THE HOUSE OF DOÑA PERFECTA

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Of the scores of studies that Benito Pérez Galdós's *Doña Perfecta* has spawned, many rightly take into account the novel's marked symbolism and more than a few make it their exclusive concern. Oddly, those of us who have explored one or more aspects of the novel's vast symbolic network have neglected its capital image. This is not because the image is hidden. On the contrary, it may well be that we dismiss the novel's most prominent image precisely because it is so conspicuous.[1] Additionally, to suggest that the house is that image seems on first blush to advance a platitude—after all, not only are dwellings utterly mundane fixtures in narrative but many of the novels of the realistic period that Galdós's work helps to inaugurate in Spain unfold principally in domestic interiors. Yet, if we forestall the inclination to take the image of the house for granted, we find on closer scrutiny that it burgeons with meanings whose significance in this novel is anything but trivial. The house represents *Doña Perfecta*'s capital image and nexus between its peculiarly ecocentric (from the Greek "oikos" meaning "house") characters, not so much because most of the main action takes place in Perfecta's house, but because the novel's chief conflict is in many respects about her house. Moreover, as the ambiguity of my title suggests, "house" conveys more than a three-dimensional space. Indeed, "casa," in all of its polysemy—ranging from building and dwelling to property and estate, from family, lineage, and nobility to castle, extended household, and domain—summons the novel's cardinal themes even as it operates as the linchpin of its plot. As I hope to show, Galdós exploits that polysemy by pressing simile, metonymy, and prosopopoeia into service and by relentlessly invoking the house in sundry contexts throughout the novel.[2] By these means, the house acquires a wealth of meanings and resonant symbolic values that shed new light on the novel's economic blueprint, on the personalities and motives of its characters, and on Galdós's virtuosity. Beyond these claims, merely tracing references to propertied space in *Doña Perfecta* is akin to transacting a fresh reading in which the concrete world and reality, rather than abstract notions and ideology, hold the upper hand.

A Land of Contrasts

In the novel's opening chapter, smartly encased by the arrival and departure of "el tren mixto" that delivers Pepe Rey to Villahorrenda, the narrator characterizes houses adjacent to this appropriately named railway station as a "miserable caserío" (I: 71). Later, these same houses and others along the way to Orbajosa are mere "casuchas" and "vetustas casas de labor" (II: 72, 74). Once Pepe and his temporary guide, Licurgo, arrive in Orbajosa proper, we learn that its dwellings are no better: "Un amasijo de paredes deformes, de casuchas de tierra pardas y polvorosas como el suelo formaba la base [. . .] a cuyo amparo mil chozas humildes alzaban sus miserables frontispicios de adobes, semejantes a caras anémicas y hambrientas que pedían una limosna al pasajero" (II: 82). Sparing no rhetorical device to describe the dismal aspect of these

dilapidated structures, the narrator personifies them as hungry beggars who, even as they announce the dreary living conditions of the people of Orbajosa, serve to make Pepe's ultimate destination—his aunt's house—appear all the more grand. In marked contrast to the many houses mentioned since Pepe first set foot in the province, Doña Perfecta de Polentinos's abode is a "gran casa" which is depicted as "la única vivienda que tenía aspecto de habitabilidad cómoda y alegre" (II: 83-84). In Harriet S. Turner's words, this house is a place of "elevated stance, supreme order and decorum" ("The Shape" 131).

The narrator describes the interior of Perfecta's home on more than one occasion, referring among other things to "el ornato de sus paredes" and "[el] aseo que reinaba en todas y cada una de las partes de la vivienda" (V: 99-100). With respect to the house as literary image, Gaston Bachelard observes that it furnishes "dispersed images and a body of images at the same time" (3). Perfecta's home is no exception. Each of its rooms, from the home chapel to Cayetano's library or Perfecta's private study, has its own connotations according to its intended use, location, furnishings, views, and who frequents it.[3] For the moment, a glance at one room in particular will serve to orient our perspective on Orbajosa's most reputable residence.

The heart of Perfecta's home is clearly its vast dining room, which is located on the ground floor, "en el centro de esta galería" (IV: 94). This, the most frequented room in the house, is the place where Perfecta, Pepe, and the ever-present cleric, Inocencio Tinieblas, hold most of their contentious conversations. Of note among its "sólidos muebles" are the table (which Caballuco symbolically breaks in two later in the novel [XXII: 235]), the bird cage (its parrot is conspicuously associated with Inocencio [V: 100]), and the mansion's centerpiece: a clock with an immobile pendulum. To conclude from this last image that in Perfecta's home time stands still is to fall short of the narrator's own acerbic exposition, according to which this prosopopoeial clock says "perpetuamente que no" (V: 99).[4] While other dwellings in Orbajosa are personified as emaciated beggars who would stand much to gain from economic and political reforms, Perfecta's mansion is a well-appointed, majestic structure whose personified core forever says "no" to the progress that would usher in those reforms. Albeit less blissful than alleged, this house proves to be not only a tidy and comfortable mansion but much else, including an all-too-well protected fortress that is fully armed (both literally and figuratively) against progress and the likes of Pepe Rey.

