. The narrator also fastens together a constellation of women through Jacinta and this child figure, which underscores the significance of female characters and their relation to infants. Scholars have studied the reconciliatory power of Fortunata offering her son Juan Evaristo to Jacinta (Gilman *Galdós* 244), as well the narratological and social implications this exchange bares (Moncy Gullón, Turner “Family Ties” 18). More recently, Noël Valis has advanced this gift of the child as a rite of passage for Jacinta, through which she moves away from Fortunata’s overbearing narrative presence (“Romance” 172). Little attention has been paid, however, to how the image of the child in the opening episodes connects to and foreshadows the concluding elements of the novel. This section suggests that the narrator relies on the child figure to promote the novel’s closure and to link the female characters together. It also submits that Jacinta surfaces as the character that bridges these connecting points.

As the reader looks back and forth at this expansive novel, images related to children play an integral part in building the text’s total form. The placement of the child figure in the opening and concluding frames, nuanced by the ironic narrator, holds these two opposing forces of the novel in balance. Many have understood beginnings and endings as cornerstones of the realist novel. Victor Brombert has called the first phrases of a text an “opening attack,” an
initiation to a ceremony of imagination (490). Complex beginnings, though, as flushed out by 

Fortunata y Jacinta’s ambivalent narrator, produce multiple storylines and motifs that 
complicate the analysis of opening frames (Kermode “Novels”). Studying the closing episodes of 
a realist novel provide the reader with essential material to bridge these gaps provoked by a 
complex opening. Marianna Torgovnick has suggested a “retrospective patterning” in addressing 
the opening and closing aspects of a novel. The scholar proposes the process of rereading as a 
device to understand the impact of a novel’s image systems (Closure 6-7).5 The child figure in 
Fortunata y Jacinta appears as such a component that coheres the story from beginning to end. 
The image of the child advances two structural components that Torgovnick has developed in 
piecing these elements together: “circularity”—closural details that control the opening of the 
text, and “parallelism”—images, characters or events that repeat beyond the opening and 
conclusion.6

Fortunata y Jacinta’s narrator-witness employs the image of the child in the first chapters 
to predict the concluding events of the story. The narrator’s feigned omniscience allows him to 
“silhouette” in and out of description and action,7 but his placement of the child figure in these 
first chapters enables him to craft the circularity of the novel. This circularity comes to light with 
the narrator’s treatment of Juanito in the opening frame, which uses Juanito’s name as its title, 
but removes his name from the text proper. Some have observed how Juanito’s role decreases in 
conjunction with the looming possibility of an heir, but only after his illegitimate children begin 
to surface.8 The first frame of the novel underpins Juanito’s downward trajectory earlier, when 
read through retrospective patterning: “Las noticias más remotas que tengo de la persona que 
leva este nombre [del título] me las ha dado Jacinto María Villalonga, y alcanzan al tiempo en 
que este amigo mío y el otro y el de más allá, Zalamero, Joaquinito Pez, Alejandro Miquis, iban
a las aulas de la universidad” (1: I, i, 97-8). The omission of Juanito’s name creates a gap in the narrative, perpetuated by the list of minor characters that increase the distance between the eponymous title and the first time the narrator mentions Juanito’s name. This gap shrinks and expands throughout the novel, predicated on Juanito’s ability to lie and philander, but this gap never fully closes. Only his illegitimate son Juan Evaristo can fill it in Part 4, when Juanito’s estranged wife Jacinta holds the newborn in her arms and casts the final blow upon the indolent protagonist.

In Jacinta’s last stand, Juan Evaristo becomes the true heir of the Santa Cruz home and sets in place the circularity of the novel’s opening and closing episodes. The narrator ironically fills the lacuna of Juanito’s name from the introductory frame of the text with this lovechild. Juan Evaristo displaces Juanito from the story and sheds new light upon Jacinta’s character. The newborn functions as a portal through which Jacinta imagines a new life away from her husband. Jacinta’s gaze and the narrator’s use of metaphor in the description consume any narrative space that had previously belonged to Juanito:

A solas con él, la dama se entretenía fabricando en su atrevido pensamiento edificios de humo con torres de aire y cúpulas más frágiles aún, por ser de pura idea. Las facciones del heredero niño no eran las de la otra [Fortunata], eran las suyas. Y tanto podía la imaginación, que la madre putativa llegaba a embelesarse con el artificioso recuerdo de haber llevado en sus entrañas aquel precioso hijo, y a estremecerse con la suposición de los dolores sufridos al echarle al mundo. Y tras estos juegos de la fantasía traviesa, . . . haciendo en fin, unas correcciones tan extravagantes a la hora total del mundo . . . Jacinta hacía girar todo este ciclón de pensamientos y correcciones alrededor de la cabeza angelica de Juan Evaristo . . . podría tener la cara de Santa Cruz, pero cuyo corazón era seguramente el de Moreno . . . Porque bien podría Moreno haber sido su marido . . . el mundo sería entonces como debía ser (4: VI, xvi, 534).

The narrator reluctantly acquiesces to Jacinta in this final sequence, as if competing with each other in the free indirect discourse. The narrator’s tone edges tongue-and-cheek with his selection of verbs and adjectives—fabricando, humo, aire, madre putativa, correcciones, etc.
His ironic voice notwithstanding, the narrator deploys Jacinta’s focalization, which builds her house of fiction. Jacinta’s gaze baptizes Juan Evaristo with an alternative reality. The adoptive mother invents a new personal and biological history for and through the newborn, Juan Evaristo’s body serving as a kind of canvas. This new reality includes the presence of Moreno-Isla as a physiognomic and paternal influence. Jacinta believes in the non-event of having physically suffered through childbirth. She narrativizes the absence of her biological progeny with a lost-and-found story, nearing a mythological status in the novel by superimposing her own images of the child.⁹

The rereading of the novel also locates the child figure between these introductory and concluding installments. Images of children produce moments of parallelism in episodes beyond the opening and closing of the novel. These images further develop Jacinta by connecting her character to three other female characters—her mother Isabel Cordero, her mother-in-law Barbarita, and Fortunata—with the child figure as the vehicle of this connection. Beginning with Jacinta’s mother, many have recognized how Isabel Cordero’s seventeen childbirths contrast with Jacinta’s sterility,¹⁰ but a closer look at Jacinta’s birth story and the narrator’s arrangement of the child figure in it can expand upon this notion. Isabel Cordero has so many children that she conceives of a mnemonic device to organize them: “recordaba [a sus niños] asociándolos a fechas célebres del reinado de Isabel II . . . ‘Mi primer hijo—decía—nació cuando vino la tropa carlista hasta las tapias de Madrid. Mi Jacinta nació cuando se casó la Reina, con pocos días de diferencia’” (1: I, vi, 156). Isabel Cordero blends the historical with the genealogical in her memory device. The verb “asociándolos” and the lack of specificity in the mother’s correlation between Jacinta’s birth and its corresponding national event, however, advances a gap in the story.
Isabel Cordero feigns her children as historical-biological binaries, despite her chronological inaccuracy. Stephen Gilman has called her children little “episodios nacionales” (“The Birth” 71), but these children’s connection to fiction appears to absorb the historical reference in this allusion when Jacinta’s birth story, marriage, and complications of giving birth are considered together. Isabel Cordero uses a strategy of forcing Jacinta’s relation to the historical date (“con pocos días de diferencia”), just as the narrator forces Isabel Cordero’s death and the announcement of Jacinta’s engagement to Juanito to coincide with General Prim’s death: “Decían los vecinos y amigos que había reventado de gusto . . . En su muerte la perseguían las fechas célebres, como la habían perseguido sus parto, cual si la historia la rondara deseando tener algo que ver con ella” [emphasis in the original] (1: IV, ii, 197). Neither Isabel Cordero nor the narrator describe the actual events of birth—in Jacinta’s case—or history, they conflate them through secondhand sources and elusive imagery instead to give the appearance of parallels. This conflation, or narratorial strategy, points up the irreconcilable gap in the stories. The historical-biological inaccuracy in Jacinta’s birth story foreshadows the historical-biological gap she will experience—failing to conceive a son. While doomed public events parallel with Jacinta’s birth and marriage (Macklin 186-7), it appears just as important that these parallels surface through a conflation of events and ambivalent narration.11 Jacinta’s birth story retains an irreconcilable lacuna between fiction and reality that she further covers up with the fiction Juan Evaristo belonging to Moreno-Isla.

Jacinta’s character develops through her relation to another parental figure as well, her mother-in-law Barbarita. This connection between two mother figures anchors her character, form its inception in the novel, to the maternal and the problem of procreation. Both Jacinta and Barbarita share in their struggle to conceive an heir in their respective marriages, though
Barbarita finally gives birth to Juanito after many years of waiting. The narrator uses the image of unborn infants to emphasize the social pressure that accompanies childbearing in middle-class Madrid in these two women. The narrator reveals his physical presence, importantly, for the first time to underscore this social burden. He claims to have met and listened to Barbarita’s hardship of not conceiving a son for the first ten years of her union to Don Baldomero: “Los felices esposos contaban con [Juanito] este mes, el que viene y el otro, y estaban viéndole venir y deseándole como los judíos al Mesías” (1: I, iv, 142). An initial reading of the material suggests a narrative suspense and light characterization of Barbarita, but a detailed review unpacks the significance of male family heirs in this bourgeois community that relates this mother-in-law to Jacinta. It also discloses the narrator’s use of irony in his treatment of Juanito through the child figure. The allusion to the Jewish Messiah supports Juanito’s acronym of JSC (Jesucristo), but it also inflicts a sarcastic turn upon the indolent protagonist. The Jewish Messiah has yet to arrive and Juanito is not the hero of the story, displaced at the conclusion by the exchange of his lovechild between Fortuanta and Jacinta. This Christological imagery of the child links Barbarita to Jacinta, as well as to Fortunata, images of Christ used to depict the children to whom these three women give birth or adopt.12

Jacinta’s arranged marriage to Juanito, planned by Barbarita and Isabel Cordero, comes to fruition on the back of Fortunata’s pregnancy. This unborn child sets in motion the central conflict of the novel, but it also holds these four women in a covenant, forever linked throughout the four-volume story. This network of mothers and mothers-to-be begins when Juanito returns home one evening during his ten month liaison with Fortunata, before his arranged marriage, and reveals the pregnancy: “Después de una noche entró tarde y muy sofocado, y tuvo cefalalgia y vómitos, la mudanza pareció más acentuada;” in response, Barbarita thinks to herself: ‘Ahora le
voy a poner a mi pollo una calza para que no se me escape más” (1: IV, i, 190-2). Jacinta surfaces as this *calza*. Like the metaphor that replaces her, Jacinta stands in for Fortunata, but, like the metaphor and the word it replaces, these two women—and the implicated Isabel Cordero and Barbarita—cannot be separated from each other. The narrator reintroduces Jacinta into the narrative through allusion to the child by emphasizing Juanito’s acute psychosomatic experience: a headache and visceral discharge that mimic pregnancy symptoms. The image of the unborn infant looms over Juanito, opens up the narrative to Jacinta, and inaugurates the network of women that drive the novel. The child figure catalyzes Juanito’s bourgeois union, casts Jacinta in her role of *ángel del hogar*, and places her in opposition to Fortunata. Jacinta will reinterpret the role of Barbarita’s anguish of providing an heir to the Santa Cruz family, but with the impossible burden of sterility rather than tested patience.

III. Narrating the Child: Jacinta and the Affect

Jacinta seems poised to be remembered as a fragile eponymous figure, a victim of Madrid’s hypocritical bourgeoisie and overshadowed by other leading characters. Deceptively, though, the narrator grants her flashes of protagonicity. He fleshes out a complex character in Jacinta, despite the social and story impositions. Part 1, up until Chapter 10, narrates Jacinta’s escalating struggle to conceive an heir for the Santa Cruz family. In these episodes, her mind and body work together in perceiving and producing visual phenomena of children. These experiences engulf the narrative and suggest her as a leading figure. Linda Willem has advanced Jacinta as a focalizer of urban children when she travels through the slums of Madrid in Chapter 9, the character guided by her maternal concerns (“Jacinta’s ‘Visita’”). Most recently, Lisa Surwillo has suggested that the dirty, poor children in these scenes underscore Spain and
Jacinta’s social conflicts. Scholars have paid little attention, however, to the effect of Jacinta’s observations of children in and beyond Chapter 9.

This section contends that Jacinta comes into a leading role through her affect for children, which multiplies the amount of narrative space dedicated to her character. The focalization of infants, real or imagined by her, produces a continuum of emotions in the text. The growth of narrative landscape allotted to Jacinta, this accumulation of unsteady reactions to her visualization of children, suggests an expanding gap between the character’s perceiving body and the perceived child, between subject and object. Jacinta and the child remain interrelated, though, mutually implicit in the expansion of this gap of unnamed yet intensifying emotions. Together, Jacinta and the children she engages develop the affect, bodily sensations in reaction to an exterior force.

Early debates regarding the affect positioned New Criticism’s “affective fallacy” against reader-response and psychoanalytic theories. In its recent academic resurgence, scholars have resubmitted poetics as an affective device in the reading process (Burgess, Colm Hogan, Robinson), while others have debated the categorization of emotions and the pragmatics of stoicism (Altieri, Nussbaum). An important distinction has been made between the affect and emotions, the former viewed as emergent bodily sensations and the latter as the conscious recognition of an emotion. Fredric Jameson has further differentiated between these two terms and explores them within the realist novel. The scholar has suggested the affect as a sphere in the text where as-of-yet unknown emotions flourish, and has recast the emotions as “named emotions.” Jacinta’s experience with children and the mounting of narrative space her character demands advance what Jameson has called the “realm of the affect.” This space registers the interplay between subject and object, and the intensity they develop in the text. The term
“subjectivity” is no longer enough here, since it privileges the subject and it would emphasize a conscious state of emotions, something Jacinta fails to attain in these chapters. The sphere of the affect grows in detail, because the narrator and character attempt to describe these elusive and unknown emotions, just as Jacinta attempts to understand her visualization of children.\textsuperscript{15} Offering a similar understanding of the affect, Jo Labanyi has proposed it as an entanglement between self and world: “[the] affect is the body’s response to stimuli at a precognitive and prelinguistic level” (“Doing Things” 224). The precognitive and prelinguistic levels of experience underpin the accumulation of detail that the affect puts forth yet can never fully enframe, mimicking the fundamental problem of representation in realist prose. The realm of the affect maintains a “perpetual present” of description, the stasis of story and build-up of detail that magnify Jacinta’s rise to a leading figure when she interacts with children and their images.\textsuperscript{16}

This section observes the process of granting Jacinta greater narrative landscape as a three-act play. The first act begins in Chapter 5 during her honeymoon, reaches its climax in Chapter 9 when Jacinta visits the \textit{cuarto estado}, and concludes in Chapter 10 once Juanito reveals that his lovechild is dead and that she must move on. The growth of description through the affect suggests a tension between the time of story and the time it takes to narrate, between the visual and the temporal. The privilege of narrative time over story time allows Jacinta’s character to increase her claim of character-space and to leave a greater impression upon the text, when observed through what has been called the “socioformal” element of the realist novel.\textsuperscript{17} These representational limits between the perceiving body (Jacinta) and its object (child figure) locate the swelling of the affect and Jacinta’s rising character.

As noted in the previous section, Jacinta’s union to Juanito falls into place thanks in part to the revelation of his lovechild with Fortunata. It seems only natural that Jacinta, once
suspicious of the previous pregnancy, would go in search of her husband’s firstborn. The combination of her suspicion and the family pressure placed upon Jacinta to conceive a child develops the realm of the affect in her narrative. This is Act I, Jacinta’s incitation to action. The words of others and the stress of providing a son combine in Jacinta to produce her motivation. The relation to language begins with her husband’s infamous drunken honeymoon confession. Juanito blurts out the details of his liaison with Fortunata, but sheepishly admits to fathering a son: “‘Supe que en efecto había…’ Jacinta tuvo la piedad de evitarle las últimas palabras de la oración, diciéndolas ella,” though Juanito refuses to confirm the pregnancy the following day (1: V, vii, 234-5). From this moment forward, Jacinta carries out the daunting task of always “filling in” the information others leave out. She fills in her husband’s omission of the word “child” here, just as she must attempt to fill in the void of an heir in their marriage. Jacinta’s process of filling in becomes a self-defeating task, though, like the realm of the affect’s project of describing the indescribable.

Family pressure to have a son, on the other hand, comes from Barbarita. Her mother-in-law’s remarks cause in Jacinta a “dolorosa idea de vacío,” as Barbarita quips: “No te apures por los chiquillos, que ya los tendrás” (1: VI, i, 239). The family’s ambivalent use of language regarding children throws light on Jacinta’s childless status and the socio-familial pressures that come with it. The *punto negro* and *gusanillo aquel* that surface repeatedly in her conscience serve as dark metaphors that remind her of Juanito’s lovechild.18 These linguistic turns and omissions cultivate the growing *vacío* Jacinta perceives, which she will try to fill in by searching for Juanito’s son, a process that explodes the sphere of the affect in the text.

Ironically, the more her family and community tease out this void of children in her life, the more room must be allotted to Jacinta’s burst of unsteady emotions. When she stops to see
her sister, the fecund Candelaria, for example, Candelaria and family friend Benigna make fun of Jacinta for not knowing how to handle children. She naively showers Candelaria’s with too many gifts. Hurt and exposed, Jacinta fumbles through the streets of Madrid, children multiplying in her purview:

Se le iban los ojos tras de la infancia en cualquier forma que se le presentaba, ya fuesen los niños ricos, vestidos de marineros y conducidos por la institutriz inglesa, y a los mocosos pobres, . . . quería verse rodeada de una serie, desde el pillín de cinco años, hablador y travieso, hasta el rorró de meses que no hace más que reír como un bobo, . . . se los comía con los ojos . . . todos, en una palabra, le interesaban igualmente . . . Pues cuando ella tuviera un chico, no permitiría a nadie ni siquiera mirarle . . . [De repente] oyó algo que la detuvo . . . Era un gemido, una voz de la naturaleza animal pidiendo auxilio y defensa contra el abandono y la muerte (1: VI, iii-iv, 251-3).

A synesthesia of children overwhelms Jacinta in this initial explosion of the affect. Her darting eyes prove incapable of fixating on a single child. This sensorial sublime maintains a dialectic between self and world, inside and outside, continuously in the process of being filtered. One long sequence of description attempts to capture multiple scenes of visuals and sounds, baby clothes and puerile noises, reemphasized by the feline imagery at the end. The narrator attempts to categorize the visual phenomena of children in his use of the word todos, but the single word fails to capture the scene’s kaleidoscopic essence. This collapse of the word todos exposes the tension between detail and summary in realist prose, the self-defeating project of description and enframing that appears within the realm of the affect as well. The force field of the affect is always in transit, ever expanding yet never large enough to encompass all the information regarding the bourgeoning emotions. The language of the affect is exhausting rather than exhaustive. During this process of narrative excess, the narrator reveals Jacinta’s focalization, made clear in her figurative act of eating children with her eyes (“se los comía con los ojos”). The gastronomic and the visual bring to light a moment of metafiction, as Jacinta observes and takes part in the production—the cooking—of the images of infants.19 Her
focalization propels what Jameson has called the “verbal fetish” (36), realism’s constant expansion of and obsession with detail. This initial eruption of imagery sets in motion the mechanism of the affect in the narrative that grants Jacinta larger portions of the novel’s stage, a place where she can explore her monomaniacal obsession with everything puerile.

Jacinta’s interaction with the images of children, set off in the above sequence, discloses a complexity in her character that goes beyond maternal desires and bourgeois stereotypes. Her child’s play introduces naïve and selfish elements in her, and the great lengths to which she will go and fantasize of the alleged firstborn of Juanito. Jacinta’s flaws round out her character, however, and free it from character flatness. The details regarding Jacinta’s observations of children, accumulated within the realm of the affect, point back toward her and absorb the narrative space previously allotted to other characters. Some scholars have maintained Jacinta’s maternal instincts (Gilman “The Birth” 72-3), and note Jacinta’s maternal “interest perspective” when she focalizes children during her visit to the cuarto estado in Chapter 9 (Willem “Jacinta’s ‘Visita’” 101). Conversely, others have suggested Jacinta’s visualization of and relation to children as a process that blurs her reality (Moncy Gullón 56-7). Perhaps this is why many scholars have turned to her dreams of children to penetrate below her bland socio-personal experience: dreams offer difficult imagery that position Jacinta above the stereotypical role of ángel del hogar. The dimension of the affect offers a similar access to the visual phenomena of children in Jacinta, but one that reveals the complexity of her reality while she is awake. Her focalization of children arises as a fiction that she tells, erratic as the results appear. Jacinta advances to a protagonist role when she becomes productive in the realm of the affect, because she cannot be reproductive in her physiology.
Jacinta’s transition from bourgeois Madrid to its slums introduces the second act to the Jacinta story, which requires a different focus from the *Pituso* story, and magnifies her position in the novel. Jacinta’s voyage submits her to an unfamiliar social environment. Her experience outside Candelaria’s home, on the other hand, placed her in a familiar surrounding filled with intense visuals of children. The realm of the affect flourishes within new milieus, and Jacinta’s passage from middle-class Madrid to the cuarto estado signals a social and linguistic rite of passage in her character. The narrator describes this process of assimilation as Jacinta enters the open-air market: “Recibía tan solo la imagen borrosa de los objetos diversos que iban pasando, y lo digo así, porque era como si ella estuviese parada y la pintoresca vía se corriese delante de ella como un telón” (1: IX, i, 316). The narrator’s sally into Jacinta’s experience underpins her uncertainty and his narratorial authority. The blurry urban images that rush past her and the reference to the theatrical create a kind of live motion picture that the narrator registers for and outside of her. This implication of movement stresses the static position of her body, the new physical environment moving too fast for her to categorize its alien contents. The narrator further emphasizes her overwhelming experience: “El suelo intransitable ponía obstáculos sin fin, pilas de cántaros y vasijas, ante los pies del gentío presuroso . . . los colores vivos y elementales que agradan a los salvajes . . . como si nadasen en un mar de pañuelos” (1: IX, I, 317). The floor and its synesthetic contents swallow Jacinta like the water of the “mar de pañuelos.” Her body and its senses continue to fail in the following sequence, mistaking mannequins for people and yellowish men for sulphuric objects. Jacinta’s ailing perception foreshadows her naïve assertion later that the spurious *Pituso* resembles her husband. It also strengthens the realm of the affect, where Jacinta can carry out the sensorial fallacy of father-son recognition in the *Pituso* and where she begins to produce her own narrative of the child once more.
Jacinta emerges from and assimilates to this sensory sublime. She harnesses the new environment and, to her character’s structural advantage, exploits the image of the child with greater authority than she did outside of Candelaria’s home. Her newfound authority in narrating the child, however, undergirds her delusion and dissociates her further from reality. Working from within the realm of the affect, Jacinta still struggles with unsteady emotional reactions, but she begins to frame her focalization of children with the theme of parenthood. Guillermina Pacheco, her urban Virgil and previously a character that overshadowed Jacinta in the narrative, nearly disappears from the story, because the narrator must grant Jacinta greater space to deliver her narration of the child. In the following sequence, Jacinta adapts to the once uncontrollable environment of the lower class, which now provides her with a productive landscape to explode images of infants:

Cuando se halló cerca del fin de su viaje, la Delfina fijaba exclusivamente su atención en los chicos que iba encontrando . . . a cada paso tropezaba con una [madre], con su crío en brazo . . . no se les veía más que la cabeza por cima del hombro de su madre. Algunos iban vueltos hacia atrás, mostrando la carita redonda dentro del círculo del gorro y los ojuelos vivos, y se reían con los transeúntes. Otros tenían el semblante malhumorado . . . También vio Jacinta no uno, sino dos y hasta tres, camino del cementerio. Suponíales muy tranquilos y de color de cera dentro de aquella caja que llevaba un tío cualquiera al hombro, como se lleva una escopeta (1: IX, i, 318).

The narrator redeployes Jacinta’s focalization here. Children repopulate her perspective and dominate the scene. Multiple stories of children reappear through the dimension of the affect, but Jacinta now advances a more controlled theme in parenthood. She notices mothers that carry children and men—potentially fathers—that carry coffins of dead children, a sort of domestic symmetry. Jacinta sees what she wants to see, though, and the reader remains suspicious of the visual information the realm of the affect creates through her. For example, in Jacinta’s purview, the faces of infants seem to float as well as contrast in their physiognomies—enlivened eyes, laughing and grumpy semblances. The affect’s instability of emotion resurfaces
in the children Jacinta imagines which remain beyond her line of sight. She pictures the waxy faces of dead children that lie dead within the caskets. The metaphor of a weapon—coffins carried like a shotgun—emerge along with the child figure. This allusion recalls Isidora’s dream of Riquín in La desheredada (1881) and Barbarita’s of Juanito where gun imagery is also used. The child as figura mortis and the image of a gun suggest motifs of death and the phallic, hinting at the passing of Juanito’s real firstborn and Jacinta’s sterility. All these little faces, real or imagined, stare back at Jacinta, just as the narrative continues to point toward her in her growing role. Without the child or maternal desire, Jacinta remains isolated in the novel (Turner “Family Ties” 18). Here, the realm of the affect reverses this isolation yet singles her out by removing all other major characters from the narrative. She is at once engulfed by the image of the child and alone without any true contact with reality.

Jacinta’s first interaction with the Pituso marks a two-part sequence of crisis and climax in her protagonist voyage in Chapter 9. The risk of finding and adopting Juanito’s child sets in motion the crisis. Jacinta succeeds as a leading character here by absorbing the narrative space despite being surrounded by other characters (Izquierdo, Ido, his wife Nicanora, and Guillermina). The first part of this sequence opens when Izquierdo brings in the Pituso, the boy covered in shoe polish, described as an ugly spectacle (adefesio) by the narrator. Surwillo has called the Pituso’s semblance an instance of “blackface” and part of a larger social commentary (189-90). It can also be understood as a canvas that Jacinta wipes clean, like Locke’s tabula rasa, a real child made hollow by the one who gazes at it.24 The narrator removes the other characters from the narrative by narrowing the focus onto Jacinta’s focalization of the spurious child. Jacinta parses the visual grammar of the boy’s face, looking for and “finding” Juanito’s physiognomic remnants. Out of this dirty semblance shines the Pituso’s mouth: “Sus labios le
brillaban cual si fueran de cristal. La lengua que sacaba... parecía una hoja rosa” (1: IX, iii, 329).

*Pituso*’s crystal clear teeth and rosy stuck-out tongue reemphasize the gesture of fiction-making and the gastronomic, an allusion to Jacinta’s narration of the child and to his spurious nature. The dirty *Pituso* now sits on Izquierdo’s knees like a stage prop, but Jacinta sees something altogether different: “Eran [los ojos] como los del Niño Dios pintado por Murillo” (1: IX, vii, 356). Jacinta’s greatest achievement arrives by locking the boy into her own frame of fiction, like the referenced Murillo painting. The realm of the affect permits her to temporarily fill in the abyss of an heir with her fiction of this boy’s physiognomic relation, writing a new story with idyllic and Christological imagery, just as Barbarita dreamed of Juanito as a Messiah.

The climax of this scene advances when Jacinta reaches for the *Pituso* and places him on her own knee. This act of grabbing the boy and placing him on her lap conflates two thresholds—the verbal fetish of the affect and the physical fetish of the flesh. The distance the realm of the affect maintained between self and world diminishes, but overlaps to expand into a new direction of hyperfiction. Jacinta literally enframes the boy within her figurative dimension of the affect, the *Pituso* no longer a metaphoric Murillo portrait: “¡Pobrecito! exclamó con vivo dolor Jacinta, observando que el mísero traje del *Pituso* era todo agujeros... ¡Con cuánto amor pasó la mano por aquellas finísimas carnes... ‘Te voy a traer una botas muy bonitas,’... El muchacho levantó un pie. ¡Y qué pie!” (1: IX, vii, 357). Jacinta pities the boy, loves him, and feels pleasure from his uncovered limbs. Her body reacts to and interacts with the *Pituso*’s in a simultaneous manner, verbal and physical fetishes interrelated. Jacinta enacts a kind of Pinocchio reversal that turns the real boy into her personal puppet by figuratively dressing the *Pituso* and imposing Juanito’s biological lineage upon him. Jacinta’s previous encounters with children advanced explosions of simultaneous vignettes, arbitrary within the realm of the affect. This
burst of emotions suggests a simultaneous explosion of verbal and physical fetishes through Jacinta within one story. Her focalization feigns a controlled environment that in reality confuses fiction with reality, predicated on the realm of the affect.

This growing gap between fact and fiction that the affect’s dimension develops through Jacinta closes, though, along with her protagonicity, by Juanito revealing the truth about his son’s death in Chapter 10. This is the third act and conclusion of the Jacinta story. Her final moments as a protagonist also locate the singular emotion of motherhood in her: “Veía al Pituso como si lo hubiera parido, y se había acostumbrado tanto a la idea de poseerlo” (1, X, iii, 391); and “Creíase Jacinta madre, y sintiendo un placer indecible en sus entrañas, estaba dispuesta a amar a aquel pobre niño con toda su alma” (1, X, v, 408). The realm of the affect reaches implodes when Jacinta consciously recognizes the pleasure of parenthood—a named emotion. The sphere of the affect erodes through this naming and leaves her vulnerable. Juanito’s final blow of truth easily breaks down her wall of fiction, delivered during the ominous Christmas celebrations. The affect’s force field acted like a protective layer that grew until, ironically, Jacinta claimed motherhood. The finality of this claim, its singular emotion, settles the dust cloud of emotions and fiction she had experienced between herself and the children she observed. Jacinta’s attempt to falsify the Pituso’s birth records with Guillermina becomes a pitiable attempt at prolonging the inevitable and bookends her story as a protagonist.