The Houses of Rey and Polentinos

Once its grandeur is established, we learn that Pepe first approaches the house from the rear, viewing its no less grand and "hermosa huerta." If the front of the house, with its five iron balconies that resemble "cinco castillos," seems an imposing fortress, the rear, with its fertile orchard, would seem more penetrable—save that Perfecta has ordered that its only access to the outside world, its "puertecilla," be walled over (II: 84).[5] This early sign that Perfecta will staunchly protect her domain points to the orchard's contents, which consist of more than the fruit that Orbajosa's children are fond of stealing (XXXI: 282). That her daughter Rosario frequents the orchard is the more likely reason Perfecta has secured it. In keeping with Germán Gullón's perception that "los lugares exteriores tienden a presentar narraciones donde prima la acción"

("Espacio" 67), the sealed orchard affords the narratological possibility of action in an exterior space that remains within the perimeter of Perfecta's estate and that metonymically equates to her house.[6]

As Pepe approaches the orchard on horseback, he stretches to peer over its wall. Seeing Rosario for the first time, he remarks on her beauty and observes Inocencio, who will turn out to be her jealous guardian, standing next to her within the confines of the orchard. The importance of these telling moments before Pepe actually crosses the "arquitectónico umbral de la casa de Polentinos" (III: 91) is magnified by a deferral: Pepe is suspended in mid-arrival while the narrator proceeds with an analeptic chapter in which he supplies background information that explains Pepe's motives for visiting his aunt's house. Curiously, this third chapter—simply titled "Pepe Rey"—is more about property, finances, inheritance, family, and marriage than about Pepe.[7] It is also about houses of a different sort. In it we learn that the sole heiress of "el opulentísimo Polentinos" (Perfecta's deceased husband) is Rosario. Now "casa" no longer refers merely to a building, but also conjures its more conceptual meanings of estate and lineage—as in "fue descargándose la casa del enorme fardo de sus deudas" (III: 86). The narrator repeatedly points to the immense holdings of the Polentinos estate, which consist of a "riquísimo patrimonio" that includes "vastas tierras" (III: 86). Even if by comparison the Rey estate is not as sumptuous, we learn that it is comprised of an honestly earned fortune that includes, among other assets, lands in Orbajosa and the "hermosa casa de Puerto Real" (III: 87-88). In light of this information, Juan Rey's suggestion that his son, Pepe, marry Rosario entails a mingling of siblings' assets as well as a merger between old and newly acquired wealth. More pointedly, it entails the union of the affluent house of Polentinos, governed and administered by Perfecta—with Rosario as sole heiress—and the less affluent house of Rey, governed and administered by Juan—with Pepe as sole heir.

This proposed union of the two houses by wedlock (which in Spanish resounds all the more in the etymological kinship of "casa" and "casar") is a "primum mobile" behind the plot. The proposal's origins are related more to economic concerns—to family assets and the repayment of family debts—than to any idealistic matchmaking on the part of Juan Rey, for both the narrator and Juan refer repeatedly to the proposed marriage as "un proyecto" (III: 87-88) that likely stems from the debt of gratitude Perfecta owes her brother for having helped her restore the Polentinos estate to its former splendour: "¿Cómo te pagaremos ella [Rosario] y yo tan grandes beneficios?," Perfecta asks Juan in a letter (III: 86). Although this rhetorical question goes unanswered, if we judge the narrator's subsequent account, it appears that Juan's implicit—if belated—response is: by allowing your wealthy daughter to marry my son (III: 88). This interpretation, drawn from the shared context in which obligation, gratitude, and marriage proposal are presented, is later buttressed by these words from Perfecta to her nephew: "Basta que esta unión haya sido propuesta por tu padre, *a quien tanto debemos mi hija y yo*, para que la acepte" (XI: 146; my emphasis). Similar terms are later used by Inocencio, who puts it this way: "La señora me dice que tiene un compromiso con su hermano y que no se atreve a rechazar la proposición por éste hecha" (XXVI: 260). Juan presents this "proposición" to Pepe as a project that meets with Perfecta's approval and that he ought to consider.[8] This Pepe does with scant enthusiasm. His lack of interest in the project contrasts with his father's view of it as a genealogical and economic strategy for maintaining the integrity of his lineage and consolidating family wealth.

In effect, the marriage would convert the house of Polentinos-Rey into the house of Rey-Polentinos, for it entails not only an exchange of gifts but also the marriage of cousins. Juan's successful efforts to restore the Polentinos estate to its former splendour amount to a substantial gift that merits reciprocation from Perfecta. Her sense of indebtedness to her brother is manifest in the above citations; strictly speaking, that sense is not derived from a desire to repay a debt (for nothing has been lent) but from what Pierre Bourdieu calls "the unconscious obligation to give in return" (5). The counter-gift must differ from the gift—so as not to void it—and must be deferred. That much time passes between Juan's giving and Perfecta's counter-giving does not nullify the gift-exchange operation. On the contrary, to counter-give too soon is always to denounce "the initial gift retrospectively as motivated by the intention of obliging one" (Bourdieu 6).[9] Moreover, marriage with a patrilateral cross cousin is a prescription that meets the tacit self-interests of both brother and sister in maintaining their common lineage and family name—more so when the house of the latter lacks a male descendent. Rosario is thus the different, deferred, and endogamous counter-gift that Juan proposes and that Perfecta feels doubly obliged to grant. Clearly, Perfecta acquiesces from a sense of social and genealogical obligation rather than of her own free will.

To give Pepe an additional (also economic) incentive for travelling to Orbajosa, Juan reminds his son that there he owns "fincas que puedes examinar" (III: 88). As we know, Pepe will prove to be naïve not only about the petty politics of Orbajosa but also about the pecuniary motives of its most seemingly upright citizens. This stands to reason, given that he is already portrayed as a stolid engineer who appears to be unaware of the economic incentives that underpin his proposed marriage, which, considering the thoroughly pragmatic context in which it is presented, is more about real estate than real love.

A Room With Two Views

Once this key background information is in place, the narrator resumes recounting Pepe's arrival. Pepe crosses the threshold, enters Perfecta's abode, and is cordially received by her. This fourth chapter, which by its title, "La llegada del primo," inaugurates a new point of view—that of the house of Perfecta—contains subtly interwoven contradictions related to space and property. On the one hand, the room Rosario has prepared for her cousin signals a hearty and sincere welcome; on the other, Licurgo begins to hint of a lawsuit against Pepe that will hardly make him feel welcome (see "On Disputed Ownership," below). Rosario shows Pepe to his ground-floor guest room, which to him seems an "hermoso nido" (IV: 93). But if Pepe believes that he and Rosario will one day nest under the Polentinos roof like two lovebirds, he is sadly mistaken.[10] For much as Pepe proclaims, "¡qué hermoso cuarto es éste! [. . . .] Está convidando a la paz" (IV: 94), his stay here will bring anything but peace.

The guest room provides a clue to Pepe's predicament. This would-be nest is a room with two views. One window opens to the orchard, while the opposite window opens to the street and boasts a view of the cathedral. No great leap of the imagination is required to consider that orchards and gardens allude to fecundity and paradise, perhaps even to temptation, and that traditionally orchards are inviting sites for amorous exchanges.[11] Moreover, this

particular orchard is a privileged enclosure that is already and will continue to be associated with the prize Pepe has come to claim—Rosario. The orchard window proffers more than a view, however, since Pepe will use it to enter and exit the orchard surreptitiously. Additionally, Rosario's upstairs bedroom window also opens to the orchard; this later affords the two cousins clandestine communication via the common grounds (see for example XVI: 181). While this guest room window paints a promising picture and grants the access to the orchard which the sealed "puertecilla" denied, the window opposite presents a sterner view of the world. The cathedral, whose "corpulenta fábrica dominaba todo el pueblo" (III: 91), figuratively and literally embodies the forces that bring about Pepe's downfall. Figuratively, because of what I have elsewhere ("Lies" 482-86) called the mock ideological battle that is about to ensue, in which Inocencio uses every theological argument and psychological stratagem at his disposal to prevent Pepe from marrying Rosario. Literally, because Pepe's visits to the cathedral are in each instance turned against him, until the bishop bans him from it altogether.

As if to confirm that these two opposing panoramas—of the orchard and the cathedral—foreshadow conflict, Rosario, after showing Pepe both windows, issues a warning that he fails to heed: "No abras las dos ventanas a un tiempo, porque las corrientes de aire son muy malas" (IV: 94). Nöel M. Valis cites this same warning as an indication that "el cuarto de Pepe participará de dos mundos distintos," and fittingly refers to it as an insinuation of "un choque tácito, de obstáculos no dichos" (1034). Although Rosario is unaware of the ominous meaning of her words, in many respects the rest of the novel will deal with those sinister cross-currents that emblematically begin to make their presence felt after Pepe assures his aunt that "desde que entré en esta casa [. . .] me he sentido rodeado de la atmósfera de paz que deseo." Just then, as if to mar Pepe's idyllic vision of his aunt's estate, a figure blocks the view to the orchard: "Los cristales de la puerta que comunicaba el comedor con la huerta se oscurecieron por la superposición de una larga opacidad negra." The black opacity which the "Penitenciario de esta santa catedral" forms as he enters the scene is an animated counterpart to the immense shadow cast by the cathedral (V: 97).[12] Henceforth, that shadow will wind its way through Perfecta's home in ways that lead Pepe to surmise that "por lo visto, aquí el obispo gobierna las casas ajenas" (XIV: 170).

A False Sense of Belonging

Notwithstanding these inauspicious signs, Pepe is for a time so unaware of the extent to which his aunt's house is braced against outsiders that he presumes to have arrived at his own home. Upon first seeing the house, he tells Licurgo, "estamos ya en casa" (II: 84). Later, this entirely natural expression is qualified by Perfecta, who assures her nephew that "aquí puedes mandar como si estuvieras en tu casa" (V: 96). The narrator then discloses the nature of the delusion under which the hero will labour for some time: "Pepe [. . .] se creía ya en su propia casa." It is left to Inocencio, who is portrayed throughout as holding a privileged position within the Polentinos household, to hint that perhaps Pepe does not belong in the house after all—as when he reminds him of the proverb, "más sabe el loco en su casa que el cuerdo en la ajena" (V: 99). The subtext is that in Perfecta's house Inocencio is in his element, while Pepe is

not. Before any ideological sparring begins in earnest, Pepe's problematic standing within the Polentinos household is already apparent in these simple but telling references to the house.[13]