Jacinta’s brief experience in a leading role, especially between Chapters 8 and 10, advances a character that lives out a fiction within a greater fiction that is the novel. This greater fiction contains multiple stories that flush Jacinta’s in and out of the narrative. This narrative structure allows the realm of the affect to ebb and flow in the reading experience. It recalls Cervantes’ structure in Don Quijote (1605) and suggests a parallel between its own Chapters 8 to
10. Cervantes’ sequence shows the ingenious knight suddenly become the hero he had always dreamt of becoming. The protagonist also faces his ultimate enemy—the vizcaíno—just as Jacinta faces her ultimate obstacle of sterility. Both Galdós’ and Cervantes’ narrators interrupt narrative action as well: Don Quijote’s battle with the vizcaíno is paused with swords drawn; the acquisition of the Pituso is paused by Izquierdo and Ido’s political rants in a local pub. Both set of sequences also lead into these novels’ respective second parts. At this juncture, this section does not wish to take on a comparison between these two masterpieces. Such a task requires greater room and a different study beyond the realm of the affect. These intriguing coincidences point up the motif of fantasy, nevertheless, and of fleeting protagonicity within a realm of self-imposed fiction. It also throws light onto Galdós’ meticulous planning. Jacinta remains one of many stories told in Fortunata y Jacinta, and the realm of the affect grants her the opportunity to enter and exit with force.

Part of Galdós plan includes taking the narrative focus away from Jacinta, both during and after Chapters 5 to 10. This pacing creates anticipation and develops the sensation in the reader that the realm of the affect slowly absorbs the narrative, rather than having it explode quickly over the course of a few pages. The novel’s totalizing gaze reaches beyond Jacinta, similar to how Don Quijote develops its Chinese boxes that advance other characters and heroes. Galdós inserts minor story within minor story, frame within frame. Fortunata y Jacinta can shuttle the reader between the fictional and the metatextual (Gold Reframing 17), as Quijote’s narrator stalls the swordfight and makes the reader aware of the fiction in hand. Ido’s meat eating and Izquierdo’s political rants at the local pub—two subsections of Chapter 9 and twenty pages of description—underpin socio-political realities and satirical commentary, but they also provoke a rest in the narrative. The narrator hints at this kind of metatextual reference throughout the
“Visita” chapter. For example, when Jacinta and Guillermina struggle to pass two blind men, as “Jacinta se apretaba contra la pared para dejar el paso franco” (1: IX, ii, 323), and a “barricada de chiquillos” blocks their path (1: IX, ii, 324). The heat rises in this tunnel-like space and in Ido’s home. The blind lead the blind here, waking into the spurious Pituso scenario. This sequence dramatizes the constant barrage of obstacles, literal and literary, that the characters and reader must face before reaching the moments of coup de theatre in Jacinta’s story. These narrative rest stops allow Galdós to connect multiple plot lines and to create anticipation. The combination of Chinese boxes and the build-up of anticipation produce a greater amount of satisfaction in the reader when Jacinta finally reaches the Pituso. When the conclusion of the three-act Jacinta story surfaces, the reader’s sympathy overshadows Jacinta’s delusional efforts in the realm of the affect.

IV. Three Deaths and a Resurrection: For Whom the Child Figure Tolls

After Part 1, the child figure appears as a figura mortis in the latter two volumes of the novel. Simply put, when children die or disappear and return to haunt, they become a figura mortis. These images of children surface in verbal or memorial representations through a character’s memory (Ferucci 119). These types of recollections and dark imagery of the child haunts three characters in the Fortunata y Jacinta in their final moments of life: Mauricia la Dura, Moreno-Isla, and Fortunata.29 This macabre figure of the child serves as a platform for these suffering souls to express their repressed emotions, however, which would otherwise go unrecorded. The figura mortis establishes a bridge between life and death in the novel. Once these three characters pass away, Jacinta receives their eradicated narratorial space, as noted previously, through the newborn Juan Evaristo. The child figure holds Fortunata y Jacinta
together: first through the circularity of the child’s image in Jacinta, and now through a series of parallels that place the child at the symbolic center of Mauricia, Moreno, and Fortunata’s deaths.

As a closing apparatus, the image of the infant sheds new light on this novel’s concluding moments. Scholars have emphasized the text’s resistance to formal closures (Gold Reframing 3, 50-1), and the fragmentation that its death scenes propose in the story (Del Pino 209, 214). Others have suggested that death introduces reconciliation between and renewal in characters (Ribbens Conflicts 220-4, Sobejano). Critics have paid little attention, though, to what connects these episodes of death. This section asserts that the *figura mortis* of the child interconnects and magnifies the characters of Mauricia, Moreno, and Fortunata. This ominous child figure provides a “close up” to their conclusions.30 *Fortunata y Jacinta* reverses the conservative nineteenth-century trend of tying up loose ends with a brief overview of characters and story, observed by many (James “The Art” 169, Lukács). Parts 3 and 4 grow in length and expose new problems through the child figure’s macabre interaction with these three characters. Vernon A. Chamberlin has argued that Galdós emulates Beethoven’s closural patterns in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, writing that the author “knew exactly how he wanted to close his great four-volume novel” (“The So-Called Problem” 13). This section will expand upon this idea of successful closure by offering the child figure as part of Galdós’ plan of conclusion.

Regarding death in literature, J. Hillis Miller has written that it advances an ontological blind spot that cannot be humanized (*Ariadne’s Thread* 250). Galdós takes this narratorial uncertainty to task by using the child figure to dramatize the transition from life to death. The child figure becomes a vehicle through which these three characters express themselves in their dying moments, an information-giving system that fills in the alleged blind spot between life and death. This *figura mortis* affords the narrator the aesthetic freedom to detail the implausible act
of narrating death. The child figure remains inseparable from life and death, Valis has posited, the image of the child linked to rejuvenation and demise (“Death” 254). Here, the image of the infant promotes a final separation from life. Following Francisco Ruiz Ramón’s idea that Galdós leaves open yet depicts the experience of death,31 H. L. Boudreau has written: “ironic ambiguity is very nearly a constant in Galdós’ portrayal of the last moments of beloved characters. He is able to give the device ever-changing freshness, but the truth being elaborated is always the same: human nature is constant” (121). The power and irony of these scenes rest on their lack of verisimilitude, because they attempt to fill the kind of literary abyss of which Hillis Miller warns. The figura mortis, exploded through child’s play, gives these three dying characters the narrative landscape to register a memorial of their deaths.

As this dissertation has suggested, the child in Galdós receives an under-characterized figure, a character without a point of view that others observe. Mauricia, Moreno, and Fortunata’s deaths further underscore Galdós’ device of using the image of the child to develop the characters of adults. In contrast, novels like Emily Brönte’s Wuthering Heights’ (1847) or James’ The Turn of the Screw (1898) build self-aware child characters during moments of death. For example, young Catherine in Wuthering Heights looks up at her father after a noticing that he falls silent: “she began singing very low, till [her father’s] fingers dropped from hers, and his head sank on his breast . . . ‘Oh, he’s dead, Heathcliff! He’s dead!’ And they both set up a heart-breaking cry” (30). James writes a darker death scene, with the governess squeezing Miles until he dies in front of the boy’s sister Flora. Brönte and James exploit the perspective of the child, who looks up at the adult in submission or fear. These children develop their own ideas and provoke sympathy from the reader for the loss of their innocence. Galdós, on the other hand, exploits the focalization of the adult that gazes at the child. The author circumvents the problem
of writing death in *Fortunata y Jacinta* by manipulating the presence and aesthetic distance of the child figure. In the example of young Catherine, the reader feels sympathy for the young girl instead of the dead father. In *Fortunata y Jacinta*, and in the final two novels of the *Torquemada* cycle—which Chapter 2 examines—the narrator develops this sympathy in the dying and dead adult characters instead. Galdós’ strategy works for two reasons: he uses children as framing devices to shuttle characters—and readers—to a scene of death, and cultivates the symbolic force of infants in the suffering adults.

Mauricia’s death is the first affected by the child figure in the novel. It is also a spectacle, extended over the course of several days. Guillermina becomes a sort of captain and theatrical director to this sideshow of death by using children as her principle actors. These children frame Mauricia’s experience of death in two ways: first, these children advance a motif of culture and a critique of nation; second, their presence instigates Mauricia to revisit the memory of her childhood. Regarding the first topic, the narrator describes the neighborhood children that Guillermina recruits to clean up the dirty courtyard: “Bajó la señora al patio, donde había entrado un ciego tocando la guitarra y estaban algunos chiquillos jugando a los toros,” the blind man eventually coming out to say: “Ya veis, gateras, lo que *vus* dice la señorita. Que *vus* estéis quietos” [emphasis in the original] (3: VI, ii, 183). The blind man’s guitar playing recalls the boy playing and singing the *romancero* earlier during Jacinta’s trip to the *cuarto estado*. The sequence of melody and imagery of children functions as an exordium to the upcoming theatrics that will surround Mauricia’s deathbed. The *romancero* and the children that play at bullfighting suggest a pre-industrial image that absorbs this slum of industrialized Madrid. The scene simultaneously recollects the popular oral ballads of the *romancero* and proposes a national
discourse. History turns into metaphor in Galdós (Valis “Authority in Galdós” 175), here promoted by the image of the child during Mauricia’s anticipated death.

The rounding up of children delays Mauricia’s passing, but it also produces a series of Chinese boxes that perpetuate the spectacle. Guillermina enlists the boys from the bullfighting game, lines them up against the wall, and asks them to clear the scene for an altar dedicated to the dying woman: “Era de cuadros de malla, combinados con otros cuadros de peluche carmesí. Encima puso un paño de altar traído de la parroquia, que tenía un hermoso encaje . . . [Guillermina] salió al pasillo, recibió de manos de Rossini la sagrada imagen (3: VI, ii, 186).” Suddenly, “todos los chicos del barrio” express an “emoción teatral” when Guillermina instructs a choir of girls to sing. These children surround the altar and Mauricia, positioned like a Greek chorus. Guillermina’s child actors provide the histrionics and melodrama, literally melody-drama, which build anticipation for the death. The choir of girls recalls the choir that surrounds Mignon in her death scene in Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, while the gathering crowd of adults is reminiscent of Nana’s death in her eponymous novel. Mauricia foams at the mouth and suffers visions, similar to Nana as well, but Mauricia holds on to life and her audience leaves, bored without the dénouement of the spectacle. The children have enclosed one frame within another: the choir of children and the altar that contains a series of geometric-religious figures. The baroque proportions of the altar and the singing, all done by children, ironically prepare a non-event, though, which critiques Guillermina’ self-congratulatory plan. This failure places greater focus on Mauricia.

The child figure, in its second function, becomes a vehicle that transports Mauricia back to her childhood memories. The spectacle of children and the communion she takes from Padre Nones ignites in her an anesthetic, the narrator writes. This experience provokes in Mauricia a
non-religious rite of passage, nonetheless, one that allows her to access her past: “con la impresión recibida retrogradaba su pensamiento a la infancia, llegando hasta adormecerse por breves momentos en la ilusión que era niña inocente y pura… ignoraba lo que son pecados gordos” (3: VI, iii, 189). The memory of childhood gives Mauricia a moment of serenity, a distance from Guillermínax’s theatrics. This passage in time and place dislocates her from reality and allows Mauricia to enjoy a private memorial, one to which only the narrator and reader are invited. The narrator shows special care and respect for Mauricia by keeping her remaining convulsions and death off stage. Doña Lupe recounts her passing to Fortunata later in the story (3: VI, iv, 202), but the usurer tells her version tongue-in-cheek. Mauricia is one of Galdós’ beloved characters, given a proper burial in the novel through the image of her innocent childhood.

Moreno-Isla appears as the second major death in this sequence affected by the image of children. Various critics have analyzed his passing and the chapter dedicated to him, “Insomino.” All agree that his final days are predicated upon his emotional turmoil of not being able to give Jacinta a son, but critics surprisingly disregard how the images of children haunt Moreno in his final days. Willem has compared the Alpha and published versions of the novel. The former version advances an alternative ending to the Moreno story, one in which Jacinta is with child (“Moreno-Isla”), presumably fathered by him (López-Baralt “Fortunata” 21). Galdós turns Moreno into a martyr in the published novel, dying without progeny and preserving Jacinta’s purity. Regarding Moreno’s childless situation, Ribbans has written: “His is the most evident example of a wasted life, a Homerian ‘hoja muerta’ on the tree of life, which… leaves no trace behind” (Conflicts 224), while another scholar believes Moreno would have made the perfect husband for Jacinta (Sobejano 223). The absence of a son implores the reader to sympathize
with Moreno, a strategy used throughout the novel with Jacinta’s character. However, Moreno joins Mauricia in the constellation of deaths and the visitation of the \textit{figura mortis} when the image of the child haunts him in conversation with others and in the memory of his own childhood. This memory, compounded with his family’s insistence that he marry and father a child, leads into the bursting of his heart in his melodramatic death.

In Moreno’s path to death, the \textit{figura mortis} evolves from verbal utterances to visual imagery. The movement from the verbal to visual representation of the child figure introduces an escalation of intensity in Moreno that leads to his growing depression. In contrast to Mauricia, who is surrounded by children, Moreno surrounds himself with the image of the child. He approaches his doctor and cousin Moreno Rubio to ask if he can still father a child, which he confirms. Moreno fantasizes of having a child with Jacinta. Rubio’s confirmation of Moreno’s biological fertility makes the absence of Moreno’s biological progeny more pronounced. An untimely comment made by Barbarita—that he should marry and have many children, and that she could act as their godmother—accumulates yet another utterance of children in Moreno. It sends him in a downward emotional spiral: “Se ahogaba . . . sentía el golpe de la sangre” (4: II, iii, 344).

These verbal utterances of children reveal in Moreno his love for Jacinta, but they also suggest a history of failed family dynamics, which come to light in his memory of childhood. Moreno looks back in time, like Mauricia, and dreams of his childhood. Valis has suggested that the child figure, especially as the \textit{figura mortis}, can function as a vehicle of nostalgia in nineteenth-century Spanish literature (“Death” 255). Moreno finds his innocence lost when he thinks back, though, saddened by his family memory. Moreno’s dream recalls his brief and strained relationships with his mother, father, and grandfather. In the dream, his father feels
distant and the mother dies young. Parenthood is kept at bay in the vision, as with Moreno’s in reality. Toward the end of the dream, a makes an ironic comment on Moreno’s current state of affairs. He rides a donkey and: “[El burro] salió escapado, y aunque el chico hacía esfuerzos por detenerlo, no podía... Total, que llegó hasta la calle de Segovia, muy cerca del puente... se cayó, abriéndose la cabeza” (4: II, iii, 348). Moreno rides a sterile and comical animal in the donkey, a jest of Moreno’s own childless station. His fall from the animal and failure to cross the bridge hints at his inability to cross the bridge of fatherhood and marriage.

Moreno’s dream leads to a waking vision of children in his last moments. Galdós organizes this death similar to Mauricia’s by including further visions of children and the sounds of music, like the girls’ choir. Moreno’s waking vision is set off by the gong of the Puerta del Sol’s clock, which he hears from his home: “la idea de la soledad sucedió en su mente a las impresiones musicales” (4: II, vi, 362). Moreno feels the soledad strongest when he thinks of the children he does not have. In a delirium, he believes he speaks with Guillermina about leaving and returning from London to be with Jacinta. Moreno thinks he and Jacinta could open an asylum for the insane as a way to justify the children he imagines they would have: “Tendremos uno, dos, muchos hijos, y seré el más feliz de los hombres” (4: II, vi, 362). Galdós closes Moreno’s life in parallel to Mauricia’s, first by adding a layer of sound and second by placing Guillermina by their side, figuratively and literally. The clock’s ominous gong—his own private choir and bell that tolls for him—functions as the final note in Moreno’s melodrama, his heart bursting moments later.

Mauricia and Moreno’s deaths lead the reader into Fortunata’s passing, the climax of the novel. This three-part death series becomes its own play, built upon layers of music, drama, flashbacks, and heartache. Fortunata’ death has been examined by many. Critics continue to side
with Gilman’s observation that she turns into a figurative angel during this process (“The Birth” 78-80, Galdós 244, 298). Other scholars have noted that her death experience becomes a moment of personal as well as social reconciliation (Cruz Martes 144, Del Pino 214). Moncy Gullón has added that the image of Juan Evaristo feeding on Fortunata’s breast unifies the bird and egg motifs, as well as Fortunata’s mythological essence, which is developed throughout the novel (66). As cited earlier in this chapter, critics have also established the abrazo threshold of Fortunata leaving the newborn to Jacinta as a positive transition between the eponymous female characters. Nevertheless, critics have not addressed the macabre element of the child as a figura mortis in Fortunata’s passing. This final part will show how, similar to Mauricia and Moreno, Fortunata is carried out of the story by the child figure.

Fortunata’s experience of death shares both similarities and differences with the previous two deaths. Like Mauricia and Moreno, Fortunata receives a number of visitors before and during her passing. Her death also maintains the melodramatic essence of exaggerated emotion and of people trying to take her baby from her. Unlike her two predecessors, though, Fortunata fails to recall her childhood. She remains caught in the moment by the actual presence of a child, her newborn, rather than the figurative presence of the child. Maxi, Fortunata’s estranged and loco cuerdo husband, sets up the introduction of the figura mortis. The husband becomes a kind of oracle and delivers a pair of ominous messages concerning her child: “Nacerá de ti el verdadero Mesías,” he says, leaning in (4: I, iv, 382). In a later scene, Maxi emerges from the audience that surrounds Fortunata as she holds her newborn: “Se parece a tu verdugo” (4: VI, iii, 464). Maxi’s first comment links the child to the Christological imagery previously placed upon Juanito and the Pituso. The second comment introduces a dark element into baby’s arrival.
Fortunata’s newborn, Juan Evaristo, may be the true savior of the story and of this bourgeois community, but he also comes to take Fortunata away.

In Mauricia and Moreno’s final moments, images of children and of their childhood absorb their thoughts and lead them out of the text. In Fortunata’s journey, a real child, flesh and bone, realizes the final blow as the figura mortis. The protagonist turns to Ballester, holding the baby: “‘¿Sabe usted que me parece que me quedo sin leche? Mi hijo chupa y chupa y no saca,’ . . . Juan Evaristo volvió a callar, pegándose al pezón con salvaje ahínco” (4: VI, x, 500). Juan Evaristo savagely drinks his mother’s milk until she passes away. The child figure—that elusive Messiah sought out by Barbarita and Jacinta—receives its poetic justice first by dispensing with Fortunata, the protagonist, and secondly by being held in Jacinta’s arms. This final act raises Jacinta out of the shadows of the novel and into a final instance of protagonicity. Ferucci has suggested that killing a newborn or child in the nineteenth-century novel ensures the poet or adult’s rebirth in the story, as with Mignon’s death and Wilhelm’s newfound inspiration (127). Fortunata’s death inverts this literary trend, suggested by Juan Evaristo becoming the family heir and Fortunata dying instead. The child figure in Fortunata y Jacinta invokes its right to live, finally, after experiencing physical death and textual disappearances throughout the story.

* * *

This chapter has argued that Fortunata y Jacinta maintains its coherence throughout its four volumes through the image of the child. The narrator’s careful placement of the child figure in the introduction predicts Juanito’s demise, but it also anticipates—more importantly—Jacinta’s final moment of redemption. This circularity underpins Galdós’ commitment to the structure and meaning of the novel. As he once commented to Luis Bello in an interview regarding critics’ thoughts on his use of detail: “Ya sé que mi estilo no parece estilo a muchos
que buscan también, buscan otra cosa. Crean que lo mío es fácil . . . Para mi el estilo empieza en el plan” (1). Galdós’ plan allows him to weave character, motif, and plot into a single narratorial web that grows in multiple directions, yet these three central threads remain interconnected to each other. The child figure appears as a device that links these three elements together. The narrative and social implications of the image of the child in *Fortunata y Jacinta* facilitate the relation between Jacinta, Barbarita, Isabel Cordero, and Fortunata throughout the text as well.

Chapters 5 to 10 in Part I demonstrate the child figure’s ability to magnify a character in Galdós. The image of the child in this sequence places Jacinta under a new light. Scholarship has long emphasized Fortunata’s role in this novel. From R. Gullón’s idea of the love triangles, to Gilman’s bird motif, López-Baralt’s psychoanalysis, and Kronik and Turner’s in-depth studies on Galdós’ use of the metaphor, Fortunata has—rightfully—occupied scholars. The realm of the affect in relation to the image of the child, however, opens new access to Jacinta’s character. Jacinta’s affect for everything puerile advances the tumultuous voyage of understanding her personal desires, body, and reality. This confusing sphere of emotions also points up Galdós’ constant innovation of the genre of realism. The *Pituso* and Juan Evaristo recall Dickens’ own caricatures of children, but they pierce the consciousness of adult characters with the kind of sensitive characterization practiced by Tolstoy in a novel like *Anna Karenina*.

Finally, this chapter has demonstrated that the image of the child as a *figura mortis* governs the deaths of Mauricia la Dura, Moreno-Isla, and Fortunata. It acts as a narrative vehicle that transports the narrator and reader to the unrepresentable experience of death. The memory of childhood and the pressures of childbearing expose these three characters at their most vulnerable states as well. Understood as three columns of a single narrative structure, the deaths of Mauricia, Moreno, and Fortunata function as individual yet interrelated closures within the
novel. These miniature and paralleled endings suggest the expansive nature of realism, and further show the care Galdós’ feels toward his characters. Death in *Fortunata y Jacinta* might echo it as a traditional closural apparatus in the nineteenth-century novel (Gold *Reframing* 72), but the *figura mortis* of the child here delves deeper into a character space unvisited by most novelists of and before this period in Europe.
Notes

1 Gilman (“The Birth”) and John W. Kronik (“Galdosian Reflections”) write foundational studies on Fortunata, while Ricardo Gullón’s notion of the changing love triangles places Jacinta in a minor light as well (Técnicas 137). Others have aptly suggested that Jacinta’s character focuses on mother, especially her problem of sterility and motherly desire (Goldman, López-Baralt “Fortunata y Jacinta” and “Sueños,” Moncy Gullón, Turner “Family Ties”). These studies, though excellent in their analysis of Jacinta, overlook her tumultuous relationship with children.

2 Mercedes López-Baralt has suggested a series of binaries that Juan Evaristo Segismundo reconciles from the general motifs of the novel: “pasión/razón, instinto/sociedad, fecundidad/esterilidad, ilegalidad/legalidad, adulterio/honradez, libertad/moral, naturaleza/cultura… libre ya de contradicciones” (512).

3 Gerald Prince has explored how the beginning of a realist novel orients the end of it (158). Martin Price has advanced that the opening of a realist novel sets its story and prose rules, while minute details emerge to create a convincing story (82-5). The parts begin to sustain the whole, just as the child figure coheres character and motif in Fortunata y Jacinta.

4 Many have observed the significance of the narrator. Ricardo Gullón has suggested that the fragmentary vision that the “narrador-testigo” inaugurates his ironic distance (Técnicas 85-6). This self-conscious narrator remains critical, forgetful, and a gossiper (Gullón Técnicas 17, Macklin 180). The narrator’s incessant interruptions, especially in Part I, impart a self-awareness in the reader and a constant reminder that history and story here are indeed fiction, suggesting the influence of the Quijote’s various narratorial interjections (Gilman Galdós 239). It speaks to his manipulative hand (Turner Galdós 51), and to his ability to craft a story through the image system of the child.

5 Frank Kermode’s The Sense of an Ending remains foundational, though narrow in its analyses of prose. The scholar explores classical and Biblical texts, and compares their closural devices to the modern novel. Kermode concludes: “And although for us the End has perhaps lost its naïve imminence, its shadow still lies on the crises of our fictions; we may speak of it as immanent” [emphasis in the original] (The Sense 6). Complex novels rely on predictive figures rather than on well-rounded endings, which Kermode believes the realist novel promotes.

6 Margaret Torgovnick employs Barbara Hernstein Smith’s term “retrospective patterning,” which the latter uses to analyze poetry in Poetic Closure. The proliferation of child imagery in Fortunata y Jacinta speaks to Torgovnick’s terminology, or “geometric metaphors.” The scholar also includes “incompletion” and “linkage,” the first relating to open-ended conclusions, and the second referencing interlocking novels or series, as with Balzac’s or Galdós’ (Closure 13).

7 Marshall Brown proposes his notion of the “silhouetting” effect as a way to analyze realism. He observes the constant renewal for the hunt of realism in academia, noting the endless
complexity and debate of the term (224). Silhouetting opens up the contrast between the prosaic (tableau) and narrative action (coup de theatre), and an ironic author and objective occurrence, producing a meeting of styles in constant movement.

8 Many scholars have detailed how Juanito’s indolence increases alongside the looming possibility of an heir, but only as the novel progresses (Gilman Galdós 292, Ribbons Conflicts 224, Moncy Gullón 54, and Turner Galdós 50, 164).

9 Jacinta reimagines her reality and converts absence into loss. Dominique LaCapra has written that the conversion of absence into loss gives rise to Christian and Oedipal stories, hiding divinity so it can be found in redemption or unity (50-1). It creates the sensation of a return to Paradise “through a kind of creation ex nihilo,” and “gives anxiety an identifiable object—the lost object—and generates the hope that anxiety may be eliminated or overcome” (57), just as Jacinta does in this concluding scene.

10 Isabel Cordero and Fortunata’s fecundity contrasts with Jacinta’s barrenness (Moncy Gullón 54-9). This mother of seventeen proves herself business-savvy as well in dealing with the family business and marrying her daughters (Ribbons Conflicts 88, Turner “Family Ties” 8, Galdós 55-8).

11 Ribbons has noted how the narrator tends to give a general image of history rather than narrate actual historical events in the novel (History 9-10), similar to how Isabel Cordero conflates historical dates with birth stories.

12 Jacinta uses Christological imagery to describe children, as when she beams with excitement when she lays eyes on the spurious Pituso: “Es un niño Jesús… es una divinidad este muñeco” (1: X, iv, 398). Maxi predicts to Fortunata that she will give birth to the true Messiah (4: I, iv, 382).

13 W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley’s essay treats the affective fallacy; scholars like C. S. Lewis and Norman Holland advanced reader-response and psychoanalytic theories, respectively.

14 Rei Tereda follows Kant’s ideas on emotions, but relies more heavily on Paul de Man, separating consciousness (emotion) from experience (affect) (81-9).

15 It could be argued that Jacinta fetishizes the child in the novel, but this named emotion fails to offer the scale of erratic emotions and intensity that Jacinta experiences while observing children. The fetish is only part of a larger parcel of character experience. Valis’ excellent article treats the fetish and the child, suggesting that verbal representations become visible through linguistic fetishism (“Death” 247), an idea that helps round out this chapter.
Fredric Jameson’s terms of the “perpetual present” and the “realm of the affect,” and his theory on the affect in realist novels appear throughout his recent book, but the scholar presents his thesis on pages 15-44.

The socioformal is explored in greater detail in the Introduction of this dissertation.

Harriet Turner has proposed these two allusions as Fortunata’s subliminal presence in Jacinta (Galdós 59-61), though they can be expanded upon and understood as malleable metaphors that suggest the idea of a child, also connected to Fortunata.

Various critics have observed the gastronomic as a metatextual process in Fortunata y Jacinta (Gilman Galdós 372, Goldman, Moncy Gullón 53, Ribbans Conflicts 49-61).

These faults magnify Jacinta’s place in the character-system of the novel and diminish the presence of others. Her rise in the story can be explained through the socioformal element, a strategy applied by the narrator to apportion narrative space to different figures: “Each individual portrait has a radically contingent position within the story as a whole; our sense of the human figure (as implied person) is inseparable from the space that he or she occupies with the narrative totality” (Woloch 13).

It is interesting to note the lack of feminist studies on Jacinta. This critical void notwithstanding, in her book on the ángel del hogar, Bridget A. Adelarca has proposed women in Galdós as faceless, characters that easily disappear from the narrative and that remain arrested in their roles as mothers (75-87). Lou Charnon-Deutsch and Jo Labanyi disagree, and have edited a collection of essays that suggest the fluctuation of gender definition in nineteenth-century literature (Culture and Gender 3). Labanyi hast written elsewhere—and five years later—that the private and public elements of society interplay and blur in the Spanish realist novel (Gender and Modernization vii-viii). Jacinta’s private demon (sterility) plays out in public as well as private settings, which exemplifies the complexity of her character. The biological accident of sterility pushes her to the margin of society, but when she reenters the narrative with Juanito’s lovechild—imagined as her own—and her fantasized union with Moreno-Isla, Jacinta ironically undermines the status quo with this idyllic image of domesticity.

Dreams become fictions that tell, Turner has explained (“Family Ties” 21). This appears true in Jacinta’s theater dream, which depicts a grotesque child-man that reaches for her breast: “[Era] uno de esos sueños intensos y breves en que el cerebro finge la realidad con un relieve y un histrionismo admirables” [emphasis added] (1: VIII, ii, 290-1). Many have emphasized the presence of phallic and reproductive motifs in this vision (Gilman Galdós 298, Moncy Gullón 58-9, Valis “Death” 251).

Critics have recognized the import of the Pituso story/novela that begins with Ido “selling” it to Jacinta (Goldman 87-92, Ribbans Conflicts 51-4, Turner Galdós 60-1), though these readings place the emphasis on Juanito, Ido, and Izquierdo’s roles in the elaboration of the story rather than upon Jacinta’s.
James R. Kincaid has proposed the child as made hollow in the nineteenth century, its beautiful or horrible nature developed in the eye of the beholder: “[it] has been assembled in reference to desire, built up in erotic manufactories” (4), a sort of intimate mirror that looks back at someone like Jacinta whose motherly-reproductive desires build up in the children she observes.

This painting is known both as El niño Dios and El buen pastor (1660). For reproductions and commentary on this painting and others by Murillo, see Enrique Valdivieso’s Murillo. Catálogo razonado de pinturas.

Martha Heard and Alfred Rodríguez have emphasized the importance of the December 24th date in the novel and the ironic messianic images between Juanito and the Pituso (130). A good-evil contrast arises in the Pituso himself, between his layers of “mancha del pecado” and “demonio” and his Christ-like eyes during his surprise arrival on Christmas Eve (1, IX, iii, 329).

Dressing the feet with boots signals authority (Extebarría 104, 124), and Jacinta demonstrates hers over the boy here.

Juanito makes “inroads into [Jacinta’s] illusion” (Macklin 196), and concludes the Pituso novel, as well as hers. M. Gullón has studied the structural implications of dropping the Pituso for Juan Evaristo in the novel (Money Gullón 59). Turner has studied the melodramatic turn in Pituso story (“Metaphor and Metonymy” 891). Others have explored Juanito’s ability to build and destroy fiction, as in this case with Jacinta (Gilman Galdós 296, Goldman).

Galdós keeps Feijoo’s death off stage, Ponce and Ballester noticing his burial after they mourn Fortunata. They show no interest in stopping to pay their respects (4: VI, xvi, 539). Maxi and Feijoo receive a Dickensian closing technique that accounts for “left over” characters (Erickson 429), compared to the three complex deaths studied in this section.

Torgovnick uses the term “close up” to distinguish from “overview.” An overview, according to the scholar, is temporally distant and gives a brief conclusion to all characters (Closure 15).

Francisco Ruiz Ramón has written that death becomes the logical solution to Galdós’ novels (119-24), and adds: “nunca responde el novelista a la tremenda pregunta. Por el contrario, la esencia misma del morir parece ser una cuestión cuya respuesta no se encuentra aquí, sino siempre más allá. Para Galdós terminar de contar la muerte de cualquiera de sus entes de ficción es dejar vibrando una honda interrogante” (170).

This altar scene appears foreshadowed in Part 2 during Mauricia’s drunken dream in the convent of Las Micaelas. She kidnaps a baby Jesus and eats its head and claims: “No, no te suelto, ya no vuelves allí [al altar]… ¡A casa con tu mamá!” (2: V, ix, 647). Christological
imagery, the altar, and the theme of motherhood maintain the major motif of the child figure in the novel.

33 Turner agrees with Ribbons and Sobejano, and adds that Moreno’s death prefigures Fortunata’s. Fortunata dies in the building Moreno owns, this physical structure becoming a nexus where she bears her son and multiple social classes intersect (“Benito” 401-2).
CHAPTER 3
MOURNING THE CHILD:
CHILDREN AND THEIR TYRANNY IN TORRQUEMADA

I. Introduction

Francisco Torquemada stands out as Galdós’ only recurring character to receive a dedicated series of novels. The self-made and physically imposing usurer enters such texts as El doctor Centeno (1883), La de Bringas (1884), and Fortunata y Jacinta (1886-7), collecting and profiting from others’ debts. Torquemada becomes the eponymous character of a four-part cycle that describes his rise from local lender to international businessman and senator. It consists of the following titles: Torquemada en la hoguera (1889), Torquemada en la cruz (1893), Torquemada en el purgatorio (1894), and Torquemada y San Pedro (1895). The novels’ narrow plots and limited list of characters advance a nineteenth-century character study that provides a greater understanding of the usurer. In this character study, Galdós reimagines Torquemada from an archetypical moneylender to a man faced with interpersonal conflict. The protagonist struggles most with the multiple deaths in his family: of his first wife Silvia, second wife Fidela, brother-in-law Rafael, friend and fellow usurer Doña Lupe, and of his son Valentín, a mathematic prodigy. These experiences of loss turn the arrogant usurer into a vulnerable character that is in constant mourning.

In experiencing these deaths, Torquemada’s role as a leading character seems continually at risk. He defers to social and religious agents in his life choices, people who stand to gain from his rising socio-financial status. In reaction to these agents’ influence over the protagonist, the narrator grants more narrative space to these secondary figures, which creates a major shift in the character paradigm. As seen in Chapter 1, regarding Juanito Santa Cruz, Galdós strategically
fazes out his male heroes. Francisco Bringas suffers a similar fate of indolence in *La de Bringas*, dominated by his wife. These male characters flatten with time, dismissed by the story and readers alike by the novels’ conclusions. Torquemada’s character, however, presents an ironic disposition in the narrative: Galdós rounds out his character while diminishing his leading figure in the plot. He remains relevant at the closing of the tetralogy, despite his retreating protagonicity.

This chapter argues that Torquemada’s unstable status as protagonist is predicated upon, yet ironically enriched, by his obsession with the image of his dead son Valentín. No other death affects Torquemada as dramatically as this in the cycle, which explains the protagonist’s continual acquiescence to secondary figures. Torquemada’s reaction to Valentín’s passing throws light on his diminishing structural position and interpersonal frailty. His varying reactions, carried out in private, and away from much of the tetralogy’s major plotline, unveil depths in the character previously unstudied by scholars and unseen in the protagonist’s archetypical roles in Galdós’ *oeuvre*. Torquemada sets out on a delirious mission to resurrect his son, which disengages him from these sequences of major actions, taken on by other characters instead. Torquemada’s delusional hope of reincarnating Valentín leads him to marry Fidela as a means to carry out this enterprise. Born of this union is the physiologically grotesque Valentín II, a child figure that changes the courses of Torquemada and Fidela’s families. In short, Torquemada surfaces as a major character fleshed out by minor moments. These instances of minorness place him within a kind of hermetic protagonicity, framed around his visions of Valentín and later by losing control of his second son Valentín II.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first section proposes *Torquemada* as a structural and thematic inversion to *Fortunata y Jacinta*. It explores general similarities between
the novels, but, more importantly, it emphasizes how the two novels compare and contrast in their use of the child figure. It makes the case for the uniqueness of Torquemada’s experience when placed side by side to Jacinta, an element disregarded by critics. The second section explores Torquemada’s private séances and dialogues with the portrait of his dead son in *Torquemada en la cruz* and *Torquemada en el purgatorio*. These middle texts develop the fragmented visions of Valentín and the complexity of Torquemada’s character that has gone unaddressed by scholars. The theories of pictorialism and physiognomy inform this section. The final section analyzes the ominous role of Valentín II in the deaths of Rafael, Fidela, and Torquemada between *Torquemada en el purgatorio* and *Torquemada y San Pedro*. Previous studies have viewed the boy only as a symbolic figure in relation to his dead brother Valentín. This section suggests Valentín II as an interpretation of the *figura mortis* of the child—similar to the final three deaths of *Fortunata y Jacinta*—but with the forceful presence of his grotesque body, which carries social and literary consequences in the *Torquemada* novels.

II. Inversions in Opening Frames: *Torquemada* and the Child Figure

Read as a tetralogy, *Torquemada* reflects both a parallel and an inverted image of *Fortunata y Jacinta*’s themes and structure, but it is their inversions that expose stories centered on the image of the child. Beginning with their parallels, Galdós dramatizes Restoration Madrid through the bourgeois experience in both novels. Both works are also divided into four separate yet interconnected volumes. Each volume opens with the introduction of a male character that is ironically overshadowed by a secondary figure. The *Torquemada* series, especially, maintains a motif of irony. Francisco Torquemada’s name itself carries a religious-materialistic dichotomy, allusions made to the famous Spanish inquisitor that collide with the character’s profession of usury. The four titles in *Torquemada* demonstrate the deceptive and ironic nature of language in
the cycle as well. Narrators in both works enlist a series of first and secondhand sources to legitimize their tales, but ultimately distance themselves from them to create an elastic first-third-person narration. Peter A. Bly calls its effect in Torquemada’s narrative a “textura ficticia” (“La fosilización” 25). Many others have recognized the metatextual similarities between these novels. Much has been written about how these two novels structurally and thematically compare, but little critical attention has been placed upon how they reflect inversions of each other. This section analyzes how Torquemada presents a structural and thematic reversal of Fortunata y Jacinta, and advances the image of Valentín as the cornerstone to the tetralogy’s unique story. More room is given to the analysis of the child in Torquemada to avoid repeating ideas and quotes from Chapter 1.

The Torquemada cycle depicts a father’s reaction to losing his son; Fortunata y Jacinta depicts the search for a son by a woman who longs to be a mother. Torquemada mourns by wishing to bring Valentín back from the dead. Jacinta envisions reunions with children that are not hers. Both characters are caught in a repetitive gesture of “reimagining” the image of a child. The usurer produces images of his son through the trauma of loss, the mother-to-be through an imagined loss, or the absence of loss. Theories on trauma have led scholars like Theodor Adorno and George Steiner to contemplate the limitations of writing about it. They have suggested in their respective works that a text always emerges *a posteriori* and as a reaction to a specific traumatic event. Giorgio Agamben has proposed that an aporia grows between historical facts and personal truths, between the date of the traumatic event and the experience of writing and looking back—the “remnant” of memory and people (survivors and the lost) (162). Regarding death, Jacques Derrida has offered the simple yet apt observation in a collection of essays that one person always dies before another, which leaves the survivor behind to take on the
unbearable task of contemplating the loss of a friend or family member (The Work of Mourning). In Torquemada’s experience with death, the father buries the son, and Valentín’s passing provides the date of the trauma. The unfortunate chronological reversal to the normal father-son sequence of death prompts Torquemada to continually extend the aporia between event and experience. On the other hand, Jacinta imagines that she has lost a son with whom she must reunite—both the Pituso and Juan Evaristo—as seen in Chapter 1.⁴

The above scholars help unpack Torquemada’s obsessive compulsion in reconciling with the trauma of losing his child, but their studies overlook the distinction between losing someone and imagining a loss, between event and non-event. Making this distinction will allow the reader to better understand the connection between Torquemada and Jacinta. Dominique LaCapra has made an effort to parse the language of trauma and establishes two categories: loss and absence. The former must carry a date and an event, as with Valentín’s death. When a character or person converts absence—the absence of an identifiable traumatic event or date—into loss, this process of conflation gives rise to mythological stories. Transferring absence into loss hides a non-existing divinity and develops the illusion of finding it “again.” This transition creates, LaCapra has suggested, the sensation of a return “through a kind of creation ex nihilo,” and “gives anxiety an identifiable object—the lost object” (57). Jacinta’s character falls into this category of experience, imagining non-biological children as hers when finding them “again.” Jacinta’s production of images in the realm of the affect—studied in Chapter 1—allows her to experience a similar experience of loss to Torquemada’s loss of a child, feigned as it is. The two characters make up two sides of trauma’s coin: absence and loss. Torquemada and Jacinta’s internovel bond strengthens when the reader considers that both characters go to great lengths to “bring back” their children. LaCapra has called this act, on both sides of trauma, a “compulsive repetition”
Torquemada and Jacinta envision delusional situations where their “lost” children will return, both characters responsible for mythological stories. In Torquemada’s case, his view of Valentín as a second coming of Christ, similar to Jacinta’s idea of boys looking like Christ, enriches the mythological element in his repetition compulsion throughout the tetralogy.

Under this light, Torquemada and Jacinta share the common enterprise of bringing children back, but they maintain differing perspectives in their loss and imagined loss. Torquemada carries the dual burden of parent and reproductive agent. Jacinta carries only the first of these two parental weights. H. L. Boudreau’s comparison of these two novels has suggested a cara/cruz relation between Torquemada and Fortunata: the aging and ugly man positioned against the young and beautiful woman; both characters remain passive when confronted by social agents, and both arise as pitiable in the reader’s eyes when they pass away (118-20). Upon widening the scope, however, Torquemada’s figure emerges as a conflation of both the eponymous women. Galdós consolidates the reproductive (Fortunata) and the parental (Jacinta) in Torquemada, which makes the protagonist’s relationship with his sons, as real or imagined beings, a cornerstone in his character’s development. Where Fortunata and Jacinta’s separate interests merge at the conclusion of the novel through the exchange of Juan Evaristo, Torquemada’s character negotiates the reproductive and the parental at all times on his own. This remains especially true when the reader considers how emotionally distant his second wife Fidela stays from him.

Put a different way, Torquemada bears the burden of loss and reproduction, while Jacinta bears the burden of reproduction and imagines loss. He must replace the void that was once filled by a living heir; she must fill a void that has always been empty. Ironically, Jacinta succeeds with the adoption of Juan Evaristo. Her new son represents a hopeful future. Torquemada, in a
way, fails with Valentín II. This grotesque child destroys the hope of a future. The social
pressure to provide another heir surfaces in Torquemada when he remarries, Donoso forcefully
telling him: “la casa quiere familia . . . porque los hijos son la moneda con que se paga a la
nación” (TC 39-40). As the narrator explains in an earlier episode, Torquemada invests his
biological and spiritual self in his son Valentín: “En honor del tacaño, debe decirse que, si se
conceptuaba reproducido físicamente en aquel pedazo de su propia naturaleza, sentía la
superioridad del hijo, y por esto se congratulaba más de haberle dado el ser” (TH 10).6 The
pressures and emotional turns Torquemada experiences appear of a different nature than
Jacinta’s. He must deal with the perpetuation of his own flesh, wealth, and title. Torquemada’s
repetition compulsion, performed in séances with the portrait of the dead Valentín, reveals a man
resigned to the trauma of loss.

Aside from the connection between Torquemada and Jacinta’s delirious missions to
reunite with children, the novels cast inverted socio-physiological images of their male heirs.
Each text presents a pair of sons that arrive in key structural moments,7 but these heirs also move
their respective plot lines in different directions. Valentín and his grotesque brother Valentín II
appear as visual and physical phenomena.8 Valentín, a math prodigy, carries a large head on his
caminos” (TH 10-1). The boy’s death denies the hope that his genius offered Madrid—a missed
national opportunity. Valentín II, on the other hand, suggests national decadence, the self-
interested union between Torquemada and Fidela marking the end to a bourgeois era.9 The
Pituso and Juan Evaristo propose a different kind of binary, one that nudges Fortunata y Jacinta
in a positive direction. The two boys transition the adult characters from the lack to the gain of
hope. The Pituso appears as a physical and linguistic savage, but Juan Evaristo is angel-like in
Jacinta’s arms. This final scene—explored in Chapter 1—advances an idyllic bourgeois union between Jacinta, Moreno-Isla, and “their” child. The Valentín brothers signal a socio-moral decline.

Chapter 1 located the latent and circular function of the child figure in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, and demonstrated how the narrator uses its image in both the opening and closing frames of the novel. The narrator in *Torquemada en la hoguera*, conversely, uses a more patent image of the child. The existence of Valentín as a real boy and his death develop an immediate impact of the child in narrative and story. The structural position of Valentín in the opening chapters builds a deceptive illusion by saving this infant as the final image of the chapters’ sequences. The narrator draws the reader’s attention toward the most obvious and visible element (the despicable usurer and eponymous Torquemada), while he holds back the ultimate reveal that will soon become the catalyst to the tetralogy—Valentín and his death. The first lines of the narrator read: “Voy a contar cómo fue al quemadero el inhumano [Torquemada] que tantas vidas infelices consumió en llamas” (*TH* 5). Many have analyzed the opening frame. One scholar has suggested it as a classical proem that evokes the *romance de ciegos* (Ullman 259-60).¹⁰ Some believe the introductory paragraph anticipates the tragically comic and human character of Torquemada, while others have explored the narrator’s shifting position, from omniscient to limited storyteller.¹¹ Diane F. Urey has noted the complex of irony in the paragraph by pointing up that Valentín dies in the novel, not Torquemada or his debtors (*Irony* 95). The narrator’s strategic revelation of the child, an unanticipated element for the reader, underpins Torquemada’s reaction to the Valentín’s sudden death.

Urey’s apt observation requires further analysis, though, especially in how the narrator presents and values Valentín. To say that the boy remains in the “penumbra” of the novel, as one
scholar has put it (García Sarriá 109), underestimates the worth of the child and his image throughout the cycle. The narrator maintains of a pattern of first keeping the child figure in these shadowy corners of the narrative, and second bringing it back to light in each of the four novels. The narrator’s strategy fools the reader into overvaluing the tableau of the Torquemadas’ personal and social history, which is presented first. This tableau summarizes Torquemada’s opportunistic business dealings, the investment of his deceased wife’s money in the wake of the Septembrina Revolution, and it gives a brief profile of their daughter Rufinita and her fiancé, the soon-to-be doctor Quevedito. The narrator’s heavy figurative language used to describe Torquemada—that metaphorical “hierro candente” with which the protagonist supposedly pierces his clients—distracts the reader, who waits for the protagonist’s life to serve as a moralistic warning (TH 5). It is only in the last paragraph of the first chapter that the narrator suddenly redirects the reader’s focus toward the thematic and structural import of Valentín:

Pues digo, si de Rufina volvemos los ojos al tierno vástago de Torquemada, encontraremos mejor explicación de la vanidad que le infundía su prole, porque (lo digo sinceramente) no he conocido criatura más mona que aquel Valentín, ni precocidad tan extraordinaria como la suya. ¡Cosa más rara! No obstante el parecido con su antipático papá, era el chiquillo guapísimo, con tal expresión de inteligencia en aquella cara, que se quedaba uno embobado mirándole; con tales encantos en su persona y carácter, y rasgos de conducta tan superiores á su edad, que verle, hablarle y quererle vivamente, era todo uno. ¡Y qué hechicera gravedad la suya, no incompatible con la inquietud propia de la infancia! ¡Que gracia mezclada de no sé qué aplomo inexplicable a sus años! ¡Qué rayo divino en sus ojos algunas veces, y otras qué misteriosa y dulce tristeza! Espigadillo de cuerpo, tenía las piernas delgadas, pero de buena forma; la cabeza más grande de lo regular, con alguna deformidad en el cráneo. En cuanto a su aptitud para el estudio, llamémosla verdadero prodigio, asombro de la escuela, y orgullo y gala de los maestros. De esto hablaré más adelante. Sólo he de afirmar ahora que el Peor no merecía tal joya, ¡que había de merecerla! y que si fuese hombre capaz de alabar a Dios por los bienes con que le agraciaba, motivos tenía el muy tuno para estarse, como Moisés, tantísimas horas con los brazos levantados al cielo. No los levantaba, porque sabía que del cielo no había de caerle ninguna breva de las que a él le gustaban (TH 7).

This description of Valentín forces a shift upon the tableau of the story, one that carries the force of literal proximity when the narrator inserts himself into the narrative. As a passive
character, he focalizes the child for himself, in contrast to the latent child figure in *Fortunata y Jacinta*’s first chapter. Valentín receives the most in-depth portrait of any other character in *Torquemada en la hoguera*. The narrator literally asks the readers to turn their gaze away from Rufinita and toward the boy with him. This adjustment of narratorial focus absorbs the proem and ironic tone from the opening lines. It also transforms Valentín into a child figure, as the narrator interchanges biological nouns for capricious nouns in *vástago*, *prole*, *chiquillo*, *criatura*, *joya*, *cosa más rara*, *gracia mezclada*, et al. Each “synonym” distances Valentín further from his physical body, and imposes a kind of perpetual euphemism on him. Metaphor displaces and accumulates atop metonymy in this description. Depicting the boy becomes a sensorial process, the narrator folding the act of seeing, speaking with, and loving Valentín into one narratorial gesture. When expanded upon, Urey’s observation discloses the significance that Valentín plays in the first novel as well as the remaining volumes. This child and his figure sit on top of the narrator’s character hierarchy, despite the boy’s lack of dialogue and interior monologue. By placing Valentín in the closing portion of the first chapter, a pattern repeated in the second chapter (*TH* 10), the narrator foreshadows the child figure’s importance in the story and to Torquemada. Valentín becomes an anchor that holds the narrative in place, similar to how the child figure, reconciled in Juan Evaristo, anchors *Fortunata y Jacinta*.

Galdós produces a series of inversions between *Fortunata y Jacinta* and the *Torquemada* cycle that the image of the child highlights. Jacinta and Torquemada each imagine reproducing a male heir, though under different circumstances. She imagines loss, while he experiences loss, which suggests different character perspectives. Both novels explore the moral ideal and decline of marriage within and between classes through the child. The narrators’ patterns of presentation seem similar and different as well. *Fortunata y Jacinta* slowly teases out the image of the child
in the opening chapters and concludes with Jacinta’s story by placing a real boy in her arms. *Torquemada* recasts this pattern in a more immediate fashion by placing Valentín’s descriptions as weights in the first two chapters that push the story in a new direction, shifting the motifs of the novel. Realism’s impulse to collect detail and naturalism’s focus on environments provides an “information-giving code” in Galdós’ novel (Gold “Francisco’s Folly” 47-8). Valentín, the images his father engages, and Valentín II become this kind of information-giving code that explicate Torquemada’s character.

III. Picturing the Child: Valentín’s Portrait and Torquemada’s Retreat

In each novel of the cycle, Torquemada concedes power to characters that question his decision-making. This compromise, which one scholar has noted as a transition from victimizer to victim (Shirley 79), poses a structural problem as well. It places Torquemada’s protagonicity in question. This dilemma of structure is pointed up by the ironic titles of the novels, which place the protagonist’s forces of antagonism next to his own name. *Torquemada en la cruz* stands as such an example, *cruz* hinting at his domineering sister-in-law Cruz. While some have noted his diminishing leading role (Earle, Jameson, Sánchez Barbudo), little has been written about what Torquemada does during these periods of limited activity in the story, nor how it affects his character development.

This section argues that Torquemada’s character ironically flourishes during his non-protagonist moments by engaging the portrait of his dead son Valentín in the two middle novels, *Torquemada en la cruz* and *Torquemada en el purgatorio*. The author uses what this section understands as pictorialism and physiognomy to flesh out interactions between the father and this portrait. The portrait, a literal still of life, comes figuratively to life through Torquemada’s imagination and the narrator’s presentation of it. The humanizing effect the boy’s passing has on
the father in *Torquemada en la hoguera*—observed by critics (Blanco Villalba 156, Del Río xliv)—increases when the protagonist engages the image of Valentín as if it were alive. Torquemada’s child’s play, here his perception of his son’s image, explicates the irony of the increase in his characterization and social passivity: he remains alone when interacting with the portrait. Torquemada is more interested in reincarnating his son than in his own surge of monetary wealth and social position, a mission that Cruz takes on in his stead. His séances with Valentín’s portrait, part of his compulsive repetition in mourning, demonstrate an experimental realism in Galdós that shows images coming to life and human depth to character. Torquemada becomes a hermetic protagonist.

Torquemada’s paradox of hermetic protagonicity—that the less involved he becomes in narrative action the more his character flourishes—presents a reversal in characterization of male protagonists from previous novels. Galdós displays a tendency of diminishing the role of leading male figure like Juanito Santa Cruz and Francisco Bringas, who finish less interesting and more pathetic than when their stories begin. Fredric Jameson has recently picked up on this Galdosian trend, but the critic misgauges this device as universal when he adds Torquemada to his list of protagonists that becomes minor and flat (100-6). “Minor” and “flat” remain mutually exclusive in Galdós. Obvious examples arise in characters like Estupiñá, Mauricia *la Dura*, Frasquito Ponte, and Almudena, to list only a few. Minor characters can either be “engulfed” by or “exploded” onto the narrative (Woloch 26). Torquemada’s child’s play houses a series of pictorialist and physiognomic descriptions that explode his character and test the boundaries of the novel’s realist poetics.

Pictorialism can be understood as written language’s attempt to depict visual material in detail, in contrast to the placement of an art object in the narrative that Ekphrasis implies. Peter...
Brooks’ latest work has defined the process of capturing the visual in the novel as nineteenth-century realism’s basic function (Realist Vision). This apt idea, though, overlooks the experimental aspects of realism, like Galdós’ scenes that edge the uncanny, as when Valentin’s face in the portrait moves and speaks, or when his image emerges from Torquemada’s accounting book. Other scholars have acknowledged that written language desires to represent but cannot fully reproduce the visual (Foucault 3-8, Said 100-1). This observation of written language’s limits underpins Jean Hagstrum’s foundational work, which suggests that pictorialism occurs when a written passage can be translated into a visual reproduction. Viola Winner, studying Henry James, has advanced a productive inversion to this definition of pictorialism, which the scholar proposes as: “the practice of describing people, places, scenes, or parts of scenes as if they were paintings or subjects of a painting” (26). Marianna Torgovnick’s research on the literary device has expanded upon these ideas by offering a vocabulary for critics to parse pictorialism in realist novels (The Visual).

Torgovnick establishes four major categories that work within a continuum in pictorialism: the decorative—emulation of a movement in description, like impressionism; the biographical—a documentary mode that links a novelist to a specific painter or work; the ideological—a metaphorical use of pictorialism that entails socio-political or historical themes; and the interpretive—subdivided into the perceptual and hermeneutic: respectively, the character’s and the reader’s reception of a visual artifact. Torgovnick situates the iconographical, an extra term, between the decorative and the ideological (The Visual 21). For the purposes of Torquemada’s interaction with his dead son’s portrait and overall imagined image, this section incorporates the interpretative-perceptual concept, supplemented by the iconographical. Torquemada interacts with an icon of his son and works through his perception of it. This
combination opens up the conscious and unconscious states of a character (Torgovnick *The Visual* 22), and helps explain Torquemada’s personal devotion to the portrait.

Hazel Gold has recently drawn from Torgovnick’s work to study Galdós’ earlier novel *La sombra* (1871), examining the interaction of protagonist Anselmo with the moving image of Paris. Paris steps out of a painting, similar to how Valentín speaks from and steps out of his portrait. Gold has located a problematic yet productive relationship between Galdós’ writing and his iconization of a visual illustration (“Painting” 831). This section finds a similar process in the two middle *Torquemada* novels, but pays particular attention to how the descriptions of Valentín’s portrait and enlivened image emphasize the details of the child’s facial features.

Beyond iconography, this attention applied to the face moves into physiognomy. Johann Casper Lavater offers his theory of physiognomy as the reading of external features of a person, or of their image, to understand their inner character (2-5). For one scholar, physiognomy in literature functions as a resistance to the obliteration of the human face; describing it becomes an unmasking, a divination in a text that emphasizes Aristotle’s idea of *anagnórisis* (Stimilli 2-5). In *Torquemada*, Valentín’s *anagnórisis*—his enlivened portrait—overwhelms the narrative landscape and Torquemada. As a product of Torquemada’s focalization, however, the portrait and its moving images reveal elements of his character, rather than any substantial information about Valentín. Ultimately, Torquemada’s perception of his son’s icon demonstrates an instance of pictorialism in Galdós, but it also shows Torquemada’s emotional attachment to Valentín’s figure. In his weakest moments, Torquemada allows his impression of Valentín’s physiognomy to absorb his reality.

The reader begins to understand the power of Torquemada’s nostalgia for Valentín, and the impetus behind the pictorialist descriptions, when the protagonist is forced to move on from
the loss of his son. Doña Lupe sets this conflict in motion when Torquemada arrives at her bedside, as she comes in and out of convulsive states. Doña Lupe proposes a financial opportunity to the protagonist that entails physical and social separation from his family’s past: marriage into the Águila’s aristocratic family and an improved social status. Doña Lupe introduces the single caveat—Torquemada must forgive the Águila’s pending debt. His financial position and their union would prove mutually beneficial: “Prométame hacer lo que le dije . . . En ningún caso le aconsejaría cosa contraria a sus intereses, menos ahora, . . . resultará un buen negocio, y una obra de misericordia” (TC 2-3). This interaction turns Faustian, Doña Lupe luring Torquemada into a binding socio-financial contract. The protagonist already enjoys a financially secure position, though: “Vamos, era más rico de lo que él mismo pensaba . . . [pero] se sentía vagamente ascendido a una categoría social superior” (TC 20-1). He displays little interest in improving his social status. Only when the portrait “tells” Torquemada to listen to Donoso and Cruz’s advice that he should marry the latter’s sister, Fidela, does he acquiesce. This change in class would mean leaving his home, where Torquemada stores his memories and portrait of Valentín.

The worth of the portrait to the protagonist stands out when contrasted to the great amount of valuables he collects from debtors that he also holds in his home. Torquemada feels nothing for these hoarded items beyond the monetary leverage over others that they give him: “No se desprendía de ningún bargueño, pintura, objeto de talla, abanico, marfil o tabaquera sin obtener un buen precio, y aunque no era artista, un feliz instinto y la costumbre de manosear obras de arte le daban ciencia infalible para las compras así como para las ventas” (TC 22). Things in Torquemada’s life remain void of emotional and artistic meaning. They offer him influence. Gold has recognized this trait in the protagonist concerning Torquemada y San Pedro.
as well, Torquemada impervious to the museum and the art objects it contains that he acquires through the Gravelinas palace (“A Tomb” 324). Valentín’s portrait, nevertheless, triggers in Torquemada a “triste memoria” (TC 22). The boy’s image bursts Torquemada’s delusion onto the page, and opens access to the protagonist’s interior life. Noël Valis has linked the mourning of mothers to the photographs of dead children in La de Bringas and Fortunata y Jacinta (“Death” 249). Here, the description of Torquemada’s reaction to Valentín’s portrait advances a father’s experience of mourning:

Se mareaba pensando en el turris-burris de cosas sucedidas desde la Creación hasta el día del cataclismo universal y del desquiciamiento de las esferas, que fue el día en que remontó su vuelo el sublime niño Valentín . . . Creía firmemente que su hijo, arrebatado al cielo en espíritu y carne, lo ocupaba de un cabo a otro, o en toda la extensión del espacio infinito sin fronteras . . . todo lo llenaba el alma de aquel niño prodigioso . . . sintiendo que el tiempo pasaba con extraordinaria parsimonia, los minutos como horas, y éstas como días bien largos (22-3).

No other painting or sculpture that Torquemada acquires in the remaining novels affects him with such impetus, market value notwithstanding. His interaction with the iconographical image marks off a suspension of time in the story and captures the nature of the protagonist’s thought process regarding his son and his reality. For Torquemada, his relation to the portrait functions as a conjuring that invokes a realm of emotions and visitations of Valentín’s image. The boy’s spiritual essence, in the usurer’s purview, dominates all things past, present, and future. The material fuses with the spiritual as well. The narrator begins to develop a tableau that belongs to what Barthes has called “subsidiary notations,” “parasitic” detail that fills the gaps between major turning points (“An Introduction” 248). The Torquemada-Valentin interaction expands this parasitic space, which captures the protagonist in a minor-like role. This detail of non-action, however, discloses Torquemada’s vulnerability and rounds out his character. These moments of stasis ironically lift the protagonist from his former archetype of miser—which
Doña Lupe takes her to grave—to a man that mourns, as deranged as he might be.