In spite of Pepe's unique status as Perfecta's nephew, gradually it becomes apparent that he is far from finding himself at home, like "Pedro en su casa" (XXI: 220), or even in the home of a close relative, while others who enjoy no legitimate status as family members seem to have the run of the place as long-standing insiders. This is not only true of Inocencio, who is "en la casa una especie de consejero áulico inamovible" and who considers himself "director espiritual de la casa" (XXVI: 256, 260),[14] but also of many other "orbajosenses" who frequent the place—like Jacinto, who is "tan amigo de esta casa," or "el tío Licurgo," with whom Perfecta has a "familiar conferencia" about Pepe's properties in the province (X: 134, 141). As Ricardo López-Landy notes, "todo Orbajosa está en casa de doña Perfecta" (58). Even María Remedios, whose concealed obsession (unreported until chapter XXVI) is inviolably linked to Perfecta's house—and who once was nothing more than a "lavandera en la casa de Polentinos"—lunches and prays together with her. What is more, she and Perfecta "ayudábanse mutuamente [. . .] en los negocios de la casa" (XXVI: 256). By means of these and other connections drawn between Perfecta, the house, and sundry characters, the narrator weaves an ecocentric web that links those characters to Perfecta. This is another way of saying that Perfecta rules over an extended household or domain that consists of many more individuals than those who bear the Polentinos name. (Only she knows the length of the "lista de todos los hombres de su servidumbre" or the sum of "sus cuentas numéricas con los aldeanos" [XXVIII: 276; XXXI: 282].) Aside from Perfecta, the only individuals who bear the Polentinos name are uninvolved or ineffectual members of the household: Perfecta's brother-in-law Cayetano is a hapless bibliophile who "no se mezclaba para nada en los asuntos de la casa" and is obsessed with reclaiming the town's "noble" past in his *Linajes de Orbajosa* (VI: 102; XXXII: 288),[15] while Rosario is so inadequate in determining her own fate that she remains housebound—when not confined to her room. In contrast, Perfecta's sphere of influence begins at home, extends throughout Orbajosa, and reaches as far as Madrid, where through her relationship with "excelentes damas" (XXXI: 282) she instigates the termination of Pepe's government assignment (he was to explore the economic potential of the Nahara region).[16] To be sure, Perfecta's authority is at its most regal in Orbajosa, whose judge, mayor, and bishop are in her pocket, and most of whose 7,324 citizens consider her a pillar of society. Many of those citizens might echo Caballuco's sentiment that she is "Mi madre, más que mi madre, mi señora, mi reina" or that "ella y su hacienda son antes que mi vida" (XXI: 220, 227). To the extent that her house is a provincial palace, she is its queen; to the extent it is a fortress, she is its commanding officer—one who looks upon her staff "como mira un general a sus queridos cuerpos de ejército" (XV: 176).[17] Soon enough, Pepe not only does not belong in Perfecta's house, he becomes its "estratégico enemigo" (XV: 176).

On Disputed Ownership

Assaults on Pepe come from all directions (even if secretly they emanate from María Remedios) and ultimately turn on casting him as an atheist intruder from Madrid who is not fit to live in Orbajosa and least of all in Perfecta's house. The legal threat posed by Licurgo, Pasolargo, and other litigants seems minor compared to the menacing inroads made by Inocencio

in portraying Pepe as unworthy of Rosario's hand. Nevertheless, that threat merits review because it mirrors the move to dislodge Pepe from Perfecta's home—which is not his property—inasmuch as it entails the appropriation of lands—which are his property. In both pending actions the aim is the same: to leave Pepe dispossessed.

The legal threat that Licurgo and company pose is a product of Pepe's standing as an absentee landlord and reveals that Perfecta, unlike her brother—who protected and restored the Polentinos estate—, has not lifted a finger to protect portions of the Rey estate that clearly reside within her sphere of influence. On the contrary, she may well have leveraged her position as Juan Rey's sister to make local homesteaders feel indebted to her for turning a blind eye to their encroachments on her nephew's property.[18] If this is so, and if Pepe were to succeed in evicting these squatters from his lands, then they would no longer be under Perfecta's protective wing—in effect, she would forfeit an important part of her retinue. Yet, since Pepe inherited this property ("Los Alamillos de Bustamante") from his mother and not his father, Perfecta has only a very remote claim, if any, to it (II: 74). True, Pepe seems to take a dim view of the value of the property and once thought of relinquishing it altogether (XI: 145), but those whose livelihood depends on it value it differently. "Los Alamillos" includes waterways, mills, and arable land which, according to Licurgo, "es la mejor tierra del país" (II: 74). Over the years, Licurgo and "otros muchos colindantes" (XI: 145)—all of whom, including their appointed "abogadillo," Jacinto, we associate with Perfecta's extended household—have been encroaching on Pepe's lands. Now those lands, according to an exasperated Pepe, "son de todo el mundo, porque lo mismo Licurgo que otros labradores de la comarca me han ido cercenando poco a poco, año tras año, pedazos de terreno, y costará mucho restablecer los linderos de mi propiedad" (X: 134).

This subplot about plots of land, which takes up considerable portions of the first half of the novel, thickens until Pepe resolves to rid himself of these "pleitistas" by leaving town (IV: 95; XI: 146). Examining his property had been among the reasons for visiting Orbajosa. Now his property's disputed ownership is the principal reason for leaving it.

The House Becomes a Contested Site

But by this time Pepe and Rosario are in love, and Pepe cannot abandon so easily what proleptically he referred to earlier as "esta casa [. . .] [donde] me gustaría vivir y morir" (IX: 124). When he shares with Perfecta his plan to wed and depart with Rosario forthwith, Perfecta argues against marrying precipitously. He chooses not to defy her and agrees to stay (XI: 146-47), even if by now most "orbajosenses" would cheer his departure. Prominent among those who call for it is the bishop, who, according to Perfecta, "está muy disgustado porque te tengo en mi casa." Nevertheless, Perfecta abides by a higher moral imperative than that of mollifying church authorities, and states publicly that "mi sobrino es mi sobrino y no puedo echarle de mi casa" (XIV: 170).[19] Her duty to family apparently outweighs her duty to church—but only apparently. Perfecta openly opposes her nephew's exit, while behind closed doors she continues to pull strings in hopes that he will vacate the house of his own accord (compare XI: 146-48 with XXXI: 282). In time, Pepe's reasons for staying no longer have anything to do with the Polentinos estate, his own property, or the economic potential of the Nahara region. Instead,

they centre solely on his love for Rosario—a love whose sincerity we have no reason to doubt.[20] Despite Pepe's altruistic aspirations, however, real estate (albeit of another kind) lingers in his path. Once Rosario becomes not only the mansion's resident heiress but also its mysteriously sequestered captive, Pepe is forced to confront the house as a material object that stands between him and his loved one. Accordingly, in the second half of the novel, the house takes on added significance, initially as a convent and prison, then as a medieval fortress and contested site. For Pepe, the house is no longer "la vivienda de mi tía" but, derisively, "aquella casa de Orbajosa" which he would rather forsake—but not until he has wed its captive (II: 84; XIV: 171).

While still a "huésped de esta casa" (XI: 150), Pepe manages to meet furtively with Rosario in the middle of the night. The secret meeting, whose arrangement is made via the orchard windows to which I referred earlier, takes place in the mansion's ground-floor chapel and is described in the novel's most ironic chapter, "Luz a oscuras." Here the house takes on the qualities of a private convent whose only novice is a mysteriously cloistered Rosario. We learn that mass is celebrated in Perfecta's home, that the chapel is where "los Polentinos tenían los santos de su devoción doméstica," and that Rosario's father is buried beneath the stone on which she and Pepe exchange a blend of amorous and theological pledges (XVII: 182, 188). A paradigm of ecocentricity, Rosario's grim romantic wish is that "cuando Dios quiera llevarnos de este mundo" she and Pepe likewise be buried in the house (XVII: 188).

In questioning Pepe's faith, Rosario refers to her own as though she were little more than a metonymic extension of the house. Christ is the figure "que adoramos en casa"; he is not "mi tutelar" but "tutelar de mi casa" (XVII: 183, 188). While idiomatic and conventional in the context of a home chapel, Rosario's words nevertheless betray her lack of individual identity and free will. She is less a sovereign being than a sheltered ward—as much of her mother as of the house that cloisters her and that, ironically, she reveres. This synecdochic blurring of distinctions between persons and the spaces they inhabit is frequent in the novel (for example, the onus of Pepe meeting the Troya sisters matters less than the onus of having visited their home [XIV: 166-67]), and applies not only to Rosario and other "amigos de la casa," but especially to Perfecta.[21] In this same chapter, when Rosario asks Pepe what opinion he has formed of her mother, he replies that he holds her in high esteem, but quickly adds that "es preciso reconocer que el demonio ha entrado en esta casa" (XVII: 185).

That statement resonates with a question Pinzón asks in the following chapter, "¿qué demonios de casa es ésta?" (XVIII: 196). Pepe replies that it is his aunt's house.[22] Lieutenant-colonel Pinzón, who arrives in Orbajosa with a brigade charged with stamping out factionalism in the province, is, by chance, a friend of Pepe's and soon becomes his accomplice. Although bloodless within the scope of the novel's main plot, the sweeping military intervention undertaken by Madrid's central government proves to be extremely invasive, as it entails not only the replacement (to Perfecta's horror) of the mayor, judge, and governor, but also the billeting of soldiers in many of Orbajosa's homes as well as searches conducted "de casa en casa" (XVIII: 194-95; XX: 215; XXV: 250). The troops' arrival and Pinzón's prescribed lodging in Perfecta's house coincide with a bitter confrontation between Pepe and Perfecta, in which the former minces no words in accusing the latter of doing everything in her power to prevent him from marrying Rosario (XIX: 202-03). At first, Perfecta magnanimously blames herself for "todo lo

desagradable que en mi casa ocurre" (X: 202), but the conversation turns sour moments later: "No quiero que te cases con Rosario," she affirms. Pepe is defiant: "Me casaré con Rosario" (XIX: 206). After further debate, the battle lines are drawn: "Yo te niego a mi hija, yo te la niego." His reply sidesteps any references to marriage: "¡Pues yo la tomaré!" (XIX: 208).[23] Pepe's infelicitous use of the verb "tomar" in part explains why later, in a letter to his father, he writes, "su hermana de usted cree a pie juntillas que yo voy a tomar por asalto su vivienda, y no es dudoso que detrás de la puerta habrá alguna barricada" and "el asalto y toma de la casa es una ridícula preocupación feudal de su hermana de usted" (XXVIII: 275-76). But, given that Orbajosa is occupied by troops that are led by a brigadier (Batalla) whom Perfecta believes to be a close friend of Pepe's, and given Pepe's unambiguous verbal threat, the measures Perfecta takes to protect her home are hardly unwarranted. At the same time, Pepe's effrontery, which is tantamount to what Brian J. Dendle aptly refers to as an open declaration of war (60), is less the product of brazen self-confidence than of the confidence he places in his ally, Pinzón, who has agreed to conspire with him in carrying out an elaborate scheme to prepare Rosario for elopement. After having wavered often between staying and leaving Perfecta's house, finally, Pepe is resolute: "Adiós, señora. Me retiro de esta casa" (XIX: 210). In effect, however, Pepe vacates the house without leaving it, since, for all intents and purposes, Pinzón has taken his place as his double within its premises.