Just as Valentín consumes Torquemada’s purview, the boy’s image, especially his physiognomy, consumes the narrator’s. The narrator concedes greater narrative landscape to this iconographical object than to any subject or valuable in the novel thus combined:

la única imagen que en la casa del prestamista representaba a la Divinidad era el retrato de Valentinito, una fotografía muy bien ampliada, con marco estupendo, colgado en el testero principal del gabinete, sobre un bargueño, en el cual había candeleros de plata repujada, con velas, pareciéndose mucho a un altar. La carilla del muchacho era muy expresiva. Diríase que hablaba, y su padre, en noches de insomnio, entendíase con él en un lenguaje sin palabras, más bien de signos o visajes de inteligencia, de cambio de miradas, y de un suspirar hondo a que respondía el retrato con milagrosos guiños y muequecillas . . . se quedaba el hombre como lelo, abiertos los ojos y sin ganas de moverse de allí, . . . colocando con simetría los candeleritos, los libros de matemáticas que había usado el niño y que allí eran como misales, un carretoncillo y una oveja que disfrutó en su primera infancia (TH 23).

This single portrait demands more from the narrative than the previous catalogue of objects put together. It implies a human connection for Torquemada and poses a narratorial challenge for the narrator—to represent the unrepresentable father-portrait interaction. On the one extreme, each literal element that makes up Valentín’s portrait comes together to construct a figurative frame that holds both the narrator and Torquemada captive. This second encasing becomes the marco estupendo, a Chinese box through which Torquemada and the narrator, through child’s play, create the implausible Valentín. On the other extreme, the details that go into this metatextual enclosure give the illusion that the image of Valentín turns its gaze toward Torquemada, father and portrait exchanging winks and gestures. The boy’s image resists the obliteration of its physiognomy, demanding recognition in the narrative—anagnórisis. The literally lifeless yet figuratively enlivened portrait requires the kind of narrative space apportioned to a living subject. Valentín’s portrait becomes what one scholar has called a “monstrous act of memory,” a verbal representation of a child that no longer physically grows, but develops metaphorically (Ferucci
The pictorialist language expands to accommodate Valentín’s physiognomy, but with an important caveat: the boy’s haunting face always points back toward Torquemada and the narrator. It embodies those who have constructed it. As a collaboration between the imaginations of Torquemada and the narrator, the portrait works as a mirror that unmasks its two onlookers.

The narrator’s ambivalent description reveals his participation in Torquemada’s perception of the portrait. He sets up the implausible sequence between the protagonist and Valentín’s image with a non-committal “Diríase que hablaba,” as though he refuses to deny or confirm the image’s alleged utterances. The narrator facilitates the “lenguaje sin palabras” by attempting to describe the indescribable, using words to depict what words apparently cannot depict. His reproduction of this unrepresentable conversation between father and portrait underpins the fragile state of this metaphoric frame: “Lo indudable es que hijo y padre se hablaron . . . ‘Pues... lo que digo,’ debió de expresar la imagen de Valentín, ‘fuiste un grandísimo puerco... Corre allá mañana y devuélveles a toca teja los arrastrados intereses [a la familia Águila]’” (TC 24). The narrator speaks for the image, reenacting a ridiculous scene for the reader. He also uses Valentín’s image to further victimize Torquemada. The dead boy’s portrait berates the protagonist and demands that he accept Doña Lupe’s marriage-financial contract to the Águila family. The narrator has turned this non-event, Barthes’ parasitic information, into a major turning point in character development. The portrait’s figurative movements and language, promoted by the narrator’s as well as Torquemada’s imagination, expose the protagonist’s weakness for his son’s memory. The narrator allows Valentín’s portrait to impose itself upon the protagonist by going beyond the metonymical description and picturing a new iconography, one that displaces Torquemada’s protagonicity yet teases out his vulnerable character.

The séance rituals like the ones just explored contextualize the resurgence of paternal
intuition that Torquemada manifests in the novels, despite his subordinating experience with Valentin’s portrait. The protagonist begins to view his future wife Fidela, for example, as a child trapped in a young woman’s body, a perspective that is facilitated by her own childish demeanor. She portrays a perversion of the Wordsworthian child inside the poet, suggesting a strange imitation of the puerile rather than nostalgia for childhood. In the following scene, Torquemada takes Donoso’s advice, and spends more time with Fidela, but stops to buy her candy first. The usurer imposes images of childhood onto his future wife, still looking to satisfy a father-child exchange:

Deseando mostrársel un puro afecto paternal [a Fidela], no iba nunca D. Francisco a la tertulia sin llevar alguna golosina para el ratoncito de la casa . . . “Es para unos niños,” solía decirle [al confitero] . . . “Vamos; sorpresa tenemos. Esta no la esperaba usted” . . . Acogía Fidela la golosina con grandes extremos de agradecimiento y alegría infantil, y D. Francisco se embelesaba viéndola hincar en la sabrosa pasta sus dientes, de una blanca ideal, los dientes más iguales, más preciosos y más limpios que él había visto en su condenada vida (TC 36).

Torquemada acts on his knowledge that Fidela plays with dolls and loves sugary treats. He begins a ritualistic process of using the young woman as a stand-in for Valentin’s physiognomy. The protagonist enframes her within his own marco estupendo, but now outside of the private space of the séance. Gastronomy and roleplaying underscore the scene’s fictional dimensions, constant motifs in Galdós recognized (Gold Reframing 71, Goldman 97, and Ribbans Conflicts 58). This scene edges Oedipal levels, though, as Torquemada talks down to Fidela, as if he imagines a child figure that sits on the ground after receiving candy. The narrator surrounds the scene with plasticity. Pictorialism extends beyond the portrait and transforms Fidela into an art object that moves, a curious reversal to the nature of Valentin’s image. These descriptions advance something ironically repulsive in the white purity that Torquemada finds in Fidela’s teeth. Torquemada remains attracted to the physiognomy of children and to what is
child-like.

This figurative father-child interaction also parallels the exchange of candy between Jacinta and the spurious Pituso: “Los dientecillos le brillaban [al Pituso] cual si fueran de cristal . . . Cuando Jacinta le puso un caramelo dentro de la boca, Juanín se reía de gusto” (1: IX, ii, 329; 1: IX, vii, 360). Critics have understood this latter interaction between potential mother and child as a seduction into motherhood and as premonitory, like Fortunata handing Juanito the raw egg (Moncy Gullón 60-2, López-Baralt 502-3). Torquemada’s Oedipal interaction with Fidela appears similar, emphasizing the whiteness of the teeth and the puerile enjoyment of candy. The Torquemada-Fidela sequence suggests an added layer of vulgarity, due to Fidela’s age. Torquemada treats her like a child, but she also acts like a child on her own, a mutually beneficial role-play. Both the Jacinta and Torquemada scenes propose figurative parent-son unions that end morally questionable. Torquemada’s exchange with Fidela demonstrates how the protagonist substitutes an aesthetic image of a child for his future wife through a repetition compulsion, still stricken by the loss of his son and in search of parental reconciliation. It also shows how Galdós insists on the power of physiognomy to carry emotional weight and resemblance—as with Jacinta’s “recognition” of Juanito in the Pituso—that prompt parental characters to imagine fictional realities.

Torquemada retains a certain amount of authority in this Oedipal relation, but remains in a subordinate position in the father-portrait relation. The autonomy of Valentín’s image increases enough between Torquemada en la cruz and Torquemada en el purgatorio that it removes the need for a narrator in its dialogues and ridicules Torquemada on its own. To exemplify this escalation, two scenes are compared side by side below from these two novels, respectively. The
first scene depicts Torquemada’s interaction with the portrait, asking Valentín’s image for advice in how to bring the boy back to life. Valentín begins the dialogue in this excerpt:

“Papá, yo quiero resucitar”

“¡Según eso, te tendré otra vez conmigo, pedazo de gloria!” exclamó Torquemada, sentándose, o más bien cayéndose sobre una silla, cual si estuviera borracho perdido.

“Volveré a ese mundo.”

“Resucitando, como quien dice, al modo de Jesucristo; saliéndote tan guapamente de la sepulturita perpetua que... me costó diez mil reales.”

“Hombre, no, eso no podría. ¿Tú qué estás pensando? Salir así... ¿cómo dices?, ¿grande y con el cuerpo de cuando me morí?... Quítate. Así no me dejan” (TC 42).

The second scene describes Torquemada after an argument with Cruz regarding the hereditary traits of his and Fidela’s unborn child, who will eventually be known as Valentín II:

Miró al retrato fijamente, y el retrato callaba, es decir, su carita compungida no expresaba más que una preocupación muda y discreta . . . Volvió a su despacho, y estuvo haciendo cuentas más de media hora, recalentándose el cerebro. De pronto, los números que ante sí tenía empezaron a voltear con espantoso vórtice, que los hacía ilegibles, y de en medio de aquel polvo que giraba como a impulso de un huracán, saltó Valentinico dando zapatetas, y encarándose con el autor de sus días (todo esto en el centro del papel), le dijo: “Papá, yo quiero dir en ferrocarril...” [emphasis in original] (TP 56-7).

In the first scene, Valentín’s image speaks to Torquemada with little to no intervention from the narrator. The portrait no longer needs an ambivalent narratorial voice to eschew the implausibility of its utterances as it did in earlier sequences. Valentín’s physiognomy disengages from both the protagonist and narrator’s grasp, attaining the autonomy in its figuratively physical movement. Two elements remain clear from this interaction. First, Torquemada is adamant about reincarnating Valentín. The father’s mourning encourages him to maintain this delusion, despite being married to Fidela and able to conceive a child together. Second, Valentín’s portrait makes fun of Torquemada’s logic by underscoring the limits of its own illusory frame. Where in La sombra protagonist Anselmo recognizes Paris as a figment of his imagination and a voice of
reason, Torquemada fails to recognize Valentín as a figment that points out his own lapses in judgment ("Hombre, no, eso no podría"). The portrait’s near autonomous physiognomy reiterates Torquemada’s deferral to it and the diminished status of his protagonicity. It also manifest’s the metatextual nature of these exchanges, Valentín’s portrait calling attention to its own fiction.

The second scene further demonstrates the power that Valentín’s image holds over Torquemada and the metatextual essence of this interaction. This image functions outside its own portrait and, consequently, outside the realm of pictorialism. As one scholar has shown, frames and framing in Galdós call attention to the limits of literary enclosures and social institutions (Gold Reframing 2). Here, the image of Torquemada’s son refuses to appear during the séance and decides, instead, to appear on the mourning father’s account book. On the one hand, the emergence of Valentín’s image from the miniature dust tornado throws light onto this narrative artifice. Both Torquemada and the reader observe the child figure surface and move around on a piece of paper at the same time. This self-conscious and simultaneous element contains three layers: the published novel in the reader’s hand, Torquemada’s account book, and Valentín’s moving image within the account book’s pages. Galdós creates an exhaustive mise en abyme, reminiscent of Diego Velázquez’s Las Meninas (1656), as if the novelist allows the reader to participate in the various enclosures of fiction. On the other hand, the image’s face forces its gaze upon Torquemada—“encarándose”—and suggests the protagonist’s social failure in producing and maintaining a male heir. Valentín—the future of Madrid—died under his care. Now Torquemada lives vicariously through a fantasy of this socio-personal failure. Each step of this metatextual process transports the reader and Torquemada further from social reality yet, ironically, closer to its eroding structures.

The unfortunate irony of Valentín’s portrait is that rather than bring closure to
Torquemada’s grief it tortures him within his repetition compulsion. The portrait and its various visual incarnations echo the capricious advice of Cruz, Fidela, and Donoso regarding family and business matters. These images of the child function like a masochistic gut instinct in Torquemada, a voice of reason that berates its own subject. This occurs, for example, when Torquemada first reacts to Cruz’s ideas on investing in railways and expanding his business internationally: “Que quiere correrla en ferrocarril... ¡Bah!” (TP 57). The protagonist acquiesces to expand his business, nevertheless, when the image of Valentín demands: “yo quiero dir en ferrocarril” (TP 57). Valentín’s portrait and its image further victimize Torquemada, but they also—ironically—develop the protagonist into a rounder character by fleshing out his vulnerable elements. Pictorialist descriptions turn into physiognomic phenomena that exploit Torquemada, who has yet to recover, and his state of mourning.

IV. Haunting the Family: The Child and the Grotesque

Just as Valentín’s portrait tests the limits of representation through its figurative presence, Valentín II tests these limits through the literal representation of his body. A grotesque version of his dead brother, Valentín acts as a living figura mortis that haunts Rafael, Fidela, and Torquemada in their moments of death. This child figure suggests a parallel with Fortunata y Jacinta, where children and their images visit Mauricia la Dura, Moreno-Isla, and Fortunata before they pass away. Valentín II contrasts the former figura mortis, though, by how he repulses the characters he engages. Rather than provoke thoughts of childhood as in Mauricia and Moreno, or of a hopeful future with Fortunata, Valentin II causes Rafael, Fidela, and Torquemada to recognize their hopeless futures. If the images of children in Fortunata y Jacinta provide a platform for its characters to memorialize their intimate experiences of death, Torquemada constructs a grotesque child figure that pushes its characters toward their deaths.
Critics have examined Valentín II in two ways, as a symbol of decadence and as part of a good-evil binary that includes his dead brother Valentín. Regarding the child’s symbolic nature, Earle has suggested that Valentín II marks the beginning of the end for the family (37-8). Gustavo Correa has added a religious aspect to this observation, calling the boy Torquemada’s “orgullo luciferino” as the protagonist declines (141). Sherzer has read Valentín II as a monster and an “an anti-son” that erases the family’s future (38). On the other hand, scholars have located a binary between Valentín and Valentín II. Rhian Davies has considered the first brother both a monster and an angel, and the second brother a biological degenerate (“Regeneración” 87-9), while Folley has located a Christ-Satan juxtaposition between the brothers, which adds humor and underscores Torquemada’s confusion between the material and the spiritual (45). Urey has summarized it well: “The difference which enables the repetition of Valentín also destroys the similarity of the repeated elements” (“Identities” 57).

The representation of Valentín II’s physical form holds remnants from Valentín, but his body also advances its own angel-monster binary, a corpus of signifiers that critique Torquemada and his milieu. Round (“Galdós”) and Fuentes Peris have suggested the Valentin brothers as symbols of national decadence and degeneration, respectively. Fuentes Peris, in particular, believes that the siblings represent the fear and alarm of racial degeneration that was believed to engender “idiots” and cause the loss of human capital (55). However, these studies have not analyzed Valentín II’s physical presence in the text beyond symbol and binary. This final section of Chapter 2 proposes Valentín II as an element of the grotesque that operates within the realist poetics of Torquemada en el purgatorio and Torquemada y San Pedro. It further argues that Valentín’s grotesque presence serves as a structural and familial antecedent to the deaths of Rafael, Fidela, and Torquemada.
Wolfgang Kayser’s foundational research on the grotesque has established the device’s problematic nature. Kayser advances the grotesque figure as elusive, constantly evolving and difficult to define, because it contains both political and philosophical meaning (179-80). The grotesque also catches the audience off guard through laughter and repulsion (181). Dark humor and horror go hand in hand in the device (Thomson 8), a fusion underscored by the combination of Valentín II’s ominous laughter and his physiological distortions throughout the final two novels. Scholars have examined the grotesque in Galdós, though only in *Torquemada en la hoguera* and *Fortunata y Jacinta*. One study has thrown light on how the device appears in specific moments or characters, rather than envelop the whole of Galdós’ realist poetics. The extreme portraiture of such a character underpins the figure’s grotesque nature while it critiques the reality it distorts (Kronik “Galdós” 41, 44). B. J. Zeidner Bäuml echoes this notion and has observed instances of the grotesque in Galdós as a fusion of post-romantic and pre-realist details, which emerges as the “bourgeois grotesque” (158). Valentín II’s disgusting body and symbolic essence posits the child as a grotesque figure that advances moral, social, and physiological distortions of the reality he inhabits. This male heir surfaces as a grotesque child figure that ironically destroys the family that brings him into the world—the self-interested union of Torquemada and Fidela.

The birth and childhood of Valentín II mark one of the most odious characters Galdós has written. The boy’s grotesque nature sickens Rafael, Fidela, and Torquemada, though in different ways, along their paths to death. As Nicholas G. Round has suggested, death remains the great leveler in the *Torquemada* cycle (“Galdós” 128), and Valentín II arrives as the Grim Reaper that leads these three adults to it. This grotesque boy and his macabre function propose a reversal of the stereotypical child character depicted in the bourgeois novel. From Goethe’s Mignon to
Dickens’ Little Nell, children tend to die in the realist novel and move protagonists to tears or inspire them (Ferucci). An intriguing example arises in the case of Miles from Henry James’ *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). The governess struggles between caring for and hating Miles. She accidentally kills him when she embraces him with too much force, and is left devastated. In *Torquemada*, however, Valentín II visits death upon those that loathe and attempt to kill him.

As a grotesque figure, Valentín II enters the physical world and the narrative to disrupt. Quevedito, a doctor and Torquemada’s son-in-law, reveals the first visible depiction of the child and introduces the grotesque element into the tetralogy’s realist poetics. The doctor remarks to Cruz, after Torquemada has left the room:

> El chico es un fenómeno. ¿Ha reparado usted el tamaño de la cabeza, y aquellas orejas que le cuelgan como las de una liebre? Pues no han adquirido las piernas su conformación natural, y si vive, que yo lo dudo, será patizambo. Me equivocaré mucho, si no tenemos un marquesito de San Eloy perfectamente idiota (TP 94).

Quevedito’s frank observation inaugurates the grotesque in the narrative and into this bourgeois milieu. The doctor’s own name recalls the seventeenth-century writer of the grotesque Francisco de Quevedo. Strategically, the narrator holds back any visual of Valentín II’s body until this moment. Torquemada—the father previously desperate to have another son—refuses to visually engage Valentín II after his birth, which keeps the grotesque child figure out of sight. In the above quote, at three months old, Valentín II carries an oversized head, ears like a hare, knee-knock legs, and a presumed idiocy. The newborn’s physiological state remains at once unbelievable and real, humorous and repulsive—grotesque. Valentín II’s body contends naturalism, too ridiculous even for phrenology to explain. This physiological-literary phenomenon grows and distorts in the last two novels of the cycle. This child figure reaches a new extreme here, beyond the rickety semblance of Isidora’s *Riquín* and the yellow-hued foundlings in *La desheredada* (1881), and unlike the humorous animal metaphors used to
describe the foundlings in *Fortunata y Jacinta* that multiply like rabbits. This child figure arrives as both a literary and physiological distortion: a grotesque figure that disrupts the realist genre and a physiological anomaly that disgusts is characters.

Rafael becomes the first casualty affected by Valentín II’s ominous presence. Many have considered Rafael’s suicide as a reaction to the Torquemada-Fidela marriage, and place Valentín II as a secondary element in his death. Rafael views his brother-in-law as an intrusion upon the natural order of his aristocratic lineage, and considers the protagonist’s marriage to Fidela as morally wrong. The Torquemada vs. Rafael perspective explicates the conflation of social classes, but it overlooks the part Valentín II plays in Rafael’s death and the blow this child strikes against the class system.

A Rafael vs. Valentín II analysis reveals Rafael’s social and poetic deaths. His passing is foreshadowed, on the one hand, by the novels’ structure and, on the other, by his being replaced as the family heir. Structurally, the suicide of Rafael (former heir) closes the third novel, just as the death of Valentín (another former heir) closes the first. Valentín was set to inherit from his father and lead Madrid into the future. Valentín II—now that Torquemada and the Águila families have joined—becomes the rightful successor. This pattern of advancing and replacing male heirs situates Rafael socially and thematically against this grotesque child figure. The narrator describes the uncle’s internal struggle whenever he sees or hears his nephew Valentín II:

> en el gabinete o en el cuarto del chiquitín, las sensaciones, y aun los sentimientos del pobre ciego sufrían alteraciones bruscas, pasando del contento expansivo al desmayo hondísimo y aplanante. Era un variar continuo, como los movimientos de la veleta un día de turbión. Horas tenía Rafael, en las cuales gozaba extraordinariamente oyendo a [Fidela] en los trajes de la maternidad, horas en que aquel mismo cuadro de doméstica dicha (para él, más bien sonata) le llenaba el corazón de serpientes. Razones de esto: que antes del nacimiento de Valentinico, era Rafael el niño de la familia, y en la época de miseria, un niño mimado hasta la exageración . . . Vino al mundo con repique gordo de campanas el heredero de San Eloy (102).
Rafael’s overwhelming emotions recall a more sinister Juanito Santa Cruz, who also feels the threat of children replacing him. Rafael’s “alteraciones bruscas”—emotional peaks and valleys—move like an ominous *sonata* that Valentín II directs. This musical element, coupled with the young boy’s instances of laughter (*TP 102-7*), underscores the device of the grotesque employing laughter and odious sounds, here filling Rafael with metaphorical serpents. The idea of allowing a physiological phenomenon to reign in a new era disgusts Rafael: “Esto da asco. Si no viene pronto el cataclismo social, será porque Dios quiere que la sociedad se pudra lentamente . . . me ha nacido en el alma como un tumor . . . es que deseo que se muera” (104-5). Attempted infanticide appears twice in *Miau* (1888) as well, when Luisito’s mother and aunt attempt to kill the boy at different stages of their lives. Rafael offers a male analogy as an uncle that wishes but fails to murder his nephew. This failure of infanticide advances the force of the child in Galdós, especially in the grotesque Valentín II who leads adults to their deaths.

Valentín II is not physically present for Rafael’s death, yet his name and the talk of his absence absorb the scene. Pinto, the young family servant, walks Rafael to his bedroom. Torquemada lays his brother-in-law down and takes off his boots. For the first time, Rafael demonstrates deference to Torquemada, the blind man an example of “obediencia personificada” (*TP 132*), though this is a sign of his giving up rather than reconciling with the usurer. The narrator’s description of the death scene embodies the grotesque by satirizing Christ’s passion and alluding to Goya’s painting, distorting the emotional and visual elements of what should be a serious moment: “los brazos [de Rafael] rodeando la cabeza [de Torquemada], en actitud semejante a la de la maja yacente de Goya . . . una perfecta imagen de Cristo en el Sepulcro” (132). The narrator’s irony ridicules Rafael’s alleged and upcoming martyrdom of his suicide. In deference to the new family heir, Rafael makes one final request by jumping out of bed and
blurting out: “Se me olvidó darle un besito a Valentín” (TP 132). Torquemada forbids Rafael to see his nephew, though, and promises to kiss Valentín II for him, which the usurer avoids doing. “Valentín” is Rafael’s last word before he jumps to his death. Valentín II’s final act in his haunting sonata reinforces his lingering presence through his noticeable absence. Rafael fills this void with Valentín II’s name, just as Valentín II will fill Rafael’s position in the family. The grotesque child figure carries out its first fatality.

In *Fortunata y Jacinta*, the figura mortis of the child haunts and guides a series of acquaintances to their deaths. In the Torquemada cycle, the grotesque child figure leads related family members to their deaths. After Rafael, death comes to Valentín II’s mother, Fidela. Galdós draws out her death experience between the third and fourth novels, slowly hinting at her early death by alluding to a recurring illness and her strange childish demeanor. Some have viewed her as selfish and disloyal in matrimony, while others emphasize the predictive figures in her dreams. As a mother concerned with herself and material possessions, her death seems justified, one scholar has noted (Sherzer 36). Little has been written, though, regarding how the imagery of children, especially Valentín II’s grotesque nature, promotes Fidela’s characterization and death. She acts like a child, as well as indulges in reading novels and attending plays. Fidela applies this penchant for the fictive in her treatment of Valentín II by ignoring his grotesque nature and imagining him as a normal child until her death. She remains aesthetically distant from the reader and personally distant from reality.

Fidela’s path towards death becomes a hyper-metatextual event by developing distortions of the puerile and an obsession for fiction in her character. These two elements increase her emotional distance from reality and her husband. As previously noted, Fidela loves sweets like a child, but Torquemada grows tired of this antic and requests that she stop being so childish (TP...
4). Even in dreams, Fidela appears as a puerile version of herself, dreaming that she plays with dolls and that one of them calls out mamá and papá as it exchanges silver and gold for money in a currency exchange office (TP 30). The enlivening of unanimated yet human-looking objects foreshadows Fidela’s objectification of Valentín II. The exchange of money underlines Torquemada and Fidela’s vain union. Her affair with Rafael’s older friend Morentín, on the other hand, further galvanizes her character’s aloofness from her family and reality. Morentín—an aging Don Juan—echoes the Spanish playwright name Moratín and his El sí de las niñas (1801), this association strengthened by Fidela and Morentín’s age difference, which recalls the play’s motif of el viejo y la niña. The narrator underpins the histrionic in Fidela by his use of stage directions throughout the novel and by building Chapter 10 as a sequence of dialogues, in which her obsession with fiction surfaces. Fidela’s constant reading of romantic novels turns her into a Spanish Emma Bovary, indifferent that others like Rafael and Cruz notice her affair. The narrator explains: “Creyérase que no había en ella más prurito que vivir bien en el orden vegetativo, a cien mil leguas de todos los problemas psicológicos” (TP 74). Fidela’s vegetative state is predicated upon her passion for what is not real: the fiction of novels and plays, which she attempts to live out in her relationship with Morentín. Fidela imitates these fictions like she imitates children. She turns herself into a model réduit of other model réduits within the novel, a fiction within a fiction, just as the plastic talking dolls in her dream imitate human behavior. Fidela represents the decadence of free time, but also appears as a character almost as vulgar as—at this juncture—unborn son Valentín II.

The birth of Valentín II allows Fidela to apply her interest in fiction and the puerile upon him:
Vivía consagrada al heredero de San Eloy, que si en los primeros días no era para su madre más que una viva muñeca, a quien había que lavar, vestir y zarandear, andando los meses vino a ser lo que ordena la Naturaleza, el dueño de todos sus afectos, y el objeto sagrado en que se emplean las funciones más serias y hermosas de la mujer . . . Novelas, no volvió a leerlas, ni tiempo tenía para ello, pues no había hora del día en que no encadenase su atención alguna faena importante (TP 96).

In Fidela’s focalization of Valentín II, she objectifies him, and converts him into a live doll, similar to those in her dream. The narrator emphasizes this distortion of the baby with the satirical term “objeto sagrado.” Fidela remains in her fantasy world by covering Valentín II with a layer of fiction. This process of distancing herself and the child from reality consists of “interpreting” Valentín II’s savage language throughout the last two novels, which the narrator calls bárbaras modulaciones.23 This interpretation of oral language functions like her objectification of the boy: it masks the real problem of Valentín II—his grotesque nature of physiology and now language. Despite these ignorant gestures of fiction made upon the child by Fidela, her separation from reality moves her to a separation from life.

As Valentín II grows and his body further distorts into a grotesque figure, Fidela inches closer to and reaches death in a parallel fashion. The boy, now two years old, appears more animal-like and less human. This animalistic growth that coincides with the climax of Fidela’s death recalls one scholar’s note regarding Galdós’ pre-naturalist and spiritual-naturalist stages in novels like Doña Perfecta (1876) and El abuelo (1897), which states that the denouement in these works approaches by intensifying the animalization of antagonistic forces.24 What stands out in the Torquemada cycle, however, is that both Valentín II and his family appear as evil forces, despite the boy’s increasing animalistic physiology. Furthermore, the use of animalistic imagery to describe Valentín II serves less as a comparison or metaphor, and more as a vocabulary that literally describes the child’s physiological state. The reader is confronted with choosing between the lesser of two evils: the vain Torquemada-Águila family and the monster
that is Valentín II. An example of Valentín II’s growth in distortion is noticed by family friend Augustana: “[Valentín II] movía sus cuatro remos con animal deleite, echando babas de su boca, y queriendo abrazarse al suelo y hociquear en él . . . sin abandonar la posición de tortuga . . . hecho un sapo (21). The narrator adds a description of the boy’s attempt to walk like a human: “En dos [pies] andaba, tambaleándose, siempre que le permitieran el uso de un latiguito, bastón o vara, con que pegaba a todo el mundo despiadadamente” (TSP 22). The narrator and characters depend on images of animals to describe Valentín II’s reality, and the line between metaphor and metonymy blurs with each depiction. The grotesque child conjures a darker puer senex, a fusion of the young and the old, a distortion of humanity that points up Fidela’s own life distortions.

On Fidela’s deathbed, Valentín II emerges as a full animal-monster that guards his mother from Padre Gambonera and her family. Before this final scene, Fidela adopts Augustana’s strange mystic ideas on reincarnation, as if she will enjoy another chance to conceive a healthy son. At this point, she foreshadows her own death and resigns to Valentín II, like Rafael before, in her final moments on her deathbed (TSP 30-4):

Volvió Valentinico a subirse a la cama, y si poco antes, pudieron observar todos en sus ojuelos cierta dulzura… luego notaron en ellos la singularísima expresión ofensiva que de ordinario tenían . . . ¡Demonio de engendro! Le dio por echarse como un perro a los pies de su madre, y de amenazar con gruñidos a cuantos al lecho se acercaban, enseñando los dientes, y preparándose para morder al que se dejara, ya fuese su mismo papá, o su tía (42).

Valentín II transforms before the onlookers’ eyes, from gentle child to evil spawn. His crawling in front of the family and forbidding of their passage places the final schism between Fidela and reality. Valentín II covets his mother, but the reader wonders if he protects the ailing woman or wants to bite her. The child’s shape-shifting eyes recall Fidela’s dream where Valentín II takes his own eyeballs out: “¡Después [Valentín II] me los daba a mí para que se los guardara... ta... ca... pa... ca” (TSP 39). In this same dream, Fidela reproduces her son’s bárbaras modulaciones,
and looks into his eyes, repulsed by their grotesque essence. Both in visions and in reality,
Valentín II displays a distorted physiognomy that confronts and disgusts the adults that face him.
The imagery of eyes belonging to the plastic dolls and to Valentín II links to Fidela the macabre.
Her aesthetic distance reaches a permanent gap in this death. The kiss of deference Rafael tries to
give Valentín II before his passing is replaced by the boy’s dog-like snarl. Fidela remains quiet
and passes away, and Valentín II dispenses with his mother.