Although Pinzón represents a forcible intrusion by the presumably odious central government, he is well received in Perfecta's home. This highlights the extent to which objections to Pepe's presence were motivated by a desire to frustrate the arranged marriage rather than by ideological concerns. The narrator informs us that neither Perfecta nor Inocencio deny Pinzón access to Rosario, and that "a los tres días de alojamiento había logrado hacerse muy simpático en la casa." In short order, Pinzón, a complete stranger, attains the status of insider that eluded Pepe—a status the narrator describes again in terms of the house: "Adquirió en la casa de Polentinos auge y hasta familiaridad" (XX: 212). Pinzón claims not to know Pepe and tells Perfecta that Brigadier Batalla and Pepe are close friends. Fearing the worst, Inocencio proclaims that all of Orbajosa is ready to defend Perfecta "antes que consentir un atropello en esta honrada casa" (XX: 216). As to Perfecta herself, her concerns begin with the house and end with her honour: "Quizás pase yo por el trance de ver asaltada mi casa, de ver que me arrancan de los brazos a mi querida hija, de verme atropellada e insultada del modo más infame" (XXI: 222). To assuage these fears, she transforms her home into a garrison with half-a-dozen armed men.

But Perfecta is unaware that her garrison is occupied by her foe's accomplice, who resides in Pepe's former guest room. By suborning Librada—one of Perfecta's servants—, Pinzón is able to keep the lines of communication between Pepe and Rosario open and, before this scheme is discovered by Perfecta, to facilitate visits by Pepe—who enters the house disguised as Pinzón. Thus, while Perfecta is preoccupied more than ever with her home ("Necesito tener buena gente en casa "; "No estoy segura en mi casa" [XXI: 222]), she is unaware that its security is compromised by her own house guest—until she suspects that "algo malo en la casa ocurría" (XXIII: 236). Perfecta uncovers Pepe's elaborate scheme by interrogating her servants and, in keeping with her ecocentric fixation, refers to the punishment that awaits the guilty one in these terms: "Me parece que alguna no dormirá en mi casa mañana" (XXIII: 237).

The house in which Pepe and Rosario wanted to live and be buried thus becomes the site of a live-or-die struggle between outsiders and insiders which parallels an impending armed conflict between centralist and separatist forces. In turn, both conflicts are viewed by Perfecta as a "cuestión de moros y cristianos" (XXV: 249). Subsequent to the troops' arrival, Perfecta's discourse as well as that of most characters (including the formerly peace-loving Pepe) turn bellicose. Ironically, Pepe considers that the love he and Rosario share gives him the right to use force to wrest her from the house: "El amor que me tiene y que corresponde al mío, ¿no me da derecho a abrir como pueda, las puertas de su casa y sacarla de allí?" (XXVIII: 273). Much as he portrays Perfecta's viewpoint as hyperbolic—believing that she has imagined "que voy a atacar su casa para robarla su hija, como los señores de la Edad Media embestían un castillo enemigo" (XXVIII: 275)—the die is cast for a confrontation that indeed is analogous to the clichéd storming of a castle to rescue its imprisoned heroine.[24] After all, the house, whose façade resembles a castle, is guarded by armed men to prevent the presumed abduction of its heiress, while her errant suitor is allied with "enemy" troops who conduct house-to-house searches in the province. Appropriately, Perfecta's house itself announces the sound of that confrontation's fury.

The House Trembles

As the novel's climax approaches, the narrator twice employs a technique similar to one he employed earlier, when he postponed and later resumed recounting Pepe's arrival in Perfecta's home (see II: 84 and III: 91). The technique consists of depicting concurrent actions by narrating an event, then switching chronotopes to narrate analeptically along a path that leads to retelling the same event from a different point of view. This procedure broadens the perspective that informs the event, underscores its importance, and makes it susceptible of acquiring the symbolic value that signs earn by virtue of repetition. Both twice-told events to which I allude are related to Perfecta's house.

When Perfecta and her retinue goad Caballuco into resisting Madrid's troops, they succeed in transforming his initial despondency into outright fanaticism. "¡Viva Orbajosa, muera Madrid!," he exclaims, and punctuates the battle cry as follows: "Descargó la mano sobre la mesa con tal fuerza, que retembló el piso de la casa" (XXII: 235). Two chapters later, Rosario, alone in her upstairs bedroom, addresses God in a monologue in which she confesses among other things that "un impulso terrible me arroja de esta casa" (XXIV: 240). Her monologue ends as she drifts into a dream in which various members of Perfecta's extended household appear distorted. Just when "un hombre azul"—we presume this is Pepe disguised in Pinzón's uniform—is about to rescue her, "de súbito sonó un estampido, un golpe seco que estremeció la casa" (XXIV: 242). The sound is caused by the same event told two chapters earlier: Caballuco's fist has broken the peace and, with it, Perfecta's dining-room table.[25] This action is charged with symbolic meaning. When recounted the first time, it represents a resounding clarion call to resist the central government and foreshadows the first salvo fired by the factionalist resistance movement that Caballuco will lead. When recounted the second time—now within the context of Rosario's dream—it represents the proleptic intervention of Pepe's attempt to elope with Rosario and foreshadows the first shot fired in the murder Caballuco will commit. In

both accounts, parallel in their symbolism, the house trembles with a violent sound that augurs greater violence to come.

That violence comes at the hands of Caballuco—and we will know it also by what Chamberlin calls its "climactic sounds" (see "The Significance" 82-83). First, however, just as he was brought by Perfecta and her retinue to declare his fanatical separatism, Caballuco must be brought by María Remedios to the scene where Perfecta will order him to kill Pepe. Once Remedios steers Caballuco to the orchard in pursuit of Pepe, she rushes to the front of the property and, "cogiendo el aldabón de la puerta principal, llamó ..., llamó tres veces con toda el alma y la vida" (XXX: 281). A chapter later, Rosario confesses to her mother that she has met secretly with Pepe and has agreed to marry him. Overwrought with guilt, she pleads with her mother: "Arrójeme usted de esta casa, donde he nacido" (XXXI: 285). Perfecta's understandable distress turns to alarm when she learns that Rosario has agreed to meet with her lover on this very night. Yet Perfecta's response has less to do with Rosario than with the house: "¡Ese hombre aquí, en mi casa!," she exclaims. At once, the house itself voices her alarm: "En el mismo instante oyéronse tres golpes, tres estampidos, tres cañonazos. Era el corazón de María Remedios que tocaba a la puerta, agitando la aldaba. La casa se estremecía con temblor pavoroso" (XXXI: 286). This is the same event told earlier—this time from the viewpoint of Perfecta's home. The sound of the twice-told door-knocking echoes the sound of Caballuco's twice-told fist-pounding and foreshadows more lethal sounds to come. At the same time, the narrator's choice of the word "cañonazos" to characterize the passionate thuds that make the house shudder suggests the very storming of a castle, which Pepe once thought ludicrous.

The narrator, who, throughout the novel, foregrounds Perfecta's house more than any other building in Orbajosa, is nearly as ecocentric as Perfecta. In these climactic moments, the mansion itself reacts to Caballuco and Remedios's fury and operates as a sounding board that amplifies the magnitude of the conflict. The manner in which the narrator repeatedly reports that the house trembles may seem overstated, but it lets the sound blasts that signal Pepe's death at the close of Chapter XXXI stand out: "Oyóse un tiro. Después otro."

The Conflict Between Content and Continent

Caballuco kills Pepe in compliance with Perfecta's orders, which are fired off—"disparó estas palabras"—as though she pulled the trigger herself (XXXI: 287). This does not exonerate Caballuco as much as it highlights Perfecta's complicity in the killing. But tracing prior causes leads to the conclusion that Remedios (and not Perfecta) is the preeminent instigator of the complex process that leads to Pepe's demise. As Richard A. Cardwell (37) and others have noted, the narrator divulges that Remedios is "la oculta fuente de donde aquel revuelto río ha traído sus aguas" (XXVI: 254). A review of her conduct confirms this: Remedios conspires with her uncle to poison Perfecta's mind; she is a "chismosa" who spreads calumnies about Pepe throughout Orbajosa;[26] she badgers Inocencio into ordering Caballuco to accompany her on what turns out to be a disastrous mission to give Pepe "un susto"; she bullies Caballuco into climbing over the orchard wall in pursuit of Pepe; and she announces, with "tres cañonazos," that Pepe is in the orchard and that Caballuco is available to defend the household. Thus, while

Perfecta does fire off the words that impel Caballuco to pull the trigger, it is Remedios who sets the stage for the killing and fires off the metaphorical cannon shots that impel Perfecta to utter those words.

Insofar as Remedios is the prime mover behind Pepe's demise, examining her motives is as germane to an understanding of the novel as examining the motives behind Juan Rey's ill-conceived project to marry his son to Rosario. That project, which initially was more about real estate than real love, clashes directly with Remedios's project, which is even more transparently materialistic. Her aim—to see her son married to Rosario—is the product of her own cupidity, maternal passion, and deep-seated sense of inferiority. Catherine Jagoe rightly suggests that Remedios's disquietude is also a question of class (57). Although the narrator goes out of his way to specify the extent to which Remedios is driven by an overpowering maternal instinct (XXVI: 255), she is no less driven by a zealous desire to improve her social and economic standing. Note how painstakingly aware she is of her family's ignoble lineage:

Por más que echemos humos, siempre será usted [Inocencio] el hijo del tío Tinieblas, el sacristán de San Bernardo . . . , y yo no seré nunca más que la hija de Ildefonso Tinieblas, su hermano de usted, el que vendía pucheros, y mi hijo será el nieto de los Tinieblas . . . que tenemos un tenebrario en nuestra cesta, y nunca saldremos de la oscuridad, ni poseeremos un pedazo de terruño donde decir: "Esto es mío." (XXVII: 263-64)

The gloomy and impecunious house of Tinieblas would stand much to gain from becoming the illustrious and opulent house of Tinieblas-Polentinos. This serves as a reminder that Juan Rey's project was from the start both similar to and on a collision course with the Tinieblas project. Compared with the dire need and passion that drives the latter, the Rey project, at first, seems dispassionate and merely pragmatic—until Pepe falls in love and wants Rosario for her own sake rather than as a means of consolidating family wealth. Henceforth, the novel may be read as fundamentally depicting a clash between two passions that espouse two conflicting ways of viewing Perfecta's home. On the one hand, Pepe's many references to the house are attributable to his interest in what it contains: Rosario—for her own sake. On the other hand, Remedios is interested in the house of Perfecta itself—in the Polentinos estate—, while marrying her son to Rosario is only a means by which the Tinieblases might join the ranks of the upper class that Remedios venerates. This underlying opposition between content (what the house contains) and continent (the house itself) is not clearly discernible until Inocencio gives a full accounting of what he and Remedios desire:

Nada más natural que nuestro deseo de ver a Jacintillo emparentado con esa gran familia, la primera de Orbajosa; nada más natural que nuestro deseo de verle dueño de las siete casas del pueblo, de la dehesa de Mundogrande, de las tres huertas del cortijo de Arriba, de la Encomienda y demás predios urbanos y rústicos que posee esa niña. (XXVI: 260)

Inocencio's detailed inventory of the Polentinos holdings, including "las siete casas del pueblo," exposes his calculated envy, while his derisive reference to Rosario as "esa niña" lays bare his

hypocrisy. Ironically, Perfecta, who is well aware of her daughter's worth ("mi hija es rica"), wrongly believes that Pepe's longing for Rosario is motivated by avarice (XIX: 207), while, in reality, Pepe's love is genuine and Perfecta's ostensible friends, Inocencio and Remedios, are the avaricious ones.