Many have examined Torquemada’s death as it pertains to his ambiguous claim of
“conversión” to the deal-making Gambonera when he dies (TSP 116). This section throws light
on how Valentín II shapes Torquemada’s experience of death, outside of the usurer-priest
relationship. Torquemada’s sequence of death demonstrates a reversal to Fidela’s by first
recognizing Valentín II’s grotesque nature but later ignoring it. The father’s initial awareness of
his son’s distorted physiology destroys the illusion of a perfect son he builds up in the middle
novels. The narrator describes the difficult process of letting go of this idyllic image:

Si [Torquemada] fijaba la atención en su hijo, se le caía el alma a los pies, viéndole cada
día más bruto . . . Pero ¡ay!, ya nadie creía en Valentinico; se le abandonaba a las
contingencias de la vida animal, y se admitía con resignación aquel contraste irónico
entre su monstruosidad y la opulencia de su cuna . . . Y penetrado de la imposibilidad de
tener un heredero inteligente y amable, el tacaño amaba a su hijo, sentía una unión a sí por
un afecto hondo, el cual no se quebraría aunque le viese revolcándose en un cubil y
comiendo tronchos de berza . . . (TSP 56).

Torquemada finally looks at his son and sees him for who and what he is, no longer avoiding eye
contact as he did when Valentín II is born. The protagonist witnesses the child’s physiological
and mental distortions worsen. The word resignación represents Torquemada’s deference to this
grotesque being, as Rafael and Fidela did in their final stages. When Torquemada attempts to
contact Valentín’s image from the portrait, he fails to conjure any séance: “le salía el segundo, el
pobrecito fenómeno de cabeza deforme, cara brutal, boca y dientes amenazadores, lenguaje
áspero y primitivo” (TSP 56). Valentín II’s grotesque physiognomy prevents the séance spell Torquemada used to experience through the beautiful physiognomy in the portrait of Valentín. The idea of bring his son back and perpetuating his lineage produces a monstrous version of Valentín and a male heir that appears unlikely to survive or to reproduce.

Valentín II consumes Torquemada’s financial and emotional capital, the cornerstones of his character in the tetralogy and in Galdós’ œuvre. Gambonera and Cruz attempt to persuade Torquemada to donate a third or more of his fortune to the Church while in this vulnerable state. The plan backfires, though, as the protagonist’s mental state diminishes. Torquemada leaves more money to his grotesque son—going back on his initial agreement—and uses Valentín II as catalyst to fight back against his sister-in-law and the conniving priest.

Torquemada’s last will and testament states: “Dejaba a sus hijos, Rufinita y Valentín, los dos tercios de su fortuna, designado para cada uno partes iguales” (106). On the other hand, Torquemada also begins to lose his sanity, and believes Cruz and Rufinita poison his food:

aquí no hay más persona decente que mi hijo, el pobre Valentín… es incapaz de hacerme daño, ni de desear mi fallecimiento . . . Se hará la liquidación de ganancias, para que esa sanguijuela de Rufinita no se chupe lo que no le pertenece . . . Todo lo que la ley permita, y algo más que yo agencie con mis combinaciones, para Valentín, ese pedazo de ángel bárbaro y en estado de salvajismo bruto, pero sin malicia . . . Ayer me decía: pa pa ca ja la pa, que quiere decir: “verás qué bien te lo guardo todo” (TSP 109).

Torquemada’s resignación to Valentín II resurfaces in his final moments, underlined by his act of interpretation (“Ayer me decía…”), similar to his wife’s “interpretations” of Valentín II’s save language. The protagonist’s use of the term “ángel bárbaro” emphasizes the duality and contradiction of the grotesque, in this case, what is pure and disgusting—Valentín II. This grotesque child figure becomes the site of negotiation for Torquemada’s wealth, social class, and will, culminating in this oral statement. Valentín II succeeds in damaging Torquemada, despite his claim (“es incapaz de hacerme daño, ni de desear mi fallecimiento”). The protagonist, in his
unstable mental state, attempts to mask the reality of his son’s nature, like Fidela before her death. Valentín II literally and figuratively absorbs Torquemada’s last remnants of material and emotional worth, the grotesque child figure killing off its third and final victim in the protagonist.

* * *

This chapter has contended that the structure of the Torquemada tetralogy centers on the image of the child and the protagonist’s relationship with his two sons. This observation reveals new connections between the tetralogy and Fortunata y Jacinta, particularly in how Torquemada and Jacinta embark on similar missions to find an heir and become parents. Upon closer study, the role of the child in these two characters advances different natures in their respective stories: Torquemada suffers the loss of a son, while Jacinta imagines losing a son. Both experiences give rise to mythological stories in which these characters fantasize of ways to reincarnate and reunite with their sons. Differentiating between the absence and the loss of a child provides the reader with a clearer lens to juxtapose these two novels, the way in which their narrators negotiate the images of children, and how Torquemada and Jacinta’s characters grow through their relation with the child figure. These subtle distinctions also disclose in Torquemada Galdós’ commitment to the renovation of story and character, rather than merely repeat earlier models.

The second section treated the much-ignored relationship between Torquemada and Valentín’s portrait. Pictorialist language and the influence—indeed the power—of the son’s physiognomy cultivate a deeper character in the protagonist while ironically removing him from major action in the novel. Torquemada’s delirious perception of Valentín’s portrait throws new light upon his pitiable turn as a victimized usurer. This father-portrait dialectic advances some of Galdós’ most imaginative and experimental work through which the novelist combines the
metatextual and the metaphysical—self-conscious narrative in the moving frames of Valentín’s image and Torquemada’s constant questioning of his life’s purpose.

The final section linked together, through the child figure, the deaths of Rafael, Fidela, and Torquemada. It suggested a distinction from *Fortunata y Jacinta*’s final three deaths that also involve children by establishing that these characters are family related and that they die disillusioned by the future that Valentín II destroys, rather than think of their childhood or of their own innocence. This section proposed Valentin II as a grotesque physiological and literary figure that operates within the material world and realist poetics. The presence and repulsion of Valentín II fleshes out in these three characters their innermost desires, while his physical nature exposes the limits of representation in Galdós. More complex than an allegorical symbol, this grotesque child figure disturbs the realist setting and provokes self-awareness in the adults that it sees to their deaths. Galdós continues his experimental approach in the final two novels of the cycle by testing character and genre through this child figure. Valentín II underscores the problems of society and of the novel that the Spanish novelist reinterprets, much like Dickens and James.
Notes

1 See Harriet Turner’s observations regarding Galdós’ organization in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, especially her section “Two-by-Fours” where the critic has explored the irony of the four male titular characters, their descent in protagonicity, and the novel’s own two eponymous female figures (*Galdós* 50-1).

2 Geraldine M. Scanlon has emphasized the constant inversion of social and religious moral values in *Torquemada*, while Diane F. Urey’s (*Galdós*) has written perhaps the most comprehensive treatise on Galdós’ use of irony in this and other works. Various critics have recognized the ironic and misleading nature of the series’ titles. *TH* shows Valentín suffering and dying, not his father as the narrator promised. *TC* describes Torquemada’s marriage to Fidela and his aptly named sister-in-law Cruz as his crosses to bear, and Torquemada as Cruz’s. *TP* depicts the protagonist and his social purification as the saving graces of the Águila family, while Gambonera “San Pedro” proves himself more of a manipulator and a capitalistic fundraiser than a saint in *TSP* (Boudreau 117, Scanlon 265-6, Urey *Galdós* 54).

3 Various critics have analyzed the metatextual and Cervantine elements in and between *Torquemada* and *Fortunata* (Ayala, G. Gullón 21, R. Gullón *Psicologías* 55, Shirley 83-5). Hazel Gold (*Reframing* 75-8) in particular notes their structural similarities in their opening and closing moments.

4 The narrator explains that she looks at Pituso “como si lo hubiera parido” (1, X, iii, 391), and holds Juan Evaristo as “la madre putativa llegaba a embelesarse con el artificioso recuerdo de haber llevado en sus entrañas aquel precioso hijo” (4: VI, xvi, 534).

5 Critics have observed death in a more general fashion in Torquemada’s experience, suggesting that the more death he suffers in the family the more the reader sympathizes with him, which is only compounded by Cruz’s and Gambonera’s ill-treatment of the protagonist (Boudreau, Río, Sherzer).

6 H. B. Hall advances the notion of a “creditor-debtor” relationship between Torquemada and the Christian God he envisions in *Torquemada en la hoguera*, the protagonist monetizing the spiritual (144, 157-8). Scanlon discovers the inverse, a “deification of the material,” in particular between *Torquemada en la cruz* and *Torquemada en el purgatorio*. Other critics have observed Torquemada’s constant and comical lexical confusion between the material and the spiritual world throughout the tetralogy (García Sarriá 105-6, Scanlon 270, Urey “Identities” and *Irony* 102).

7 Cabrejas has noted both pairs of sons in the novels as serendipitous (346); Money Gullón holds a similar observation regarding *Pituso* and Juan Evaristo (59). Peter G. Earle has emphasized that the tetralogy is best understood when both Valentín and Valentín II are considered as a binary (33).
Various critics highlight the brother’s negative physical gradation, the worst being Valentín II (Sherzer 37-8, Davies “Regeneración” 87, García Sarriá 105).

Teresa Fuentes Peris’ book, Galdós’ Torquemada Novels, has suggested the Valentín brothers as part of a social theory of “waste and profit” (3-7). The scholar understands Torquemada’s idea to have another child as an attempt to “recycle” his son, which underpins the novels’ utilitarian discourse (39, 53). Franco Moretti has recently that Torquemada is a victim of his times: once a hero of this class, the protagonist dies a ridiculous man (160-4).

Galdós uses a similar device in Fortunata y Jacinta, as a gypsy boy plays guitar and sings next to a blind man in the chapter “Una visita al cuarto estado.” For additional commentary, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation (37).

Scholars have viewed the opening as an anticipation of Torquemada’s tragicomedy (Del Río xlii, Earle 353-4, Sherzer 37). Others have emphasized the irony of the shifting narratorial voice. They believe it announces an exordium, yet subverts the protagonist’s story as a moral exemplum (Bly “La fosilización” 26, Shirley 77-9). The narrator passes from the pulpit to taking a seat next to the reader (Blanco Villalba 153), together watching unfold the tragedy of Valentín’s death and his father’s inability to comprehend charity (Gold “Galdós and Lamennais” 31).

Torquemada presents various moments that stress distance from plausibility when describing the child. An excellent example occurs when Valentín is said to jump around the room and embrace flames while muttering equations (TH 23). Tzvetan Todorov has described the uncanny as a character and/or narrator reaction to what feels abnormal, linked closer to the emotive reaction than to the question of material reality (47). A second reading of this passage, and others in the tetralogy, reveal metaphorical explanations by the narrator and delirious moments in Torquemada regarding Valentín and his portrait.

Graeme Tytler has suggested that physiognomy in English literature reveals key elements about the person, or narrator, that does the describing (42-3). While the describer believes his or her physiognomic information determines the described subject, the reader becomes aware of the describer’s attitudes, ideology, etc. Torquemada’s experience with the portrait produces similar results.

Wordsworth and the poets belonging to the Romantic movement used the child figure to explore an idyllic memory of the past. The image of the child was often brought to life from within the poet, a notion that many have analyzed (Coveney 34-41, Ferucci, Pattinson, Steedman 5-6).

Kayser believes the grotesque issues a structure that promotes an estranged world: “Yet its world is not estranged, that is to say, the elements in it which are familiar and natural to us do not suddenly turn out to be strange and ominous” (184). Michael J. Meyer offers clarification of Kayser’s notion of structure: “The grotesque tends to encourage contradictory interpretations and
confused categories and ultimately becomes an art form that recognizes its own self-contradiction and cultivates it as a literary principle” (iii). Mikhail Bakhtin and Kayser carried out a polemic over the grotesque that continues today. Wilson Yates’ *The Grotesque and Literature: Theological Reflections* synthesizes the various definitions and debates of the grotesque, providing a thorough etymological and archaeological rescue of the device.

16 The narrator is careful not to reveal Valentín II after his birth until Quevedito’s remark. Torquemada keeps his distance from his newborn when he enters the room to see Fidela after the baby arrives: “Entró a felicitar a su esposa. Después de hacerle muchos cariños, y de echar un vistazo al crío cuando le estaban lavando, volvió a salir, radiante” (*TP* 90). Torquemada avoids eye contact with his son, perhaps aware of his grotesque nature already, though the narrator fails to clarify what the protagonist sees.

17 Cabrejas has viewed Valentín II as a seed of cretinism and destroys the stability of Torquemada’s social reality (346), but the observation fails to address the physiological and literary extremes the boy’s character suggests.

18 Scanlon has suggested that Rafael dies a failed prophet who tries to warn the family of Torquemada’s infraction upon the Águila family, especially where Valentín II is concerned (272-4). Others underpin Torquemada’s quick social and financial ascent, pronouncing the triumph of the mediocre over the select and elite Rafael (Gold “Galdós and Lamennais” 30, Earle 29). Torquemada surfaces as a golden calf (*becerro de oro*), a false idol Rafael’s two sisters praise in order to accumulate wealth and title (Folley 46).

19 Gabriel Cabrejas notes a similar structural position of the Valentín brothers (as well as the *Pitusos* in *Fortunata y Jacinta*) at the conclusions of novels: “son los dos ángulos de sendos destinos, demarcan la frontera de los adultos en juego y realzan la sintomatología simbólica del rango social y personal de los protagonistas” (346). Cabrejas moves on after this remark and does not mention which adults or how the Valentín brothers affect them. It is a promising yet false start in the article, as the critic catalogues a series of children in Galdós’ works.

20 As Bly points out, Rafael is no longer a Christ figure in this scene (“Mirrors” 96).

21 Fidela’s death sequence—and later Torquemada’s—suggests a reversal to the Christian narrative of fathers sacrificing their sons, the mother and father dying instead. Genesis 22:2 reads regarding Abraham: “Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.’” Another reference to the father sacrificing the child in the Christian narrative includes God sacrificing his only son Jesus in the Gospels.

22 Critics have viewed Fidela as selfish and disloyal (Casalduero 115-7, Sánchez Barbudo 47), while others read her dreams as premonitory to her and the family’s demise (Earle 37, Weber 19).
Translation becomes another form of fiction-making for the new mother: “Fidela, única persona que... entendía [las bárbaras modulaciones], y de ello se preciaba como de poseer un idioma del Congo, ponía toda su buena voluntad en la traducción, y casi siempre sacaba respuestas muy bonitas” (TSP 25).

Vernon A. Chamberlin has written extensively on animal imagery in Galdós. In his latest, “Animal Imagery and the Protagonist in Selected Novels of Galdós’s Pre- and Post-Naturalistic Periods,” the scholar writes: “it is at this level of half-human and half-animal being (“arpías” and “esfinges”) that full-fledged animality finally bursts forth . . . [and] intensifying the climactic struggle between the forces of good and evil by means of animalization” (23).

Boudreau calls Gambonera cruel and deal-making, appearing especially brash in the deathbed scene (117). Earle finds Gambonera acts a counterpart to Torquemada en la hoguera’s Tía Roma, both pleading with Torquemada to listen to religious reasoning during moments of death in the novels (34-5). Del Río concludes that Gambonera’s selfish and pushy attitude make Torquemada more likeable throughout the fourth installment and in the death scene (xlv). Various critics debate the meaning of Torquemada’s infamous iteration of conversión as he dies. José Schraibman views it as an ironic and humorous wink at Torquemada’s lack of economic and religious understanding (882). Bly believes it reiterates the narrator’s own ambiguity and confusion (“La fosilización” 27), while others read Torquemada’s religious-economic lexical confusion as a return to his vulgar charity and capricious materialism from the first novel (Blanco Villalba 163-4, Sherzer 37).

Torquemada initially acquiesces: “Yo tengo fe, yo deseo salvarme, y me parece que lo demuestro dando el tercio disponible a la santa Iglesia” (TSP 99). Gambonera’s plan to drain Torquemada of his wealth erodes later with the protagonist’s humorous and pitiable religious-economic proclamation of conversión.
CHAPTER 4
LIVING WITH CHILDREN:
REALIST STRATEGIES IN LA DE BRINGAS AND MIAU

I. Introduction

*La de Bringas* (1884) tells the story of Rosalía Pipaón, wife to the miserly Francisco Bringas. He holds the position of *Oficial Primero de la Intendencia del Real Patrimonio* during the last months of Isabel II’s rule. Rosalía seeks independence from her husband, confronted with the constant social pressure from her friends to clothe shop and an extramarital affair with Manuel María José del Pez. The couple lives in the Royal Palace with their young children Isabelita and Alfonsín, above the Staterooms, after which they ironically name their disorganized and simple rooms. Galdós details the moral downfall of the Bringas as Spain succumbs to the Revolution of 1868, private and public spheres invoked in a parallel decline. This is a novel about perspective and vision (Bly “Perspective” 29), characters suffering from personal and social myopias, blind to the truths that lie outside the realm of their selfish desires.

Since the publication of Nicholas G. Round’s excellent article on the reflective nature of the Bringas children—an idea that demonstrates how Isabelita and Alfonsito emulate their parents’ moral flaws—critics have recognized the aesthetic distance children in general maintain from represented reality in this novel (“Rosalía”). The studies that have followed, however, focus on the dreams of the young girl that occur in Chapters 8 and 34 (Cabrejas, R. Gullón *Galdós*, Zamostny), while Round’s observations pertain specifically to Chapter 40. Despite the contribution of these works on the child in *La de Bringas*, none of them have examined the child beyond these three episodes. This chapter of the dissertation fills this gap in the literature by
analyzing children’s constant yet quiet presence—they rarely speak and have no interior monologue—in dramatic scenes. In particular, this chapter contends that the child figure serves as a point of access to the major action in the novel by being strategically placed at the opening and closing moments of key events. The child’s reflective nature extends beyond Chapters 3, 8, and 40 and into the rest of the story, mirroring scenes and setting up disputes between adults.

There are three sections in this chapter. The first shows how the narrator uses children as a *mise en abyme* in the novel. Expanding upon Jeffrey S. Zamostny’s observations that Isabelita’s dreams function as a *mise en abyme* of major events, this section proposes that children act out upcoming and past events in reality rather than in dreams. These miniature versions of major actions force the reader to acknowledge them as a commentary on the novel’s characters and themes. Section Two studies the remaining chapters. Critics have commented on the emulation that children carry out, but nothing has been said about how the narrator and characters manipulate the child as a framing device to set up interpersonal conflict. As a framing apparatus, the infant becomes an angle of vision, a narratorial pretense to enter and exit private and public settings, and a way to instigate disputes between adults. The final section analyzes the alleged similarities between the children in *La de Bringas* and Luisito Cadalso of *Miau* (1888), and offers a much needed contrast between the two novels. The central idea suggests that the narrator of *Miau* characterizes Luisito as a self-conscious entity with an interior life, unlike the aesthetically distant children in *La de Bringas*. This last section underscores Galdós’ ability to construct a complex character in a child and demonstrates the diverse roles of children in the novelist’s works.
II. Connecting the Narrator to the Reader: The Child Figure as *Mise en Abyme*

Critics have advanced the idea of the child’s reflective nature in *La de Bringas* in two ways: in children mimicking their parents and in Isabelita’s dreams that reproduce key events. Round has explored Isabelita and Alfonsín’s imitative qualities of Chapter 40 by underpinning how the girl reflects Francisco’s tidiness and hoarding—“static futility”—and how the boy mirrors Rosalía’s capricious energy for change and adventure—“dynamic futility” (“Rosalía” 43-7). It has also been argued that the children of Tellería, Lantigua, Pez, and Sánchez Botín reflect their parents’ flaws, which put these adults’ actions into perspective, rather than develop naturalism’s laws of heredity in the child (Bly Pérez Galdós 81). On the other hand, many critics have mentioned Isabelita’s dreams of Chapters 8 and 34, but have failed to analyze them fully until Zamostny’s recent study. Zamostny analyzes Isabelita’s dreams in connection with her gastronomical complications. The critic suggests that Isabelita’s visions reinterpret the events of the Maundy Thursday celebration and her time in the baths of the Manzanares with her mother. These dreams and her subsequent vomiting operate as a *mise en abyme* of these events, the narrator predicting and commenting upon Rosalía’s philandering and the impending Bourbon expulsion (65-7). However, surprisingly little critical attention has been paid to children’s reflective qualities outside of Chapter 40 and the dreams of Chapters 8, 34.

This section explains how children in *La de Bringas* act out scenes before and reenact them after they take place, working as a *mise en abyme* of events, and serving as a commentary by the narrator. These miniature “before and after” emulations carried out by children behave like bookends to episodes, placed on either side of them. They also become the narrator’s version of child’s play, his interaction with and transformation of the child’s figure. The strategic location of the child figure provokes two elements in the text. First, their position on both sides
of a scene cushions metonymy—the actual event—between metaphors—the instances of mirroring enacted by the child figure. Put differently, the *mise en abyme* advanced by the child figure creates a diamond pattern, or inward-outward-inward motion, in the reading between illusion and allusion. Second, the gesture of children echoing a scene, which is overlooked by the characters but noted by the narrator, underpins the informal telling of the story and suggests the *mise en abyme* as a form of communication between the reader and the narrator.

Lucien Dällenbach’s foundational work on the *mise en abyme*, which explores André Gide’s idea that a secondary narrative can reflect the primary narrative, suggests this device as a twinning activity that installs one representation within another (*The Mirror* 7, 18). Dällenbach has explained that the *mise en abyme* functions as an “intertextual résumé,” or an utterance that refers to other utterances (*The Mirror* 55). The scholar proposes several helpful terms to examine this phenomenon in literature: “prospective,” “retrospective,” and “retro-prospective,” which reflect future, past, or both kinds of events respectively (*The Mirror* 60). In a later study, though, Dällenbach returns to his initial observations to emphasize that the *mise en abyme* works through the active participation of the reader. This active reader automatically fills in the narrative suspension that the *mise en abyme* provokes and increases the intelligibility of the text (“Reflexivity” 435-40). Realist literature in particular calls on the reader to pretend with the text, because it must convince the reader of its factuality while it works through the medium of fiction (*All is True* x, 65). In *La de Bringas*, the child figure demands the participation of the reader through its function as a *mise en abyme*, as operates between the referential setting of Madrid and the metaphorical episodes it reproduces.

The reader relies on the narrator to complete this line of communication between the child and the *mise en abyme*, but the narrator’s ambivalent presentation of material and of
himself put his reliability in question. Just as the previous two chapters noted regarding *Fortunata y Jacinta* and *Torquemada*, *La de Bringas’* narrator opens his story with self-recognition, yet feigns omniscience in other moments as well. Critics have expressed their distrust of this unpredictable narrator, which stems from, for example, his alleged disappearance in Chapter 6, his reappearance in Chapter 27, and his political opportunism as the *Septembrina* explodes and the new *Junta* takes over.8

Nevertheless, this situation of narratorial distrust can be turned by understanding the novel as a partial retelling of a story that is shared with the reader. The presence of a self-conscious narrator breaks the fourth wall and admits the reader into the process of fiction (Furst *All is True* 4). The narrator breaks down this wall in *La de Bringas* by using the child as a *mise en abyme* to communicate directly with the reader. The plasticity of children, underscored by their metaphoric charge, exposes the narrator’s idiosyncratic style and, more importantly, his personal attitude toward what he narrates. The manner of telling and commenting upon reality outweighs the matter of reality, especially in the child as a *mise en abyme*. The narrator cements his personal approach to telling by maintaining circularity, or patterns, between his opening and closing lines of the novel.9 He begins *La de Bringas* with an uncertain description of the cenotaph that Francisco builds: “Era aquello… ¿cómo lo diré yo?” (53); and finishes the story of Rosalía with similar ambivalence, having described her pride in being able to provide for herself as a prostitute without ever mentioning the word or profession directly. He distances himself one final time to support his claim: “oí esto mismo de sus propios labios… en recatada entrevista” (305). Ricardo Gullón has written that the entire “novela se escribe para [el lector], se le cuenta a media voz, como amistosa confidencia” (Introducción 23), but it is this final secret meeting—a narratorial aside—that signals the circularity of the text and confirms its whispered essence to the
reader. The narrator is always looking for the right words, changing his angles of vision and his sources. The child as a *mise en abyme* becomes the narrator’s child’s play, a device through which the narrator anxiously primes and reiterates his material.

This narratorial anxiety to reaffirm elements of the story through the image of the child arrives as a retro-prospective *mise en abyme* between Chapters 2 and 3. These episodes detail Pez and the narrator’s labyrinthine voyage through the Royal Palace. It should be noted that Chapter 1, aside from the introduction of the personal narrator, is comprised solely of a description of Francisco’s cenotaph.\(^\text{10}\) This opening sequence challenges the traditional realist frame of character and place, mentioning only the first of these two elements in the final sentence of the first chapter. Chapters 2 and 3, then, serve to transition the scope of vision from the metaphoric minutia of the cenotaph to the large-scale and referential system the Royal Palace, the month of April 1868, and recurring characters. These specific references of setting, time, and reappearing characters, which link to the previous novel *Tormento*, reorient the reader and the story.\(^\text{11}\) *La de Bringas* fails without the preceding *Novelas contemporáneas* and the allusions to historical and contemporary information.\(^\text{12}\) Interestingly, though, the narrator repeats this fictional-factual paradigm of reference by using children to mirror the same information he has just presented. In the following scene, the narrator and Pez are lost in the Royal Palace and come to a stop to observe something curious:

> Vimos media docenas de chicos que jugaban a los soldados con gorros de papel, espadas y fusiles de caña. Más allá, en un espacio ancho y alumbrado por enorme ventana con reja, las cuerdas de ropa puesta a secar nos obligaban a bajar la cabeza para seguir andando. En las paredes no faltaban muñecos pintados ni inscripciones indecorosas. No pocas puertas de las viviendas estaban abiertas, y por ellas veíamos cocinas con sus pucheros humeantes y los vasares orlados de cenefas de papel. Algunas mujeres lavaban ropa en grandes artesones, otras se estaban peinando fuera de las puertas, como si dijéramos, en medio de la calle (68).
This retro-prospective *mise en abyme* reflects the narrowing vision and physical construct of the palace, as Pez and the narrator duck below the drying clothes and notice the sharp contrast of light and darkness. The barred window, which gives an ironic impression of a cell, and open doors arrange an outdated and plebeian *cuadro de costumbres* satirically placed within the Royal Palace, speaking to the backward and cyclical nature of the monarchy. The children that play war point up the impending revolution, a wink to the reader and warning to characters that the war brews from within the palace walls. The plasticity of the scene increases with the nearby doll figures drawn on the canvas-like wall, culminating in this series of meta-frames. Like the street boys that also dress in paper hats and carry toy weapons in *La desheredada* (1881), children become “una página de historia contemporánea, puesta en aleluyas en un olvidado rincón de la capital” (*LD* 150). The children-as-toy soldiers in *La de Bringas* play in a forgotten corner as well, randomly found and quickly dismissed by the two observers. Gabriel Cabrejas has noted how Galdós tends to place children in the chorus of the historical stage in his *Episodios Nacionales*, anonymous and collective (340). This strategy appears here too, the plastic child repeating and reminding the reader of history’s socio-political import. Furthermore, the children’s toys and game of war predict the humorous depiction of the revolutionaries in Chapter 49 that shoot at pigeons instead of people when the Revolution explodes (*LdB* 301). After first using the cenotaph to predict the moral and political dilemmas of the novel, and reorienting the reader with referential details, the narrator flushes the reader’s vision inward once more toward this *mise en abyme* of children acting out details that have already been laid out and foreshadowing the conclusion of the novel.

The narrator works tirelessly to communicate meaning to the reader through the image of the child. The location of the cenotaph in the first chapter and the above retro-prospective *mise
en abyme in Chapter 3 squeeze Pez and the narrator between two metaphorically charged sequences. Francisco’s art object, a memorial to Pez’s deceased daughter, contains the hair of the dead Juanita and of her living sister Rosa, which had been kept in a pinkish-blue candy box next to other memorabilia (LdB 58). The hair of these daughters serves as one of the many “emblemas del morir y del eterno vivir” that the narrator notes in the cenotaph (LdB 53). As scholars have observed, these combined human elements suggest melancholia and maternal bereavement, a figura mortis of the child.14 The cenotaph, the candy box, and their contents initiate the motif of storing one story within another. It is a static version of the child as a prospective mise en abyme—inanimate references to children instead of the animated children that are objectified—full of the theme of death that foreshadows the demise of the Bringas’ household and of Spain’s monarchy. The narrator’s reliance on the image of the child can be well understood through his own words. He describes how the Bringas siblings play and fight over dolls: “No miremos con indiferencia el retoñar de los caracteres humanos en estos bosquejos de personas que llamamos niños. Ellos son nuestras premisas; nosotros ¿qué somos sino sus consecuencias?” (253). Beyond Round’s notion of children reflecting their parents’ personalities, the narrator paints a grimmer version of Wordsworth’s line “The Child is the Father of the Man.” Alfonso and Isabelita’s games and the anonymous children playing war spotted by the narrator and Pez function as a kind of “Ring Around the Rosie” that underscore the decline of adults and society.15 The narrator believes in the child as an emissary of providence. In these initial chapters, he depends on the child figure to guide the reader’s process of reading, constantly, almost nervously, surrounding events with the image of the child as an in-text commentary.

Chapters 7 and 8 contain some of the strongest catalyst moments of the child as a mise en abyme. Zamostny has considered Isabelita’s dream in the latter episode similar to the Ekphrasis
of the cenotaph in the opening chapter, relying on Labanyi’s observation of it as a “false start”: the dream, like the cenotaph, continues to defer the introduction of the novel’s central conflict of Rosalía’s temptation and clothe shopping of Chapters 9 and 10 (“The Problem” 29). As dreams that repeat and anticipate events, Zamostny believes that Isabelita’s visions in both Chapters 8 and 34 contribute little to the narrative action (64). However, the reader should return to Chapter 7 to discover how children, amidst the action of the novel, enact a retro-prospective mise en abyme:

¡ay Dios mío!, ¿quién podría contar las risas, los escondites, las sosadas, el juego inocente, la tontería deliciosa de aquellas frescas almas que acababan de abrir sus corolas al sol de la vida? Las breves cláusulas que ligeras se cruzaban eran, por un lado, lo más insulso del perfeccionado lenguaje social, y por otro el ingenuo balbucir de las sociedades primitivas. En todos estos casos se repite incesantemente el principio del mundo, esto es, los pruritos de la Creación, el querer ser . . .

Y ellas lo tomaban tan al pie de la letra [el bailar] que corrían danzando de Gasparini a la Saleta y a saltos se metían en el Camón y en Columnas. Pues digo... cuando les daba por revolverle a Isabelita sus muñecas, era lo de empezar y no concluir . . . graciosísimo simulacro de la vida doméstica, vistiendo y desnudando mujercitas de porcelana y estopa, arropando bebés con ojos de vidrio y moviendo los trastos de una cocina de hojalata o de un gabinete de cartón. Lo que embargaba el ánimo de todas, llegando hasta producir rivalidades, era una muñeca enorme que D. Agustín Caballero le había mandado a Isabelita desde Burdeos… movía los ojos, decía papá y mamá y tenía articulaciones para ser colocada en todas las posturas [emphasis added] (82-3).

The narrator builds a composite portrait of a happy family and friends, though he brushes this cuadro with a layer of aesthetic distance with the exaggerated sights and sounds of children that run, play, and dance through each room. The narrator lifts the children from this domestic setting—an instance of metonymy—and delivers them into a metaphorical-satirical realm that, similar to the room names that ironically denigrate the Bringas, comment upon the family and predict future events. This sequence establishes Rosalía’s personal Garden of Eden, from which she is expelled between Chapters 9 and 10. It also underpins what the Bringas never truly had, always feign, and will forever lose: domestic bliss. The narrator employs these children as breves
cláusulas that encapsulate the social and personal problems of the adult world, and as signifiers of querer ser that allude to the family’s constant struggle to be and look like a respectable member of the bourgeoisie.

As a retro-prospective mise en abyme, these children allow the reader to peak back at prior events and anticipate future ones. Isabelita’s dressing and playing with dolls, for instance, anticipates Rosalía’s future problems with shopping and her penchant for dressing up her own daughter in new clothes. The reader cannot miss the mention of Rosalía’s cousin Agustín, her original tempter (Bly “Disorder” 393, Miller 191), and the sender of the giant doll that acts and looks nearly human. The children fight over the strange toy person, just as Pez, Francisco, and the narrator will all ultimately fight over and bed Rosalía. The doll points back and forth between novels too: back toward the amorous conflict in Tormento, and forward to the financial problems and love affair of Rosalía that stem from her spending addiction. The doll’s moving plastic eyes anticipate Francisco’s real and feigned blindness as well. Galdós returns to the use of children and dolls as predictive figures in Torquemada en el purgatorio (1894), when Fidela dreams of dolls saying the same words of mamá and papá, which foreshadow the decline of her and Torquemada’s own marriage. In contrast, the narrator here places the Bringas’ dream-like domestic experience into a contiguous material reality.

The final cushioned scene in the text positions Rosalía and Pez between two prospective mise en abyme sequences in which Isabelita and Alfonsín ironically emulate these adults’ illicit relation. At this juncture, the narrator has allowed character development and narrative action back into the fold. Rosalía succumbs to the pressures of Milagros and the beautiful clothes sold at Sobrino Hermanos (LdB 91-9); she increases her purchases, and attends the theater with the flirting Pez while Francisco sleeps (LdB 106-17). In this next scene, and as an excuse to improve
her children’s health, Rosalía takes Isabelita and Alfonsín to the Jardín del Retiro for fresh air with Pez. The narrator signals an immediate and ironic distance in the scene by mentioning the artificial constructs that lead into and make up this supposedly natural park: “el colmo del artificio” that represents Fernando VII (LdB 125).18 Inspired by their surroundings, Rosalía and Pez coquet:

y a ratos casi eran tan chiquillos como los chiquillos, es decir, que charlaban atolondradamente,… mientras los niños jugaban al escondite entre las espesas matas. . . . Les vi varias veces cuando regresaban, ella cargada con un ramo de lilas, el velo un poco echado atrás, cual si sacrificara la compostura a la libertad de la vida campestre, el rostro algo encendido por la agitación del paseo y la vehemencia del discurso; él cargado con otro ramo suplementario (125-6).

Al pasar del Retiro a las calles, los paseantes recobraban su compostura. Iban delante los niños dándose las manos. Los mayores, a la vista de la población regular, cesaban en aquellas confidencias que parecían fruto sabroso de la amenidad campesina. Era como pasar de un país libre a otro donde todo es correcto y reglamentario (128).

The narrator purposefully introduces the sequence with a hyper-aesthetic and satirical locus amoenus that underpins the moral problem of Rosalía and Pez’s relationship. The couple’s withdrawal from the Royal Palace to this nature represented as plastic recalls the pastoral genre, but with a Cervantine lens. Rosalía and Pez act like children while the actual children parallel the adults’ philandering. At the same time, the little ones play games in the dense bushes. The proximate location of the children to the adults, of mise en abyme to event, energizes the narrow space between the material and the metaphorical. When the narrator suddenly acknowledges his presence in the sequence, as when he details Rosalía’s rosy cheeks, the inward-outward effect achieves a simultaneous effect: the distance to the event shortens, but the aesthetic distance of the scene increases. As they leave, Rosalía and Pez carry a tree branch each, naïve love mementos. The narrator buttons the sequence with Isabelita and Alfonsín walking ahead of them, hand in hand as a miniature version of the twosome. The children bookend the event, but not
until the opening of the following chapter (“Al pasar del Retiro a las calles…”). The narrator exploits Isabelita and Alfonsito to both underline the naivety of the event and to close the Retiro account, rather than rely on the closural value of opening a new chapter.

The simultaneity of the event and *mises en abyme* creates a juxtaposition of mirrors, childish adults and adult-like children reflecting and feeding off of each other. The narrator’s Wordsworthian approach to children throughout the novel culminates in this final series. The narrator’s child’s play culminates in a hyperactive *locus amoenus* that deliberately foreshadows and underlines one of the primary conflicts of the story: Rosalía’s tumultuous relationship with Pez. The narrator’s interruption (“Les vi varias veces cuando regresaban”) restructures the sequence, because it forces the reader to acknowledge the imperfect tense of the event(s): this type of secret liaison between the couple has occurred multiple times. In his presentation of key narrative action, the narrator cannot stop himself from repeating and reemphasizing its significance with retro and prospective *mises en abyme* through children. These initial chapters showcase Galdós’ mastery of distance and darkness, which stimulate the reader’s imagination (Bly “Perspective,” Wright “Imagery”). Thematics notwithstanding, these multiple *mise en abyme* also manifest the narrator’s anxiety for wanting to get across to the reader the upcoming familial-romantic tragedy of Rosalia and Francisco, enframed within the declining Royal Palace. This narrator, one of Galdós’ least confident and most self-conscious, constructs a well-organized story that is predicated upon his own overzealous manner of re-telling.

III. Setting the Scene: the Child as Framing Strategy

The narrator abandons the child as a *mise en abyme* after Chapter 17, save Isabelita’s second dream in Chapter 34 and the scene in Chapter 40 where the Bringas children emulate their parents’ personalities. Instead, the figure of the child is used to frame interpersonal conflict
and setting for the remainder of the novel. Many scholars, as noted in the above section, have addressed the narratorial risks taken in Chapter 1, where metaphor absorbs referential reality. Hazel Gold has suggested that Francisco’s cenotaph is figuratively worthless and a criticism on Madrilenian society (Reframing 24-5). This opening instance advances an equivocal narratorial voice and an ironic proximity to the reader (Nimet 93, Urey Galdós 32-3). One scholar has aptly noted how the first chapter problematizes closure in the novel, which parallels the failure of social institutions (Labanyi “The Problem” 25-6). However, these and other studies have overlooked how the narrator establishes character conflict and setting outside of this initial chapter in La de Bringas. Without this knowledge, the critic fails to understand the intricate layout of one of Galdós’ most experimental yet organized texts of his Novelas.

Children become, this section argues, dedicated framing devices after Chapter 17, once the narrator ceases to use them as a mise en abyme. These children promote the illusion of referential setting and set up interpersonal conflict between characters. The Bringas children and their young peers, often glossed over in the story, enter and exit dramatic moments to establish angles of vision and to turn the action. By under-characterizing these infants, the narrator takes advantage of their constant presence in domestic and public settings to develop major and minor characters around them instead. When contiguous to narrative action, the child figure’s function in the narrative outweighs its presence in the story. This realist strategy allows the narrator to move between multiple perspectives and physical environments. The neglected infant allows adult characters to manipulate its image for personal gain as well. The child figure in La de Bringas points outward, advancing narrator, character, and story. Three main points organize this section. First, it examines the narrator’s arrangement of the child figure in opening and closing sequences in domestic and public settings. Second, it explores how the narrator and characters
both use the infant as a pretense to move between these physical spaces. The final portion
examines how adults use the child and its image to manipulate others with success and failure,
exploiting the limits of the child figure’s framing capacity. In all, this section sheds light on
Galdós’ strategy in constructing individual scenes and characters.

*La de Bringas*, understood as an organized aesthetic experiment and as a partial retelling
of a story, displays a narrator who takes great creative freedom and employs children as “living
metaphors” to increase “the reader’s awareness of the theme and unity of the novel” (Round 43-5).
The observation that Isabelita’s dreams store the narrator’s opinions of characters and events,
put forth by Bly and Zamostny earlier, underscores how children remain at the narrator’s service.
If description and focalization preserve narrative and rely on visual information (Hamon 168),
the figure of the child bears this information forward in *La de Bringas*. As with the child as a
*mise en abyme*, the child as a framing device strengthens the narrator-reader contract by
exposing how the narrator and characters manipulate the position of children to arrange a scene.

Scholars have debated the paradox of the realist frame of producing fiction while
claiming reality. On the one hand, the realist novel has been viewed as mimetic of the world it
represents (Auerbach), and as reflecting the socio-political conflict of its time (Lukács, R.
Williams). Following in the footsteps of D. A. Williams, Peter Brooks’ recent work, *Realist
Vision*, has upheld realism as a scaled-down version of visual reality. These approaches,
however, cannot account for the implausible nature of the child figure, whether plastic like in *La
de Bringas* or grotesque as with the *Pituso* and Valentín brothers. The image of the infant
communicates symbolic information to the reader before it concedes to a verisimilar personality
or body. Conversely, structuralism and post-structuralism have examined the realist novel as a
self-contained object. Under these guises, realism cannot escape its own self-referentiality and
fails to reproduce reality. Realist literature belongs in a lower hierarchical position to painting in
the arts; it “de-depicts” what a painter captures into a pastiche (Barthes S/Z 54-5). Deconstruction has extended the distance between reality and fiction through the frame as a parergon, an expanding abyss that divides inside from outside, internal from external phenomena. The child figure could be seen to benefit from such aesthetic distance. This idea of complete self-containment, nonetheless, would relieve it from the illusion of human referentiality it requires to interact with character and setting.

Ambivalent narrators like La de Bringas’ sway self-consciously between represented reality and the fictional nature of their story. They blur framing distinctions and acknowledge both sides. More recently, studies have advocated a middle ground between the looming presence of reality in and its infinite distance from the realist text. The narratorial gesture of declaring reality in fiction, Lilian R. Furst has suggested, allows past social situations to bridge with verbal signs. Factuality and fictionality overlap rather than separate in order for these two elements to materialize in the reader’s imagination (24, 48). The novel becomes a “socioformal” conjunction, a juncture between reference and structure that addresses the problem of characterization and position (Woloch 12-4). Social reference and poetics rely on each other in the realist novel. They cannot work apart. The child figure in La de Bringas provides this conjunction of character and structural dynamics. Despite its under-characterization, the infant-as-figure orients character and setting for the reader. Paradoxically, the child figure’s presence in a scene establishes the verisimilitude of place, while it remains aesthetically distant from what or whom it enframes.

As a framing device, the child provides a natural opening for the narrator to enter a domestic space in this novel, shortening the distance between narrator and protagonists. Children
stand by doorframes, rush in and out of rooms and hallways, and inaugurate dramatic scenes between adults. In the following episode, the Bringas’ children stand still in the doorway, and stage Francisco’s initial bout with blindness:

Junto a la puerta estaban Isabelita y Alfonsín, aterrados, mudos, sin atreverse a dar un paso: el pequeño con el pan de la merienda en la mano, masticándolo lentamente; la niña seria, con las manos a la espalda, mirando el triste grupo de sus padres consternados. Rosalía les mandó acercarse. Bringas les palpó, dioles mil besos, lamentándose de no poderles ver, y augurando que ya no les vería nunca. Más lágrimas derramó el pobrecito en aquel cuarto de hora que en toda su vida anterior, y la Pipaón, considerando aquella súbita desgracia que Dios le enviaba, la conceptuó castigo de las faltas que había cometido (147-8).

The narrator situates the children in the entryway. Their position opens into the room where Francisco lies in desperate state. The narrator tells the reader that the siblings are terrified, but shifts his attention, and the reader’s, toward Francisco by skipping their emotional interior altogether. This speaks to the frustration expressed by a scholar like R. Gullón, who has viewed Isabelita as an unconscious creature that appears next to action (Introducción 22). The narrator manipulates Isabelita’s position in particular. She stands with her hands behind her back and leans in to observe, a portal for the reader to lean in as well. The narrator gains focalization, while the reader receives a wealth of information: the melodrama of Francisco’s reaction, Rosalía’s guilt for philandering, and the unspeakable truths she cannot tell her husband, especially under these circumstances. The narrator privileges the Bringas children’s narratorial utility over their emotions. He exploits their location, strategically placed at the doorframe, to gain point of view, establishing the scene through their ready access to private settings.

Still children by doorframes set up scenes, while those that run through them and hallways increase tension and punctuate sequences. One instance occurs when the Bringas children and their friends run through the palace halls, described as flying pigeons, moments before Refugio’s character introduces a new element of conflict in Chapter 26 (LdB 180-3).
Another arises when Isabelita and Alfonsín run themselves into a sweat around Rosalía and Pez as the illicit couple walks along the terrace (LdB 190). The children’s running underpins the stress of the couple’s unconsummated relationship. At the moment when Pez offers himself to Rosalía, Isabelita reappears at the door and breaks the romantic scene. The young girl announces Francisco’s improved eyesight: “Al llegar a la puerta de la casa, salió Isabelita al encuentro de su mamá gritando con inocente júbilo: ‘¡Papá ve, papá ve!’” (191). In Chapter 36, Pez advances his intentions once again, while Rosalía weighs the offer against her desire for shopping, now that Milagros has paid more than half her debt back: “Pero la entrada de los niños fue como intervención de la divina Providencia en el asunto” (230). Children can close a sequence as well as initiate it. Here, they act as a kind of poetic justice on Rosalía’s behalf as she tries to make moral decisions, guided as she might be by her appetite for shopping. The child figure enframes domestic settings by leading the reader’s vision in and out of a sequence with ease, the home an infant’s natural environment where it can come and go.

Children frame public as well as private space for the narrator, as parents shuttle them between these two types of places. During the rituals of Maundy Thursday, the child figure provides the scene’s angle of vision. The narrator announces this day and the spring of 1868 as one of the most unsettling, foreshadowing the September Revolution of the same year. He follows this comment with describing how children tease each other and run. Along with Isabelita: “Las chicas de Lantigua y la Sudre invadieron desde muy temprano la habitación de doña Tula” (84). This puerile invasion parallels the domestic and political turmoil that has begun to boil over in and outside of the Royal Palace. The children’s parents lock the invading children in the palomar of the chapel, symbolically linked to a military lexicon and pigeons once more. The child figure, like these birds and the socio-domestic problems, are tucked away out of sight.
They also enjoy privileged angles of vision similar to the pigeons. Their position in the *palomar* grants a top-down slant toward the “comedia palaciega” that ensues between their families (*LdB* 86). This *comedia* is propelled by the self-congratulating evangelicalism of the Queen. These children intensify and parallel the socio-personal tension of the novel. They also frame the high angle of sight needed to view this visual information regarding Maundy Thursday and the Bringas’ eroding marriage. Isabelita and her friends look on with Cándida as chaperon. The girl turns toward the woman: “Mira, mira mi mamá. ¿La ves con su vestido melocotón? Está junto al señor de Pez, conversando con él” (87). Isabelita might not fully understand what this scene implies, but her verbalization of what she observes confirms to the reader the importance of Pez and Rosalía’s exchange.

Galdós’ mastery of distance and visual contrasts stimulates the reader’s imagination, as eluded to earlier, here reinforced by the use of the child as an agent of vision. The children’s angle of sight advances the familial-romantic tragedy of Rosalía and Francisco as well as socio-political turmoil. The children’s frame of vision, along with Isabelita’s comment, prepares the visual stimuli that the young girl’s dream repeats that same evening by enclosing a domestic drama within a greater public drama of the falling Bourbon monarchy. Some scholars have speculated whether or not this and her next dream express Isabelita’s emotions (Labanyi 32, Wright “Secret” 84). Others, however, have emphasized these visions as premonitory, suggesting a greater presence of the narrator in the construction of the dreams’ imagery (Cabrejas 339-41, Zamostny 64). The narrator understands his reader as someone who consumes fiction in *La de Bringas* (Urey *Galdós* 28), and overfeeds his customer like the young girl overeats and overdrinks Doña Tula’s meal. The narrator manifests a hyperactivity of visual information through his restless narratorial voice by repeating in the young girl’s dreams what has already
taken place. The children’s initial observations provide ironic commentary on the scene, while Isabelita’s grotesque reproduction of it suggests the narrator’s meaning-full and anxious re-

presentation of the material.

The narrator cooperates with other characters when using the child figure as a pretense to move from one physical setting to another, rather than always act alone. Together they exploit the child in a way that benefits narrator and character. Rosalía uses her children as an excuse to leave the palace, for instance, as when she and Pez take Isabelita and Alfonsín to the Jardín del Retiro on the basis that the fresh air will improve the children’s health. The above section studied this specific scene as a dual mise en abyme that cushions the adult couple between Isabelita and Alfonsín as imitative agents. This sequence can also be understood, though, as an example of how adults and the narrator work together to arrange a scene by manipulating the position of the child. As characters, Rosalía and Pez use the child as an excuse to move from the domestic to a public setting, where they can engage their flirting with more ease. The narrator, on the other hand, employs the image of these children as a mise en abyme to build a scene full of ironic commentary. The children’s act of mirroring the adults recalls Round’s idea of Alfonsín imitating his mother’s “dynamic futility” (46-7), but both siblings manifest Rosalía’s capricious energy for change and adventure in this sequence. The children’s physical and aesthetic distance—they play by the bushes—also acts as an enclosure to the adult’s own games. Like the running and teasing of children in previous examples, tension rises as children and adults parallel each other in close proximity. Rosalía and Pez rely on the Bringas children as a pretense to get to the park, while the narrator counts on these same children to comment on and conclude the account instead of the closural value of the new chapter.
Children used by the characters as framing devices—without or with minimal narrator intervention—appear less successful than in the case of the narrator-character cooperation. Francisco and Rosalía fail to coordinate their separate messages regarding Isabelita and Alfonsín, Francisco in what he says and Rosalía in how she visually presents the children in public. Francisco appeals to the family doctor Teodoro Golfín for leniency on his medical bills: “¡Ay, señor don Teodoro, toda mi vida le bendeciré a usted por el bien que me hace, y más le bendigo a usted por mis hijos que por mí, pues los pobrecitos no tendrán que comer si yo no tengo ojos con que ver!” (212). Meanwhile, Rosalía reacts to her husband’s reproach on clothes shopping and forbidding their travel outside of Madrid: “quería vengarse de su destino engalanando a su prole; ya se había provisto de figurines, y proyectaba cosas no vistas para que Isabelita y Alfonso publicaran en la Plaza de Oriente, entre la festiva república de niños, el buen gusto de su opulenta mamá” (226). The contradiction of the verbal and visual messages made public introduces a lapse in communication between the couple and in how these messages are received by a wider audience. Golfín picks up on these inconsistent “signos sociales” (*LdB* 213), which leads him to pressure the couple to pay their medical bills. The domestic and public spaces these children help their parents arrange initially in their favor ultimately creates an abyss too wide for the child figure to cover. The distrust that critics have expressed toward the narrator and the visual in the novel, as noted earlier, can be rehabilitated in the child figure. The image of the child and its limits point up social irony and expose the process of framing by the characters, which helps explicate the currency of the visual in this society.

The infant-as-frame can establish and deconstruct a scene, build up and break down character pretense. It can also be used to deceive and hurt others. In a telling episode at the Bringas’ household, children become a pretext for social charades between friends. Rosalía,
Milagros, and Cándida watch the Bringas children interact. Cándida pays special attention to Isabelita’s outfit. After making a gratuitous inquiry to her friends about how and where to allocate her extra income, Cándida turns to Milagros to belittle her:

“¡Qué mona está Isabelita!” dijo Cándida a Milagros; y a poco de decirlo, se dirigió hacia Columnas, dejando sola con su acerba pena a mi señora la marquesa. Esta oyó el gorjear de los pequeños, la voz de la mamá riñéndoles por su impaciencia y el chasquido de los besos que Cándida les daba. Al poco rato apareció Rosalía en Gasparini, y Milagros la vio ceñuda y risueña a un mismo tiempo, como cuando no podemos sustraernos a los efectos de uno de esos lances cómicos que suelen ocurrir en las ocasiones más tristes.

“Vea usted qué gracia,” dijo Rosalía al oído de su amiga [Milagros]. “Me ha dicho en el comedor, con mucho secreto, que le haga el favor de adelantarle otros cinco duros” (141).

By using Isabelita as a prop, Cándida delivers her comment tongue-in-cheek to Milagros. She also sets Milagros up to feel like the only one with money problems. Cándida draws her unsuspecting friend into a mirage that suggests the Bringas maintain a stable familial and financial household. The children’s audible interaction with their mother in the following room and Rosalía’s comment to Milagros upon her return to Gasparini ironically reinforce Cándida’s construct: Rosalía is now assumed to be a woman of means who can be relied upon for handouts. The child figure has built one ironic frame (Rosalía’s feigned financial situation) on top of a failed one (Cándida’s exposed money problems). This ironic exchange, set in motion by Isabelita’s dress, prompts Rosalía to consider both of her friends’ petitions for money. Once Francisco falls down and goes blind moments later, another scene arranged by the position of children, Rosalía takes the chance to begin taking money from her husband. Isabelita becomes the final angle in an arrangement that links these three women. The young girl sets in motion Rosalía’s financial independence and the mounting pressures to earn back the money to pay off her own debts.
The manipulation of the child can be seen in Francisco’s exploitation of Isabelita as well. The young girl becomes a tool, as with Cándida, for personal gain. Isabelita becomes a delivery system and spy for Francisco. In a lighter scene, Francisco sends Isabelita to Rosalía from his *despacho* to the kitchen, where the young girl recites recipe instructions for *gazpacho* (*LdB* 221). Isabelita’s ability to recite information verbatim causes her mother to suspect her presence in a room, the girl having expressed allegiance to her father. For example, Rosalía discusses financial debt with Milagros, but the friends go silent when they notice Isabelita: “esta niña tenía la fea maña de contar todo lo que oía. Era un reloj de repetición, y en su presencia era forzoso andar con mucho cuidado” (198). Francisco later places Isabelita on his lap to draw out information from his daughter: “‘Está en la Saleta con la marquesa,’ replicó la niña [sobre Rosalía], que hablaba con claridad y rapidez. ‘Me dijo que me viniera para acá. La marquesa estaba llorando porque estamos a 7”’ (198-9). Isabelita repeats information like an automaton, with little reflection about its content, and discloses the seven days left on Milagros’ loan. Francisco views the young girl as an information-giving system, while Rosalía and Milagros view her as a spy. Isabelita offers Francisco an opportunity to maintain his lie—the money stored in the secret bottom of his treasure box. For Rosalía, Isabelita threatens her newfound freedom. This distrust of Isabelita is further evidenced by Milagros hiding the promissory note she signs with Rosalía from the girl (*LdB* 209), and when Rosalía locks out Isabelita from the *Camón* so she can deposit false bills into Francisco’s treasure box (*LdB* 219). Both Francisco and Rosalía establish an emotional distance from Isabelita when they use her as a framing apparatus. The child figure frustrates Rosalía’s attempt to exploit Francisco, while Francisco manipulates Isabelita in attempt to protect his own secret financial situation.
The narrator in *La de Bringas* employs the child figure to open and close scenes, and uses infants’ positions as a pretense to enter and exit domestic and public settings. The child figure provides an angle of vision so the reader can move into these scenarios with ease. When the narrator acts on his own and with characters, the child figure encloses scenes with success. On the other hand, when characters employ the image of the child, they expose their strategy. Verbal and visual signs must cohere when predicated upon the single image of the infant. Characters also use the child figure to deceive others, though their exploitation of the infant proves fragile. Whether the child’s signified is mishandled in the visual-verbal binary, or if the child is used for deceit, the image of the puerile cannot support an ill-conceived frame, because it implodes on the character.

IV. A Brief Case Against Luisito Cadalso: He is a Real Boy

Compared to Isabelita’s metatextual and narratological functions, Luisito appears as a fully fleshed out character in *Miau*. As a ten-year-old child, he experiences his own kind of *Bildungsroman* or trials and tribulations that initiate him into the adult world of Madrid. The narrator does similarly explode metaphorical imagery onto the narrative in the opening sequence as in *La de Bringas*, a flurry of children described as birds running and crying when they leave school. However, the narrator also quickly singles out Luisito, as a group of bullies call him by the epithet “Miau” and throw rocks at him, led by the mean-spirited *Posturitas*. The reader acknowledges this child’s personal conflict with the bully, as well as the emotional turmoil he suffers in trying to understand his family’s financial situation as the novel unfolds. Luisito is a character with feelings, his initial anger toward the ringleader *Posturitas* developed into vengeful emotions and actions. Luisito considers his family’s interpersonal feuds and the city in which they live, which are presented through his inner monologues and dreams by the narrator. This
boy is given a reactive conscience and productive subconscious that a more figural child like Isabelita does not possess. The narrator writes the boy into events rather than along the margins of them, unlike the other child figures examined in this dissertation that frame scenes or conflicts that belong to others.

Luisito remains the most studied out of any other child in Galdós’ Novelas, perhaps because his story personal weaves into his aunt Abelarda’s and into the main plotline of his grandfather Ramón Villaamil. Earlier criticism locates Luisito in one of two categories: as prophetic or innocent. More recent scholarship has advanced Luisito as a verisimilar ten-year-old that encounters his surrounding as such. Eamonn Rodgers states: “Galdós has shown his very considerable talent for psychologically accurate treatment of the child’s way of looking at the world” (50). The boy never fully understands his family’s situation, nor should he, as a child making childish conclusions about adult situations (Haza 27-8). Geoffrey Ribbans has explores the opening paragraphs of Chapter 3 that describe one of Luisito’s several dreams, finding the boy’s reinterpretation of the city in the vision realistic (“La vision” 227-8). In a key difference from Isabelita, Luisito makes conscious and subconscious associations about between his waking and sleeping experiences. La de Bringas’ narrator usurps Isabelita’s dreams to use them as a platform for commentary. Luisito is a real boy that internalizes the world and attempts to process his familial problems, while Isabelita’s figure projects the familial-socio-political moral dilemmas that relate to others.

Yet, none of these excellent studies have proposed a clear differentiation between these diverse children in Galdós. Some have grouped Luisito alongside Isabelita, assuming the two go hand-in-hand because of their penchant for visions. Ricardo Gullón proposes that Galdós writes a personal, kindred version of God through “almas infantiles” in the sickly Luisito and Isabelita
(Galdós 173-5), though this comment reaches for the intention of the author. Cabrejas has considered Luisito’s dreams premonitory similar to the Isabelita’s, and extends the boy’s role to be imitative as well (339-41), agreeing with Gustavo Correa and Gullón. Failing to separate these two children, or the character from the figure of the child, leads to conflation. This section aims to remedy this confusion by observing how Luisito grows throughout Miau, while Isabelita and her peers’ functions shift to benefit the narrator and characters of La de Bringas.

The following paragraphs suggest major differences between Luisito and Isabelita, particularly in how he becomes a product of his surroundings rather than a metaphorical reflection of them. Luisito’s presence in the story outweighs his metaphorical function in the narrative. He matures as a child, attempts to interpret, and interacts with his shifting reality. Luisito misunderstands the world and depends on his family, but displays his self-conscious and introspective nature. The narrator imbues this character with a story arc. Isabelita, on the contrary, remains a highly functional narratorial device that the narrator retains in child’s play. This section shows that the exception proves the rule in this dissertation: Galdós can create children of similar age with distinguishable roles in his fiction. Luisito takes part in the novel’s character continuum, instead of being lifted from it. This section will compare and contrast the two children’s experiences in carrying and delivering information, interacting with other characters, and suffering through dark dreams. In an effort to avoid excessive repetition, more space will be allotted to Luisito, since the above two sections have established and cited many examples pertaining to Isabelita and other children in La de Bringas as child figures.

Luisito acts as a messenger for his grandfather, entrusted to deliver his letters and return with responses regarding the cesante’s pension. Isabelita proves different. She moves between adults and repeats information verbatim without hesitation or pause for comprehension. She also
remains tied to domestic framing structures (doorways, hallways, etc.) and adults, never without another character or the narrator absorbing her focalization. Luisito walks freely beyond doorframes and domestic space alone, carrying out scenes that enhance his character. Adults are removed from his personal stage. The narrator describes the responsibility Villaamil gives his grandson:

Y en este oficio de peatón adquirió tan completo saber topográfico, que recorría todos los barrios de la Villa sin perderse; . . . A lo mejor, topaba con un mono cabalgando sobre un perro o manejando el molinillo de la chocolatera lo mismo que una persona natural; . . . Luis se paraba a ver escaparates, y a veces decía a su compañero esto o cosa parecida: “Canelo, mira qué trompetas tan bonitas” [emphasis in the original] (97-8, 100).

Upon his arrival to the Ministry’s administrative offices, Luisito makes his own decisions with regards to the absence of the letter’s recipient: “Pero Luisito, que tenía instrucciones de su abuelo para el caso de hallarse ausente la víctima, dijo que esperaría. Ya sabía que a las siete, infaliblemente, iba a comer el señor don Francisco Cucúrbitas. Sentóse el chico en el banco del recibimiento” (101).

Luisito remains aware of his surroundings and puts to use his topographical acumen, self-reliant and observant. The narrator’s ambivalent start (“A lo mejor”) to urban description gives the boy’s imagination space to flower and allows the reader to consider the potentially curious street performers and beggars that fill the streets in this scene and later in Chapter 3 as well. In a similar instance of animal imagery in Chapter 1, Luisito imagines his grandmother, great-aunt, and aunt as cats that dress up as humans. Bly believes this episode “mediates the [animal-person] analogy through the impressionable mind of the boy so as to raise doubts about [the women’s] profile” (“Visual Enigmas” 175), referencing the influence of the book Los animales pintados por sí mismos that Luisito reads.27 The above example of Luisito’s streetwalking reverses this process, animals personified in the boy’s mind, rather than people animalized. The narrator,
though equivocal in his narratorial voice,\textsuperscript{28} clearly deploys Luisito’s focalization over his own, as if he stands next to rather than loom over him as the narrator does with Isabelita.\textsuperscript{29} The ten-year-old boy also understands the gravity of his grandfather’s instructions and the importance of returning with a response from Cucúrbitas. Luisito is smart enough to deduce the administrator’s daily routines and brave enough to wait on his own, despite this man’s daughters making fun of him moments later (\textit{Miau} 101-2). As the novel progresses, Luisito’s urban knowledge increases, yielding a tour of Madrid through his kindred eyes.\textsuperscript{30}

On the other hand, the Bringas children and especially Isabelita stage-block and arrange scenes, cling to doors and step back from the story in order to allow it to unfold. They appear at opening and closural moments, their disappearance providing a kind of blank space for the reader to fill, like the empty field Velázquez leaves for his viewer in his paintings. A clear example takes place when Isabelita leans in to observe her father as he cries for help, the narrator allowing the reader to hover over her and take in what lies in front instead of within her. The narrator keeps Luisito in the reader’s purview, on the other hand. The boy remains the focus of his own plotline, never removed from the flow of events that he protagonizes.

Luisito’s experience is organized between helping his family secure their finances as a courier and his plight with \textit{Posturitas}. The latter further showcases the child’s verisimilar humanity in the novel. \textit{Posturitas}, nephew of Villaamil’s nemesis Guillén, berates Luisito and makes fun of his family. The young protagonist believes \textit{Posturitas} and his mom responsible for creating the “Miau” pseudonym-epithet, and decides to fight him: “Por primera vez en su vida percibió Luis que las circunstancias le hacían valiente. Ciego de ira se lanzó sobre su contrario” (151). After the bully’s bought with illness, Luisito attends his wake. He squeezes his head between mourners’ legs to get a better view of the dead body, and experiences mixed emotions.
He says to himself: “¡Pobre Posturitas! ¡Pues, señor, a mi me dirán Miau todos lo que quieran; pero lo que es éste no me lo vuelve a decir!” (304). The narrator employs the child’s internal monologue over his own commentary here, which allows the reader to consider Luisito’s point of view with little to no interference. This moment brings both horror and relief to Luisito, a natural and human reaction, neither innocent nor evil. Isabelita fails to enjoy the privilege of an interior life, her scarce dialogue never followed by internal monologue. The few words she utters in *La de Bringas* serve as theatrical announcements that prompt the reader and characters of sudden developments. For example, Isabelita remarks to Cándida that she sees her mother with Pez on Maundy Thursday from the *palomar*; the young girl happily yells to Rosalía from the doorway that Francisco now sees, etc. The narrator frees Luisito’s character to roam the wake and offers up his scale of emotions in dealing with the death of his former bully. The boy must grapple with compassion and guilt, anger and fear.

Beyond his experience around Madrid, Luisito’s visions have been well explored by critics, but no attempt has been made to distinguish between his and Isabelita’s dreams. The narrators’ approach to these visions throws light on the key distinctions between the children, in particular their degrees of participation in them. In the next scene, Luisito leaves *Posturita’s* vigil, delivers another letter for his grandfather, and falls asleep on a bench:

Entonces vio Luisito que por entre los pliegues del manto de su celestial amigo [Dios] asomaban varias cabecitas de granujas . . . puesto que tenía ángeles. Empezaron a parecerse por entre aquellas nubes algunos más, y alborotaban y reían, haciendo mil cabriolas . . . y entonces vio que entre los alados granujas se destacaba uno…

¡Contro! Era Posturitas, el mismo Posturas, no tieso y lívido como le vio en la caja, sino vivo, alegre y tan guapote… se le puso delante y, con el mayor descaro del mundo, le dijo:

“Miau, fu, fu” (310).
H. Ramsden considers the boy’s dreams in general as a form of “self-expression for the child who otherwise, as a somewhat passive sufferer, has little opportunity to reveal his feelings towards the people and circumstances around him” (64). Ribbans recommends them as a coping mechanism for his tumultuous experiences (231), while others hold similar views that Luisito’s dreams underpin his personal experiences and anxieties (Sackett 30, Rodgers 51-2). Nonetheless, the narrator’s diminishing idiosyncrasy should be appended to these apt observations. The boy’s sudden intervention in the above dream (“¡Contro!”) and the small grotesque angels that rear their heads along with Posturitas establish Luisito’s presence in his subconscious. It confirms a dialectical communication between his emotions from personal experience and the dream world (Turner “Metaphors” 47), which absorbs the narrator along the way. Luisito’s voice in this free indirect discourse promotes him to partial author of the dream, or focalizer, of what he perceives and imagines. His fear and anger get the best of him within the dream as well. Luisito produces a contradictory set of images that underscore his human nature in dealing with unresolved, emotional pain: he believes to have bested Posturitas, but the bully still returns to haunt him in his sleep. The dialogue in Luisito’s dreams marks a pivot in Galdós’ use of child dreams as well, separating the boy even further from Isabelita. The young girl reproduces other characters’ dialogues, uninvolved and silent in the proceeding. Luisito, on the other hand, converses with his version of God, here also with Posturitas, and later with Abelarda as they both speak out loud in their sleep (Miau 277-9).32

Isabelita’s nightmares suggest a contrasting nature, because the narrator invades the girl’s visions. This punctuation in the visions, as established in the above section, serves to reiterate the narrator’s feelings toward characters, which are directed toward the reader. Leading up to the following dream sequence, Isabelita has witnessed Pez philandering with her mother, and seen
Milagros and Rosalía conduct some kind of business in secret. The young girl then overeats her supper, and falls asleep:

Sus nervios se insubordinaron y su cerebro, cual si estuviera comprimido entre dos fuerzas, la acción congestiva del sueño y la acción nerviosa, empezó a funcionar con extravagante viveza, reproduciendo todo lo que durante el día había actuado en él por conducto directo de los sentidos. En su horrorosa pesadilla, Isabel vio entrar a Milagros y hablar en secreto con su mamá. Las dos se metieron en el Camón, y allí estuvieron un ratito contando dinero y charlando. Después vino el Sr. de Pez, que era un señor antipático, así como un diablo, con patillas de azafrán y unos calzones verdes (221).

The reader gleans why Zamostny and Cabrejas suppose this and her previous dream as a *mise en abyme* in the text. Isabelita projects and repeats the day’s events with unreal figures that mean more to the narrator and reader than to her. The narrator treats her mind like a locomotive or machine, fueled by previous events and activated by her supper. Her dream advances an aesthetic distance from the presented material, which underlines the novel’s moral conflict—here Rosalía’s shady business dealings and her questionable relationship with Pez. Isabelita neither intervenes in her own dream nor reflects upon what she has seen once she wakes. The reader is left to consider the images as metaphorical projections and repetitions instead. Alternatively, Villaamil’s unemployment and Abelarda’s romance with Víctor consume Luisito inside and outside of his visions. The young boy rarely understands what these situations mean, but he is constantly contemplating them. Isabelita, through her dreams and as a manipulated figure, functions within child’s play. The narrator fails to demonstrate how or if Isabelita interprets her parents’ failing marriage and her mother’s clandestine activity. She simply reports it. The narrator bypasses any free indirect discourse, unlike the collaboration experienced between Luisito and the narrator in his dreams. In Isabelita’s visions, the narrator manipulates its imagery to further develop plotlines that orbit around the young girl. This last vision of hers, quoted above, goes on to describe a blood river and to reproduce conversations that adults have
regarding politics and family, auguring the impending Revolution of 1868 and Rosalía’s moral-financial decline. Isabelita receives no story arc of her own beyond the narratorial pretense of her illness and physically sallying episodes.

Luisito grows in confidence and strength throughout *Miau*, despite or even because of his naïveté in his actions and dreams. Various critics have taken notice of how he speaks down and out of turn to Villaamil and Abelarda after talking to his dream version of God. He pushes his grandfather closer to committing suicide and Abelarda to her strange withdrawal from society (Miller “Villaamil’s Suicide” 95; Rodgers 65-6, Haza 41). However, there is an important difference between Luisito as a symbolic executioner and the *figura mortis* present in the closing chapters of *Fortunata y Jacinta* and *Torquemada*, which were studied in Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation. Luisito seems completely unaware of the power of his words and ignores the impending socio-familial consequence of moving in with Quintana. The reader sympathizes with his simple though selfish motivations, because Quintana and Villaamil bribe Luisito with religious toys and stamps (*Miau* 390-7). The adult characters and reader alike understand his realistically puerile mind. The *figura mortis* in the previous novels—unreal, grotesque, and metaphorical—possess no conscience and provoke sympathy for other characters they lead toward their deaths, rather than for the dark and unrealistic child. They carry out a poetic function in the novel, while Luisito does what he deems morally right as a young, clearly misinformed boy.

* * *

This chapter has demonstrated how the narrator in *La de Bringas* exploits the child as a *mise en abyme* to comment upon events and characters’ moral flaws. Children act out scenes involving adults both before and after they take place, which cushions metonymy between
metaphors. These metaphorically charged children foreshadow the declining marriage of the Bringas, the impending Revolution, but they also serve to underpin import of events past. The *mise en abyme* advances a suspension in the action of the narrative, and opens a line of communication between the narrator and reader. The child figure that bookends the action of the novel, in other words, exposes the narrator’s manner of narrating and his personal attitude toward the subject matter that he narrates.

The second section promoted the figure of the child as a framing device that opens and closes scenes, moves characters between physical settings, and instigates interpersonal conflicts. Children in *La de Bringas* slip in and out of private and public spaces with ease, but also with a narratological purpose. Their position in the narrative, which overlooks their inner lives, points out and toward other characters instead. These children, though at times sick, remain ever-present and show no signs of death, unlike the absent, dying, and dead children of *Fortunata y Jacinta* and the *Torquemada* tetralogy. Put differently, adults in *La de Bringas* dismiss and forget about the legitimate child, because it poses no threat to the marriage and because the young boys are considered incumbent heirs. Most of the attention the child receives in the novel comes from the narrator, who usurps children’s inner lives and their free will in order to build one of the most plastic and utilitarian groups of children in Galdós.

On the other hand, the narrator of *Miau* develops a true character in the young Luisito. He is a boy that experiences a continuum of emotions and events, which the novel reveals through inner monologue and a degree of growth. Luisito suffers through the moral conflict of fighting *Posturitas* and hating him even once dead. He naively believes that he grasps the answers to Villaamil’s unemployment and Abelarda’s lamentable courtship with Víctor through his personal observations and subsequent dreams. Much like “Villaamil’s mind lives in exile” from reality
(Turner “Patterns” 174), Luisito takes after his grandfather by constantly thinking of alternate and hopeful realities. Unlike his grandfather, though, Luisito retaliates against his foes and experiences deep animosity. He remains a complex character that battles moral dilemmas through contemplation and taking action on his own recognizance. The children of *La de Bringas, Fortunata y Jacinta*, and the *Torquemada* cycle, however, appear as living metaphors whose imagery and function evolve with the perception of the narrators and characters that observe them.
Notes

1 *La de Bringas* is also a sequel to *Tormento* (1884), in which Rosalía remains an important figure, but technically secondary to the roles of Amparo and Agustín in this couple’s struggle to live together as lovers. These novels share common characters and themes of personal and social disorder (Blanco 24-5, Bly “Disorder”, Delgado 41, Fedorcheck, Gullón “*La de Bringas*” 121, Labanyi 26, Montesinos 121-2, Sánchez 309, Urey *Galdós* 27-46, Willem, Wright “Secret”).

2 Various critics touch on the importance of the Royal Palace and its physical space. Peter A. Bly notices parallelisms between the monarchs, their quarters and the Bringas’ domicile: what happens upstairs reflects what happens downstairs, just as Francisco’s spiritual and Rosalía’s moral declines follow the monarchy’s (“*Galdós*” 8-10). The ill proportion of space in the Bringas’ home speaks to national disorder (Pérez *Galdós* 34-5). Chad C. Wright writes on the gradual reduction and compartmentalization of space (“Secret Space”) and the use of light and darkness in the palace (“Imagery”). William R. Risley’s work remains foundational in understanding the relation between characterization and physical space in Galdós. Ricardo Gullón’s introduction to *La de Bringas* details the historical background of the palace and its labyrinth qualities in the novel (9-13, 17-8). Others expand on the labyrinthine elements of the palace (Bly “Perspective” 21, “Distance” 89, Hoddie 24, Labanyi 28, Pope 42, Wright “Imagery” 6).

3 Gullón (Introducción 22) and J. E. Varey (63) find child innocence in her visions. Wright (“Secret” 84) and Labanyi (32) understand them as child awareness and repression of her family’s reality, while others simply state their predictive elements (Cabrejas 337-40, Lopes 78-83). Jon Juaristi believes her visions enact free indirect discourse between Isabelita and the narrator (278), though it remains to be proven and this chapter asserts otherwise. James H. Hoddie interprets the contents of her dream and vomit as Quevedo or Bosch-like imagery of Madrid’s reality. Bly views her family and the royal figures in her dreams as plastic and aesthetic reproductions that underline the real characters’ hollowness (“Distance” 89-90). Lowe notes the July 25th date as when the heat in Madrid increases and the girl’s health diminishes, leading up to critical shifts in the novel (“Use of Time” 84).

4 Peter A. Bly has proposed that the narrator hides within the hallucinations of Isabelita as well (“Distance” 91).

5 In his journals, Gide searches for and obsesses over a *mise en abyme* that could represent the entirety of a text, and suggests that a subject should be reproduced at the character level (*The Mirror* 7). Mieke Bal clarifies that subject (or *sujet*) can mean both theme and narrator-subject (117). Mishe Ron criticizes Dällenbach and Mieke Bal’s analyses of the *mise en abyme*, in particular their notion that the device can somehow summarize or reproduce the whole of a text. Ron’s article becomes harsh in tone and picks apart their ideas through a methodology of deconstruction.
6 Ann Jefferson has viewed the prospective element in narrative as spoiling the fun of reading, while Bal, Gide, and Dällenbach promote its ability to restructure and cohere a text.

7 Lilian R. Furst writes elsewhere: “The realist narrative is pretending to give a true and faithful account of an existent reality” (“Realism” 105), as novelists attempt to eschew and cover up the mediation of their fiction.

8 Critics express their distrust for the narrator due to his ambivalent telling (Delgado 35, Hoddie 25, Labanyi 29); others underscore his alleged disappearance of Chapter 6 (Hemmingway 22, Nimetz 94); while some question his allegiance and opportunism (Bly “Distance” 95, Willem 85). Some critics have recognized the importance of the narrator’s sudden appearance in Chapter 27, which reminds the reader of the fictional and self-conscious elements of the novel (Gullón Introducción 20, Bly “Perspective” 23). Juaristi sees the narrator as a double of Pez and as a passive observer, until the final interview scene between him and Rosalía (277-8). Hoddie remains suspicious of the narrator as well, noting how the narrator literally ends up with everything Francisco originally had (25).

9 The motif of circularity suggests parallels between the opening and closing moments of a novel, through the use of imagery, style, structure, etc. This idea has been proposed by Marianna Torgovnick and has been fully fleshed out in Chapter 1.

10 The cenotaph (or hair-picture as many call it) as a framing device is the most analyzed aspect of the novel. An exhaustive list is not possible, but some scholars’ observations deserve mention. Jo Labanyi has viewed it as formlessness yet fundamental to understanding Francisco’s confusion and the narrator’s two false starts: this object’s description (an aporia in closure) and his getting lost in the Royal Palace with Pez (26). Hazel Gold has found the cenotaph figuratively worthless, a “critique on Madrid’s society” (Reframing 24-5). It creates an equivocal narratorial voice as well (Nimetz 93 and 99, Bly “Initial Art” 168-9), promoting an ironic proximity to the reader (Urey Galdós 32-3). The hair-picture becomes a Chinese box or mise en abyme of the rest of the novel, and controls the reader’s angles of vision (Blanco 26-7, Franz 260-3, Gullón Técnicas 113).

11 Risley emphasizes the importance of spatial background and a character’s relation to it, because they establish “not only certain expectations with regard to the characters, but also foreshadowings of later developments in them and their circumstances” (26). It develops a dynamic setting of physical, psychological, and moral elements in the realist and Galdosian novel (27). Place is integral in establishing trust between narrator and reader in realist literature. Place intersects with time, figures prominently in the protagonists’ as well as the reader’s mind, “conditioning and often limiting their possibilities” (Furst All is True ix).

12 Galdós’ clearly valued this year and its events, as evidenced in an article from La Prensa, dated December 3, 1885, roughly a year after the publication of La de Bringas. Galdós ranks the events of La Gloriosa of 1868 over those of 1808, and writes: “nos encontramos en presencia del hecho más grave que España ha escrito en los anales del siglo xix [sic]: el
destronamiento de Doña Isabel II. . . Aún están frescos en la memoria de todos los sucesos de aquellos días en que Serrano compartió con don Juan Prim la popularidad más grande de que han gozado los hombres políticos en España” (Bly “Galdós” 3).

13 Many recognize the humor and satire in the soldiers’ sloppy take-over of Madrid and the Royal Palace (Bly “Distance” 91, Gullón Introducción 22, and Nimetz 62-3).

14 Noël Valis advances the notion of the child as a *figura mortis* (“Death” 249). Chad C. Wright suggests the daughters’ hair shades of black, yellow, and brown as “a melancholy chiaroscuro, the colors of the sunset” (“Imagery” 5).

15 Wordsworth’s line comes from his poem “I Lift my Heart Up” (1802). The nursery rhyme of “Ring Around the Rosie” has been understood as referring to the Great Plague of 1665, among other macabre allusions (Opie 221-4).

16 Scholars have observed her Edenic expulsion and allude to Rosalía’s shopping problem and her temptation by Milagros (Lowe “Galdós’ Presentation” 52, Willem 82, and Varey 64). Sánchez views the *manteleta* in Chapter 10 as Rosalía’s beginning of the end, like Eve’s apple, and marks the true opening of the major plot (300).

17 The narrator tells the reader before the *manteleta* scene with Milagros: “Los regalitos [de Agustín] fueron la fruta cuya dulzura le quitó la inocencia [de Rosalía], y por culpa de ellos un ángel con espada de raso me la echó de aquel paraíso en que su Bringas la tenía tan sujeta” (LdB 93).

18 The narrator personally notes:

¡Y cuánto gozaban los chicos viendo la *casita del Pobre*, la del Contrabandista y la Persa, echando migas, a los patitos de la casa del Pescador, subiendo a la carrera por las espirales de la *Montaña* artificial, que es en verdad, el colmo del artificio! Todos aquellos regios caprichos, así como la Casa de Fieras, declaran la época de Fernando VII, que si en política fue brutalidad, en artes fue tontería pura [emphasis in the original] (124-5).

19 For Barthes, objective reality holds little power over the written text, fiction absorbing the effect of reality (“Reality Effect” 145).

20 Jacques Derrida separates fictional frames (intrinsic) from the real (extrinsic) in his study “The Parergon,” and deconstructs the idea of context in the written language (“Signature” 2-3).

21 Setting in Galdós connects character to socio-political background (Risley 26-7). It also intersects with time, characters and readers’ minds, and establishes trust between narrator and reader (Furst ix).
22 Many have touched on the satirical representation of Isabel II and her ironic charity expressed toward Madrilenians in this scene (Bly Pérez Galdós 49-50, Gullón Técnicas 126, and Hoddie 36).

23 The one exception arises when the narrator explains how Rosalía resorts to visiting the Prado toward the end of August out of desperation, in search of a rich suitor that might help her pay off her debts to Torquemada. She attends the Cucúrbitas’ tertulia and spends her time judging men she spies while feigning interest in conversations. Rosalía spots a series of possible lovers, including the marquis of Fúcar, a former courter of hers. She retires for the evening and hopes Pez returns soon so she can take him up on his previous offer (LdB 258-60).

24 Valis reads the opening paragraphs of the novel as a vertiginous effect and sudden influx of life. It produces an embryonic parallel that culminates in Villaamil’s death. The critic adds that it serves as Galdós’ homage to biology, representing beginnings and the “awesome forces of innocence and potentiality” in the image of escaping children (“Miau” 134).

25 Valis (“Miau” 131) and Bly (“The End” 116) recognize the great amount of critical reassessment this novel has received, especially before the end of the twentieth century. This proves true with regards to the bestial theme, animal imagery, and the meaning(s) of the epithet/acronym “Miau.” The following scholars debate the meaning and function of these elements, besides Bly (“Visual Enigmas” 175): Lucille Virginia Braun, Vernon A. Chamberlin, Inés Dölz-Blackburn, and Eduardo Urbina.

26 Regarding the former, Gustavo Correa (133) and Theodore A. Sackett (32) understand his character as one that experiences lucid supernatural and divine revelations, respectively. Gullón claims both innocence (Introducción 21) and the marvelous in Luisito, a child that receives augural information about adult reality (Galdós 174, 281-2). On the spectrum of innocence, A. A. Parker suggests that Luisito searches for justice with pure intentions (22). Geraldine M. Scanlon and R. O. Jones (58) along with Arnold M. Penuel (9) believe the boy’s reactions and visions guide the reader toward Villaamil and Abelarda’s personal conflicts and the moral dilemmas in the novel. In a broader character-structure study, Joaquín Casalduero understands this child’s story as a bridge to the Villaamil plotline that allows both private and public sectors of Madrilenian society to coincide (94-5).

27 Paradissis explores the roots and possible French origin of a book by a similar name (141).

28 Galdós presents a complex and coherent structure in Miau, but writes characters that are pushed to their limits and who feel shortchanged. It “gives an ironic sense of something undone, something unfinished” (Turner “Metaphors” 43). Various scholars recognize the ambivalent and equivocal nature of the narrator in this novel (Bly “Visual Enigmas” 177, Ruano 28, Turner Galdós 168 and 175, Valis “Miau” 132).
29 Ribbons writes about the narrator: “Por su ligero tono narrativo y el uso de diminutivos afectuosos (Cadalsito), se pone de parte de su joven personaje, comunicando una sensación de intimidad con él” (“La visión” 229).

30 Ribbons notices the clarity of street names and locations in Luisito’s dreams as well as in his waking moments (“La visión” 228). In a later example, Luisito leaves Posturita’s funeral: “La calle de Florida-Blanca estaba invadida de coches que, después de soltar en la puerta a sus dueños, se iban situando en fila. Los cocheros, de chistera galonada y esclavina, charlaban de pescante a pescante, y la hilera llegaba hasta el teatro de Jovellanos” (305). His observations add color to the realist presentation of reality, a constant personal and childish mediation of information.

31 Rodgers suggests the boy displays child competitiveness and a lack of sympathy toward Posturita’s death and dead body (55).

32 The Luisito-Abelarda is a masterfully crafted scene by Galdós that deserves its own dedicated. Turner calls the exchange a “crossed dialogue,” Bakhtin’s term, which reveals personal secrets in both characters (“Metaphors” 47).

33 Miller writes that Villaamil does not “discharge the aggressive impulse produced by a confrontation,” differentiating him from Luisito and underlining his constant retreat (“Villaamil’s Suicide” 88).
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I. Introduction

This dissertation has explored the crucial role that children play in the life and success of bourgeois families in nineteenth-century realism by studying their unrealistic physical portrayal in Benito Pérez Galdós’ interlocking series the *Novelas españolas contemporáneas* (1881-97). Scholars from various fields have studied this phenomenon in Galdós. Within cultural studies, critics such as Nicholas G. Round, Teresa Fuentes Peris, and Lisa Surwillo have advanced the child as a verification of social issues contemporary to the Spanish novelist, including class conflict and national prosperity. Symbolic readings of children by critics like Gabriel Cabrejas, Nöel Valis, and Agnes Money Gullón, on the other hand, have understood the child as a figure that represents character themes and structural elements of a text. However, scholars have not attended to how adults view children or how the child functions in social settings. Overlooking the adult-child relation fails to treat how living, dead, and wished-for children shape the lives of characters, and prevents studies from examining how Galdós contributes to the tradition of the child figure in European literature. This dissertation has addressed this gap in the literature from the “socioformal” perspective, in order to demonstrate that children operate in the social milieu of the novel and that their strange physical appearance can be explained by how narrators and characters emotionally perceive them. The central thesis contends that the narrators and adult characters of *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886-7), the *Torquemada* tetralogy (1889-95), and *La de Bringas* (1884) produce the figure of the child, a living vessel that contains the social identities and structural positions of those that observe children.
Because the child lives in material reality and takes on metaphorical imagery that others force upon it, the image of the child discloses social and structural aspects of characters. The theory of the socioformal supports this observation, which comes from Alex Woloch’s recent book *The One vs. the Many*. The socioformal suggests that reference and structure in the realist novel overlap. Characterization relies on the distributive matrix of major and minor characters, on their human likeness as well as on the text’s poetics. In her various works, Lilian R. Furst has proposed a similar approach, but emphasizes the reader-narrator contract in realism, which only works when the reader acquiesces to the pretense that the narrator uses the medium of fiction to promote factuality. Other scholars have thrown light on the reader-narrator-text interaction that allows the illusion of referentiality and fictionality to play together in the realist novel (Brombert, Iser, Torgovnick), essential to understanding the child’s value in the Madrid Galdós writes and the imagination of characters that produce the curious imagery of children.

This dissertation has developed the term “child’s play” to examine how adults view and reimagine children. It is a flexible term that parses the narrator-character interaction during the focalization of the child. Noël Valis and Moncy Gullón have briefly analyzed the adult-child relation in Galdós, but their studies view the visual and emotional impact of absent, present, and dead children in Galdós as overlapping. Child’s play deliberately distinguishes between these states and advances their effect in the narrators and characters that struggle with wanting, losing, or having a child. Current studies in structuralism have submitted focalization as a psychosomatic process between the narrator, character, and the world, which advances the relation between the observer and the observed (Bal, Rimmon-Kenan). This idea steps away from Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida’s notion that a text remains completely self-contained or unaffected by the social matter a novel depicts. It also underpins how child’s play discloses
the social, personal, and structural details of the narrators and characters that engage children and produce their images.

Studying the adult-child relation offers up new insight into Galdós’ strategies in constructing character and plot in his *Novelas*. The living, dead, and wished-for sons and daughters of these novels propose intimate details of characters previously overlooked and inaccessible. It also shows that Galdós places children on the fringe of the story, unlike the children in other European novels that portray protagonists like Oliver Twist, Heathcliff and Catherine, etc. Galdós capitalizes on his fictional children’s aesthetic distance—nearly out of reach of the families that need and want them to survive—that allows these children to be creatively reimagined by narrators and characters. Providing an heir, making a marriage legitimate, perpetuating a family name and its social class, these are central topics in the nineteenth-century novel and themes that the child figure conveys. Galdós, when considered alongside European novelists such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Emily Brönte, Charles Dickens, and Henry James, renovates the function of the child. The Spanish author builds upon the child figure’s hopeful mythological origins in the Romantics during the eighteenth century—Wordsworth, Rousseau—and the poor foundlings that appear in previous and contemporary nineteenth-century prose. Galdós participates in this history of the child in literature by writing child figures like the *Pituso*, the Valentín brothers, and Isabelita Bringas that simultaneously affect narrative and story. Overall, this dissertation has provided the first comprehensive book-length project to study the image of the child in Galdós by considering the literature on children in other European novelists and by exploring the current bibliography of articles on children in Galdosian studies.
There are three main limitations that this project recognizes. First, this study analyzes the imagined, lost, dead, sick, and healthy child, rather than treat the passage from childhood to adulthood. The nature of the *Bildungsroman*, found in such novels as Dickens’ *David Copperfield* (1850) and Galdós’ *La desheredada* (1881), implies the study of a child that is self-aware that becomes more aware of his or her surroundings and eventually joins the adult world. The child figure, along with the term child’s play, suggests that narrators and characters observe and objectify children whose inner life and conscious state the novel leaves unrepresented. For this reason, Chapter 3 of the dissertation has included a compare-and-contrast section between Luisito from *Miau* (1888)—a boy that negotiates and reacts to his surroundings—and the children from *La de Bringas*—aesthetically manipulated figures. Secondly, this project includes the figures of both boys and girls, but it acknowledges that the former outnumber the latter in Galdós. This caveat suggests the author’s interest in and the characters’ conflict of providing a male heir for the bourgeois family. Finally, this project refrains from categorizing the child in Galdós, because the image of the child evolves between the narrator and character during focalization, and because its function and effect change during the course of the novel.

The following pages present three sections, dedicated to the three chapters of the dissertation. These sections consider the major questions that each chapter proposed, underscore their findings, and advance their overall import to the field of literature.

II. Chapter 1: *Fortunata y Jacinta*

Chapter 1 of the dissertation analyzed Galdós’ masterpiece from a new angle. Rather than scrutinize Fortunata’s overwhelming influence in the novel, this chapter researched Jacinta’s subtle presence and her relation to the image of the child. In particular, this chapter sought to uncover how the absence of an heir in the Santa Cruz household affects the structure of the novel.
and the characters most implicated in reproducing a male successor—women. Jacinta arises at the center of this social and private dilemma, an element that the narrator of Fortuanta y Jacinta exploits from the opening to the closing pages. While the pressure to conceive an heir links the women of the novel, imagery of the child surfaces in the minds of Mauricia la Dura, Moreno-Isla, and Fortunata as they near their deaths. Galdós turns the absence of children into a kind of presence by constantly reminding characters of the child’s significance in their personal and public lives.

The first section of Chapter 1 examined how the narrator in Fortuanta y Jacinta used the image of the child to establish structure and story. Critics have observed the influence of the child in the structure of the novel before. Stephen Gilman (Galdós) and Harriet Turner (“Family Ties”) have explored the reconciliatory power of the child in the conclusion of the text. Moncy Gullón has studied the dramatic implications of the child between Fortunata and Jacinta. Little attention has been paid, however, to tying together the opening and closing moments of the novel or to interconnecting the female characters of the text through the image of the child. This section argued that the narrator strategically uses the child figure in the novel’s opening to anticipate Juanito’s decline and Jacinta’s moment of poetic justice at the conclusion of the story; it also advanced the child figure as the major link between Jacinta, Fortunata, Isabel Cordero, and Barbarita.

In order to demonstrate how imagery of the child anchors Fortuanta y Jacinta, this section used theories on opening and closing strategies in the realist novel. On the one hand, Victor Brombert and Frank Kermode (“Novels”) have proposed that the proem of a text sets the poetic ground rules of a story. On the other, Marianna Torgovnick’s Closure in the Novel advances how openings and closings work together in realism to create a sense of completeness.
This scholar’s terms of “circularity” (how conclusions control introductions) and “parallelism” (images and themes that repeat within the text) supported this section’s idea that the child figure governs the overarching structure of the novel and connects its female characters.

Regarding circularity, the narrator of *Fortunata y Jacinta* strategically uses the image of the child in the opening and closing pages of the story. The narrator removes Juanito Santa Cruz’s name from the opening paragraphs of the novel, for example, yet uses his name as the title to the first chapter. This omission suggests the protagonist’s diminishing role in the story and a gap in the text—he will not be the heir. Ironically, his own son, the lovechild Juan Evaristo Segismundo, fills this gap when Jacinta adopts and holds him in the final chapter. The narrator’s subtle placement of the child figure in the introduction predicts Juanito’s demise, but it also foreshadows Jacinta’s moment of jubilee, despite her delusional idea that the child belongs to her and Moreno-Isla. The child figure, examined through a retrospective reading and circularity, allows the reader to collapse four volumes worth of storylines and events into these two interrelated moments.

The parallelism of this novel proposes that the image of the child relates four major female characters: Jacinta, Fortunata, Isabel Cordero, and Barbarita. It further posits that Jacinta lies at the center of this constellation of women, each of whom is deeply affected by children. Jacinta is introduced into the story through her birth story, as told by her overburdened mother Isabel Cordero. Her character is reintroduced into the novel later through Barbarita, her future mother-in-law. Jacinta comes back into the fold, through Barbarita, because Juanito and Fortunata pregnancy. Barbarita enlists Jacinta to marry her son, in order to distance him from the responsibility of his first lovechild. This arranged marriage, which is predicated on the impact of a child, also sets in motion the Jacinta-Fortunata feud and eventual reconciliation. When viewed
as a whole, this novel creates a parallel between these four women by developing how children and the images of children govern their private and social lives.

The circularity and parallelism of *Fortunata y Jacinta* disclose the significance of providing and maintaining a male heir in this Madrilenian community. The use of child’s play uncovers just how intricate Galdós’ plan for the novel is. The image of the child works on a subliminal level to pull together multiple characters and storylines within the large novel, connecting these points in the imagination of the reader. *Fortunata y Jacinta* holds up as a nineteenth-century masterpiece through Galdós’ attention to detail, from the vast historical aspects of Madrid to the most intimate corners of his characters’ minds where the image of the child flourishes.

Section Two of Chapter 1 discovered that Chapters 5 to 10 in Part I of *Fortunata y Jacinta* use the child figure to magnify the character of Jacinta into a protagonist-like role. Despite the great contributions from critics like Gilman, Ricardo Gullón, John W. Kronik, and Mercedes López-Baralt, studies have focused primarily on the character of Fortunata. Those that have explored Jacinta’s experience concentrate on limited episodes, like Linda Willem’s excellent “Jacinta’s ‘Visita’” that underscores the character’s focalization of children and Harriet Turner’s influential “Family Ties.” This section argues that Jacinta’s affect for the child enlarges the amount of narrative space dedicated to her character as her desire for children increases, which gives her the light of protagonicity.

The current debate on the affect can be understood in two ways. One school of thought holds that poetics can control the emotional peaks and valleys of a reader (Burgess, Colm Hogan, Robinson). Others have focused the debate on how to categorize the emotions and contemplate whether stoicism is possible (Altieri, Nussbaum). Quite recently, though, Fredric Jameson has
argued that the affect, in realist literature, creates a growing sphere in the narrative called the “realm of the affect.” This is where as-of-yet unknown emotions flourish, contrary to characters consciously recognizing “named emotions,” which require less narrative space. The realm of the affect registers the interplay between subject and object, and underscores the continuum of intensity involved in constantly struggling with unknown emotions. Jo Labanyi, studying Spanish literature, has argued something similar, and thrown light on the entanglement between self and world (“Doing Things”). This section organized the growing amount of narrative landscape dedicated to Jacinta’s continuum of unknown emotions as a three-act play. The first act begins with Juanito revealing during their honeymoon that he and Fortunata had lovechild (Chapter 5), reaches its climax in Chapter 9 when Jacinta visits the cuarto estado and encounters Madrid’s foundlings, and concludes in Chapter 10 once Juanito tells Jacinta that his lovechild is dead and that she must move on. The privilege of narrative time over story time allows Jacinta’s character to increase her claim of character-space, and underscores the mounting intensity between her and the images of children that absorb this space.

Child’s play suggests how, in the Jacinta story, the figure of the child works beyond social allegory and motherly desires—it promotes the intimate and difficult process of managing reality and desire, truth and fiction in the character. Galdós displays a Cervantine mastery of poetics in Jacinta’s five-chapter experience by using a Chinese box system of stories that interrupt yet interconnect: Ido and Izquierdo’s rants at the pub, the Santa Cruz’s night at the theater, the slums of Madrid, and so on. Galdós builds brief yet poignant stories within stories, novels within novels, without ever losing sight of the novel’s whole. The author builds each of his characters, major and minor, with an unforgettable singularity. In Jacinta’s case, through her
visual and visceral reactions to the world, the figure of the child structures her *novela* and fleshes out a character that enjoys a protagonist-like role that makes her and her story unforgettable.

The final section of the first chapter found that the image of the child surrounds the deaths of three characters: Mauricia la Dura, Moreno-Isla, and Fortunata. Many critics have advanced the resistance to formal closure in *Fortunata y Jacinta* (Gold Reframing, del Pino), while others have examined the power of reconciliation that death brings between characters (Ribbans Conflicts, Sobejano). However, none of these studies consider the three major deaths that shape the conclusion of the novel. This section contends that Mauricia, Moreno, and Fortunata are linked together through the image of the child, each confronted by children or reminiscent about their childhood.

Scholars have suggested the child that returns to haunt, in image or reality, as a *figura mortis* (Ferucci, Valis “Death”). Though some have maintained the impossibility of depicting the experience of death in literature (Hillis Miller *Ariadne*), Galdós takes great care to represent this most unrepresentable moment in his characters (Boudreau, Ruiz Ramón). In *Fortunata y Jacinta*, the *figura mortis* of the child becomes a vehicle through which the narrator explores the dying instances of both major and minor figures. Surrounded by a singing choir of girls, Mauricia thinks of her innocent childhood. Haunted by not providing Jacinta with a son, Moreno’s heart explodes in melodramatic fashion. Fortunata’s newborn, Juan Evaristo, reconciles her friendship with Jacinta, but he also drinks her breast milk until she passes away.

The deaths of Mauricia, Moreno, and Fortunata work as individual yet interrelated closures within the novel. These paralleled endings suggest the expansive nature of realism, and further underpin the patience and space Galdós’ dedicates to all characters. The author eschews the limits of language in representing the experience of death by using the image of the child to
mine the depths of these characters’ inner lives. Child’s play becomes a way through which the reader can better understand what children mean to these adults and how Galdós uses their images to structure and close the stories of these dying characters with dignity. Each of these deaths, underscored by the presence and function of the child figure, build toward the final revelation of the novel—Juan Evaristo in the arms of Jacinta. Although Galdós constructs a large edifice of fiction with many levels that store many stories and themes, the image of the child remains a central component to the organization, ideas, and characters of *Fortunata y Jacinta*.

III. Chapter 2: The *Torquemada* Tetralogy

The second chapter of the dissertation explored how the death of an heir and the birth of a physiologically decrepit one influence the eponymous character of the *Torquemada* cycle. Much has been said about Francisco Torquemada’s ambitions as a usurer, his cold demeanor, and his difficulty in adapting to his new aristocratic surroundings, but very little work has gone into studying how the death of his son Valentín affects him as a father and a person. This chapter analyzed how the loss, as opposed to the absence, of a child structures the novels of the tetralogy and predicates Torquemada’s actions. Galdós creates a juxtaposition between *Fortunata y Jacinta* and *Torquemada* through the different presentations (absent vs. dead) of the child and by describing their effects upon a man and woman, Torquemada and Jacinta. Similar to the previous novel, the cycle sets up the deaths of three key characters by surrounding them with the image of the child, but Valentín II, Valentín’s physiologically monstrous brother, provokes horror in those that see and think of him. Both the mourning and presence of a child remain unbearable in *Torquemada*.

Section One of Chapter 2 demonstrated how the *Torquemada* tetralogy reflects an inverted image of *Fortunata y Jacinta*’s structure and themes by contrasting Torquemada and
Jacinta stories. Various scholars have acknowledged structural and metatextual similarities between the two works (Ayala, G. Gullón, R. Gullón *Psicologías*, Gold *Reframing*), while Peter A. Bly understands *Torquemada en la hoguera* as organized around Valentín’s illness ("Sallies"). These studies, nonetheless, fail to address how Torquemada and Jacinta’s lives are based upon their relation to children. In this section, greater emphasis was placed upon Torquemada’s character, in order to avoid repetitions between Chapter 1 and 2.

Theories on trauma were explored to analyze Torquemada’s experiences of loss and Jacinta’s desire for a son. Some scholars, like Theodor Adorno and George Steiner, suggest that a text that treats trauma emerges *a posteriori* to the event, while Giorgio Agamben has proposed that an aporia grows between the event and personal truths as time elapses. Agamben proposes this phenomenon as the “remnant” of memory and people. Jacques Derrida’s simple yet effective observation regarding mourning advances that a friend always leaves a friend behind, left behind to take on the unbearable task of looking back (*The Work of Mourning*). Dominique LaCapra, in an effort to further understand trauma, has established two categories: loss and absence. The former signifies an event and actual loss, as with Torquemada losing Valentín to illness; the latter does not, as with Jacinta’s absence of a child. When a character or person converts absence into loss, however, or when someone who has experienced loss continues to reflect upon it, absence and loss yield similar story structures of mythology through what LaCapra calls the “compulsive repetition.” In the cases of Torquemada and Jacinta, both characters constantly envision situations where their “lost” children will return. Torquemada believes he can reincarnate Valentín as a kind of second coming of Christ, while Jacinta believes that she gives birth to *Pituso* and later to Juan Evaristo.
The use of child’s play, particularly in the *Torquemada* cycle, shows how the narrators of these two novels strategically use the image of the child to organize the story and set up the motivation of their characters. In *Torquemada*, the narrator creates the most detailed composite portrait of any other figure in Valentín during the first installment, which, when read retrospectively, explains why Torquemada spends the next three installments mourning over the loss of his son. Galdós transitions the recurring character of the usurer from seeming like Balzac’s Gobseck and Dickens’ Uriah Heep—flat figures—to humanizing Torquemada by describing his personal anguish and delusion as he searches for ways to bring back Valentín. The Spanish novelist creates similar storylines between Torquemada and Jacinta, but clear distinctions arise when the four-volume works are viewed as a whole. Torquemada suffers through the loss of his son and must reproduce another in order to legitimate his marriage to Fidela and their social position. Jacinta suffers through sterility and imagines loss, though she too must produce a son to make her union to Juanito legitimate. Through the two novels, Galdós investigates the male and female experiences of nineteenth-century Madrid. Studying the child figure uncovers the evolving complexity in these characters, and reveals just how intricately Galdós plans his novels from beginning to end.

The second section of Chapter 2 argued that Torquemada’s character experiences non-protagonist moments in the middle novels *Torquemada en la cruz* and *Torquemada en el purgatorio*, yet ironically flourishes by engaging the portrait of his dead son Valentín. Scholars have noted Torquemada’s diminishing role in the cycle (Earle, Jameson, Sánchez Barbudo), but these studies have paid little attention to how these minor moments humanize and round out the previously flat figure.
Torquemada remains convinced that Valentín’s portrait speaks to him in private séances and that the dead child moves out of the frame to interact with him. This section approached the influence of the portrait over the character in two ways. First, it examined how pictorialism—written language’s attempt to depict visual material—structures Torquemada’s observation of his son’s image. Peter Brooks has emphasized that, as a foundational principle, realism attempts to depict the visual (Realist Vision). Other scholars have noted the limits of transcribing the visual with written language (Foucault, Said). Jean Hagstrum and Viola Winner’s studies find that pictorialism occurs when literature can be translated into a painting and when the author treats his or her objects and subjects as if they were in a painting, respectively. Torgovnick’s research on pictorialism offers up useful terms to analyze the realist text. To study Valentín’s portrait, this section used the iconographical—dealing directly with images of people—and the interpretative-perceptual concepts—how the character perceives these images.

Secondly, this section explored the influence of the portrait, and especially Valentin’s face, through the idea of physiognomy—how the reading of external features reveals the inner life of a character (Lavater). Davide Stimilli traces the theory back to Homer and Aristotle, including the latter’s notion of anagnórisis, which becomes a kind of unmasking of the face and a resistance against obliteration. Graeme Tytler’s foundational research on physiognomy and the nineteenth-century novel has shown that the manner in which a character and narrator describe someone’s exterior discloses just as much information about those who do the observing. Torquemada and the narrator, who in collaboration detail the “words” and “movements” of Valentín, ironically expose their own attitudes toward the image of Valentín: the narrator’s disdain for his protagonist and Torquemada’s unrealistic hope of reincarnating his son.
Hazel Gold’s excellent article on La sombra (1871) regarding pictorialism has begun to show the significance of portraits in Galdós and their import in the characters that personally invest in them (“Painting”). Ángel Del Río, many years ago, emphasized the impact of Valentín’s death in Torquemada in Torquemada en la hoguera, but this section has shown how death continues to affect the protagonist through the portrait of Valentín beyond the first novel. Jameson has observed Galdós’ trend in deceptively presenting but then phasing out male heroes, as with Juanito Santa Cruz, Francisco Bringas, and, in this scholars’ opinion, Torquemada. However, Torquemada’s diminishing protagonicity yields an increasingly humanized character. The usurer’s time with the portrait, though delusional and pathetic, promotes the grief of the father and the difficulty of moving past his loss. The narrator’s ironic comments regarding Torquemada’s séances, understood through child’s play, discover the constant victimization of a character that used to victimize others. Torquemada becomes more interesting and easier to sympathize with as the novels move forward thanks to this devout relationship with Valentín’s portrait. Galdós’ poetics, as seen through embattled protagonists like Torquemada and Jacinta, and memorable secondary figures like Almudena, Guillermina Pacheco, and Mariano Rufete, et al., show that minor characters in his novels overcomes flatness. In the Torquemada cycle, the image of the child rescues the protagonist from being forgettable and forgotten.

The final section of Chapter 2 studied the connections between Rafael, Fidela, and Torquemada’s deaths, and concluded that the physiological and literary phenomenon that is Valentín II links these characters together in their final moments. In symbolic readings, scholars have tended to analyze this child in two ways. On the one hand, critics have suggested Valentín II as a symbol of social and religious decadence (Correa, Earle, Sherzer). On the other, the child has been observed as part of a good-evil binary that includes his dead brother Valentín (Davies
“Regeneración,” Folley, Urey “Identities”). In cultural studies readings, scholars such as Fuentes Peris and Round (“Galdós) suggest that Valentín II represents national decadence, as well as the fear and alarm of racial degeneration in Madrid. However, little work has gone into exploring this child beyond what it symbolizes individually or in binary form.

This section found that Rafael, Fidela, and Torquemada maintain personal and complicated relationships with Valentín II, and that these complexities play a crucial part in their deaths. To illustrate the connection between characters and their reactions of disgust to Valentín II, the section proposed this child as an example of the literary and physical grotesque that invades the realist poetics of Torquemada. Wolfgang Kayser’s work on the grotesque suggests that the device remains elusive, combining political and philosophical meaning. Philip John Thomson has thrown light on the humorous element of the grotesque that makes the reader both laugh and react with horror. More recently, Michael J. Meyer shares that the device subsists as long as it maintains these contradictory and metatextual elements. Galdós crafts these details into Valentín II’s animal-like physiology, his savage language, and constant laughter. The young child repulses Rafael; Fidela imagines him in a perfect light; Torquemada tries to avoid dealing with the reality of his son’s idiocy. All the while, Galdós creates a baby and later a boy in Valentín II that looks like an old man and needs a cane to walk, or else he must walk on all fours. This child figure remains unrealistic in a realistic social milieu.

Child’s play throws light onto how Valentín II’s unrealistic portrayal makes inroads into the realm of realism, as well as how drives these three characters into states of horror. Kronik (“Galdós”) and B. J. Zeidner Bäuml have noted Galdós’ use of the grotesque in character description—namely facial features—to emphasize the moral flaws of figures like Torquemada and Nicolás Rubín. However, the language used to describe Valentín II’s extreme physical
appearance is not metaphoric, but an attempt to represent an unforeseen reality that haunts those that look at him and breaks with the typical symbolic system of realism. Envious of the boy’s inheritance, Rafael jumps to his death with Valentín II fresh on his mind. Fidela finally admits to her son’s horrible countenance, while he crawls on her deathbed and growls at the family that surrounds her. Valentín II’s idiocy disheartens Torquemada, but in a bout of delusion, he leaves most of his wealth to his monstrous son. Contrary to the naturalist language used to describe the yellowish foundlings in *La desheredada* (1881) and the comical animal metaphors used to describe the foundlings in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Valentín II arises as both a literary and physiological distortion. His grotesque figure disrupts the realist genre and disgusts the characters of the *Torquemada* novels. The boy absorbs the emotional and financial capital of Rafael, Fidela, and Torquemada.

Similar to *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Galdós ends the *Torquemada* tetralogy with three deaths. Unlike his earlier masterpiece, though, this second four-volume work concludes with a definite sense of hopelessness, as if the author marks the end of the Torquemada family and the end of an era—social and literary. There is no equivalent to Jacinta holding Juan Evaristo, or character reconciliation through deaths in *Torquemada*. Galdós goes on to publish *Misericordia* (1897), but the final novel of the *Novelas* shows a different kind of project that searches for new alternatives in spirituality. Previous novels, such as the ones studied in this dissertation, present the critique and the promise of socio-political institutions. *Torquemada* uncovers the other side to *Fortunata y Jacinta*’s coin: instead of the male heir solving family problems and legitimizing the institution of marriage, Valentín II exposes the calculated union between the aristocracy and bourgeoisie that Fidela and Torquemada represent, and destroys the institution of marriage in their deaths.
IV. Chapter 3: La de Bringas and Miau

The final chapter of the dissertation studied the function of the living child in the Novelas through La de Bringas and Miau. It showed that, in La de Bringas and in contrast to Fortunata y Jacinta and Torquemada, the present and legitimate child poses little threat to the bourgeois family and preoccupies the adults little. In response, the adults in La de Bringas overlook the child, while the narrator obsesses over children and creates the most aesthetically distant in Galdós. As a counterpoint, this chapter contrasted the child in La de Bringas to that of Miau, specifically Luisito. The chapter showed that the latter becomes a child characterized, someone who experiences an inner life and reacts to his surroundings. Luisito served as an antithesis to the child figure, in order to explain how Galdós diversifies the function of the child in his Novelas, and pays close attention to the literary and social elements of the child.

Section One of the chapter argued that the narrator in La de Bringas uses the child as a mise en abyme that reviews and predicts events and their meaning. The narrator locates the child before and after instances of action. These young figures act out and reenact the events, cushioning the metonymy of the novel between metaphorical subject matter. Round has advanced the Bringas children as reflections of their parents’ attitudes and personalities in Chapter 40 of the novel (“Rosalía”). Jeffrey S. Zamostny’s recent work has shown that Isabelita’s dreams in Chapters 8 and 34 demonstrate how Galdós uses the mise en abyme to comment on the events that the young girl observes during the Maundy Thursday celebration and while at the Manzanares baths. This section views the remainder of novel with a similar approach, but emphasizes that children physically act out events like automatons, instead of dream about them.
This section understood the *mise en abyme* through André Gide’s idea that images that reflect themes and action in a novel work as an “intertextual résumé.” Lucien Dällenbach’s *The Mirror in the Text* remains groundbreaking in this field. Mishe Ron has contested the scholar’s notion that any one image can summarize or reproduce the theme of a whole novel, and Anne Jefferson feels that the foreshadowing of the *mise en abyme* potentially ruins the pleasure of reading. Most helpful from Dällenbach are his flexible terms that help further present the *mise en abyme* in a text: “prospective,” “retrospective,” and “retro-prospective,” which reflect future, past, or both kinds of events. The children in *La de Bringas* work constantly to forewarn and re-explain for the reader action and theme by acting out and reenacting action, or as retro-prospective devices. The section paid close attention to the reader’s role in the novel, something that Dällenbach underlines in a later article, and that Furst has emphasized in much of her work: the novel, especially in realism, flourishes when the reader participates in the pretense of its fiction-fact game.

The narrator in *La de Bringas* exposes his attitude toward his subject matter and, consequently, his anxiety to get this message across by reusing the retro-prospective *mise en abyme* of the child. Child’s play reveals here a direct line of communication between the narrator and the reader through the child figure. By constantly warning and reminding the reader of what he narrates, the narrator discloses the mechanisms of how he tells the story as well. This novel remains one of Galdós’ most experimental and most organized. Despite the novel’s hyper-metatextual nature, however, it also treats the reality of the 1868 Revolution. Galdós develops a controlled game of literature and history in this text. As a retro-prospective *mise en abyme*, the child figure in *La de Bringas* acts as coalescing substance that holds together these two separate yet interdependent spheres of fictionality and factuality.
The section of Chapter 3 explained how the narrator and characters of this novel manipulate the figure of the child as a framing device in a microcosmic level—within a scene. Many critics have examined the frame in *La de Bringas*, but these studies have focused exclusively on the opening chapter, which suggest the cenotaph that Francisco painstakingly builds for the Pez family as an instance of equivocal narration and problematic framing (Labanyi, *Gold Reframing*, Urey *Irony*). Nevertheless, none of these apt considerations analyze the intricate system of framing that the narrator develops for the remainder of *La de Bringas*. This section showed that the children of this text develop the illusion of referential setting by their continual presence and set up interpersonal conflict between characters.

Galdós reveals in *La de Bringas* an elegant balance between the frame of fiction and of the real through the child, similar to what he achieves with the *mise en abyme*. This novel appears self-aware of the limitations of striving for pure mimesis that many critics suggest in other European realist novels (Auerbach, Lukács, Brooks), but it also tests the limitations of the self-contained story that scholars observe in the modern novel (Barthes, Derrida). The narrator in *La de Bringas* places children in doorways and hallways in order to open up and close action; they literally stand in a scene yet figuratively arrange it. The reader bypasses their inner life, because the narrator avoids depicting it, and uses the position of the child to observe the developing action instead. Children also punctuate moments of tension between adults, as when Isabelita interrupts a potential kiss between Pez and Rosalía to announce Francisco’s recovered eyesight. Characters manipulate the child to instigate conflict. The child figure interacts with the social and the structural aspects of *La de Bringas*, speaking to the socioformal conjunction and the intersection between verbal signs and social situations proposed by Woloch and Furst. This becomes evident through characters as well, like when Rosalía uses Isabelita and Alfonsín as an
excuse to leave the palace with Pez to the Jardín del Retiro—they move from domestic to public settings through the figure of the child.

Both the narrator and characters manipulate the vicinity of the child to set up the reader’s angle of vision, interpersonal conflicts, and the pretense to move between private and social spaces. Galdós appears extremely aware of the socioformal elements in La deBringas, where every scene, metaphor, character, and event work seamlessly together. It is also one of the author’s shorter novels, demonstrating how economical length can remain impactful in realist prose, contradicting the tendency to accumulate detail to achieve accuracy in the genre. The child figure in La de Bringas underpins how it functions beyond motif and reflection of other characters by playing literal and figurative roles in scenes. Because the narrator obsesses more over the child than his characters in this novel, its figure reveals a wealth of information about him, including his manner of telling the story. La de Bringas, in spite of containing perhaps the greatest quantity of healthy and legitimate bourgeois children, advances how little adults think about them when the threat of sterility or illegitimate, sick, and dead children is non-existent. This novel characterizes the fall of a bourgeois family in the Bringas not because of the child, as in Fortunata y Jacinta and Torquemada, but regardless of the child. Where Jacinta and Torquemada attempt to salvage their marriages by obsessing over the search for an heir, the Bringas’ marriage erodes while they ignore the family nucleus and next generation.

The final section of Chapter 3 studied the ten-year-old Luisito from Miau, and concluded that this child emerges as a true character in the story, rather than a figure manipulated by the narrator and characters like the Pituso, Valentín, and Isabelita. Luisito remains the most analyzed child in Galdós. Early scholarship understood the boy in two ways: as prophetic through his dreams and as an innocent being (Correa, Sackett, Parker). More recently, though, critics have
recognized the child as psychologically developed (Haza, Rodgers, Ribbons “La vision”). Nevertheless, some studies still consider Luisito under the same light as a figure like Isabelita (Cabrejas, Gullón Galdós). This conflation might seem harmless, but avoiding the key differences between these children, between character and figure, overlooks that children play different roles from novel to novel, dreams notwithstanding. This section argued that Luisito experiences anger, pain, and curiosity, et al., emotions that come from experience and that characterize.

The section has thrown light on the disparity between Luisito and other child figures by comparing him to the aesthetically distant children found in La de Bringas. Beginning with Luisito, his schoolmate Posturitas throws rocks at him and calls his family epithets, including the insulting “Miau.” Luisito experiences anger, and avenges his family by attacking the bully. He also experiences doubt in his feelings when he visits Posturitas wake after the boy dies of an illness. The children in La de Bringas, in contrast, reenact their parents’ actions with little or no thought. They function like stage blocks by opening and closing scenes. Furthermore, the narrator fails to develop their inner life, providing them with no interior monologue. This becomes clear when Luisito and Isabelita’s dreams are compared side by side. The young boy sees Posturitas when he sleeps, talks with his own version of God, and experiences fear in these dreams. Isabelita’s visions reproduce events she that witnesses, but she fails to comment on them within and without the dream. Luisito contests the narrator’s position in his dreams through free indirect discourse, while the narrator in La de Bringas invades Isabelita’s dreams by incorporating his personal attitude regarding the novel’s themes and other characters’ flaws.

The contrasting elements between Luisito and the children from La de Bringas underscores Galdós’ commitment to creating children within realism that continually challenge
yet innovate the genre. Rather than reuse the device of a child’s dream and actions to foreshadow and comment upon a story, Galdós develops Luisito, Isabelita, and her peers with unique brushstrokes that set them apart. In particular, Miau advances a series of small and interconnected family tragedies, each felt and interpreted by Luisito. The boy never truly grasps—much less represents—Madrid’s problem, nor should he. The ten-year-old faces the world as a ten-year-old, making decisions that speak to his level of maturity, like choosing to live with Quintana because of her collection of stamps and religious trinkets that he likes. Although Luisito’s story comes up short as a Bildungsroman—he never fully understands nor assimilates to the adult world—his character exhibits Galdós’ keen ability construct major and minor characters that express a remarkable human likeness. As an updated David Copperfield and beneficiary to the picaresque, Luisito’s story displays a character that walks the streets of Madrid without the dire need of survival. He is a real boy that is allowed to remain as such, despite engaging the problems of the adult world.

V. Conclusion

In summary, this dissertation has scrutinized the problem of representing physically unrealistic children within the genre of realism. Galdós, differentiating his work from other European authors that place the child at the center of their novels, situates the figure of the child at the margin of story. This transition from the center to the margin promotes a child that lives in material reality yet remains aesthetically distant, which grants Galdós the freedom to create child figures that change in shape and meaning as stories unfold.

This study suggested the term of child’s play, which differentiates between the narrator and the character during the process of perceiving the child. It also implies observing the distinction between an absent, present, and dead child. The discrimination between the
perceiving agents and the state of the child reveals two key elements in novels by Galdós. First, it makes clear the personal significance and the social effect of children—imagined or real, alive or dead—on the adults that seek them. Second, understanding the image of the child explains how it functions in the overall structure of the novel—openings, closings, parallels, dramatic sequences, etc.—as well as explain the structural position of those that observe children.

As the Introduction expounded, Galdós benefits from the Romantic and Gothic images of the child. The Spanish author capitalizes upon this inheritance, though, through innovation, rather than repetition. From Wordsworth and Rousseau’s idyllic children, to Goethe’s angelic Mignon, to Dickens and Brönte’s discarded foundlings, which take center stage, Galdós rescues the child by placing it at the margin of story. Here, the figure of the child flourishes from novel to novel in the Novelas, almost out of reach but never out of sight in the eyes of the adults that need children the most. In Galdós’ Madrid, the bourgeois family suffers without the child, especially without a male heir (Fortunata y Jacinta, Torquemada). When families do enjoy this privilege, their disregard for their own children leads them to similar implosions (La de Bringas). Even in the case of Miau, where the child confronts the world, Galdós’ Madrid spares little room for childhood, and refuses to pass children into the realm of adulthood. In the Novelas, absent, present, and dead children express the power of their images in the novels’ structure, and underscore the constant erosion of private and public institutions that fail to mature beyond their underdeveloped state.
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