Conclusion

No single image advances a more comprehensive synopsis of *Doña Perfecta* than that of the house. The novel's epistolary dénouement reinforces this impression. In letters to a friend, Cayetano writes of the alarm that Pepe's death produced "en esta pacífica y honrada mansión" (XXXII: 289) and clarifies doubtful destinies. Inocencio is housebound: "Huye de la gente, se encierra en su casa, no recibe a nadie." Fittingly, he lives alone, not in "una casa" but in "una casucha," and plans to abandon Orbajosa for Rome (XXXII: 294). Rosario is no longer a ward of the house as either convent or domestic prison; she resides instead in a madhouse (XXXII: 293). Perfecta, who normally creates for herself "una corteza [. . .] encerrándose dentro, como el caracol en su casa portátil," often speaks of the black cloud that hangs over the household (XXXI: 282; XXXII: 295). In conformity with the novel's closing maxim, which reminds us that there are people who seem good but are not, the house that at first seems peaceful and honourable is visited by violence and dishonour. Cayetano concludes in the novel's final page—in contrast to its introduction, where the house is "alegre"—that "esta casa está muy triste desde que falta Rosario."[27]

The uncommon prevalence of the common noun "casa" in *Doña Perfecta* is attributable to much more than its expected presence as a necessary and everyday spatial marker.[28] As we have seen, the house of Perfecta achieves the status of capital image because it represents not only the Polentinos lineage and an extended household but also a bitterly contested space. That space encloses the treasure that is openly sought by Pepe, jealously guarded by Perfecta, and secretly sought by Remedios and Inocencio. These characters' conflicting interests in trespassing, safekeeping, and appropriating the house account for its prominence in many of the novel's scenes—from those early moments when the grandeur of Perfecta's home is established to the dénouement to which I have just referred. Meanwhile, even the novel's two most significant subplots (the impending lawsuits and the arrival of troops in Orbajosa) are linked to the motif of the house as a contested space—since they are also about contested spaces, property rights, and territoriality. Yet, what is most striking about the house of Perfecta is not so much its multiple symbolic values as the peculiar ecocentricity of the characters who populate it.

We have witnessed how often Perfecta shows more concern for her house than for Rosario, whom she tends to construe as an heiress to be shielded rather than a daughter to be cherished. Her house is an extension of her honour, a sacrosanct space over which she must exercise complete control: to her it represents, as Freud would have it, her own "organism as a whole" (117). In many respects, the house is Perfecta.[29] Ricardo Gullón has observed that in this novel "la concentración espacial favorece la fusión del personaje con el medio" (25). Although that fusion is especially true of Perfecta, she is not the only ecocentric character who, in pivotal moments, expresses her concerns in terms of the house: Rosario refers to it when she really means to refer to herself, while Inocencio, whose frequent ecocentric allusions are usually ob-

lique, also refers to the house when he really means to refer to Perfecta, to the household in general (including, no doubt, himself), or to Rosario. To add yet another example to the many already noted, we recall that once Pepe has thoroughly mocked the Virgin's dress, what Inocencio gleefully points out is not who knitted it but that "ese vestido, tan grotesco a los impíos ojos de usted, salió de esta casa" (IX: 132). Secondary characters likewise invoke the house frequently, usually with a sense of exaggerated reverence and loyalty to Perfecta. Only Pepe's references to the house waver, as his relationship with its august clan shifts from that of family member to that of unwelcome guest, and, finally, to that of adversary.

In his address to the Spanish Royal Academy in 1897, Galdós includes dwellings among the key components of the external world which the novel endeavours to reproduce: "Imagen de la vida es la Novela, y el arte de componerla estriba en reproducir [. . .] las viviendas, que son el signo de familia" ("La sociedad" 159). In *Doña Perfecta* that component is copiously reproduced, and one of its meanings is indeed "familia." But Perfecta's house only accommodates a vestige of a family, which Inocencio and other townsfolk expand in their unofficial status as members of an extended household. In this way, the house accrues shades of meaning that refer not only to the Polentinos lineage and estate, but also to that extended household—and ultimately to Orbajosa and traditionalist Spain. As edifice, the house is variously portrayed as home, mansion, nest, prison, convent, madhouse, and medieval castle. Yet Perfecta's house is also an archetypal symbol, a spatial metaphor for a life span (as womb and tomb), a synecdochic reference to individual characters, a leitmotif linked to broader questions of property, economic inequity, and territorial rights, a personification of the status quo, and a topos of power, wealth, family, tradition, and religion. In a sense, the novel corroborates Michel de Certeau's contention that the dwelling is ultimately "the reference of every metaphor" (52).

While for most scholars *Doña Perfecta* has stood out, in Mario Santana's words, "for being mainly concerned with seemingly abstract issues" (283), it is also laden with concrete ones that merit further study. Germán Gullón observes that in this novel "el móvil económico brilla por su ausencia," yet he adds discerningly that "sin embargo, el lector percibe su sombra" (*La novela* 62). To trace images of the house in *Doña Perfecta* is to uncover the source of that shadow, to appreciate the novel's considerable economic and peculiarly ecocentric attributes, and to be struck afresh by the unvarnished motives of its characters.

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NOTES

[1] Even an exiguous summary of the special significance scholars attribute to many of the novel's common and proper nouns would fill several pages. Orbajosa, for example, is thought by Gustavo Correa (35-48) and others to symbolize traditionalist Spain, while at one point in the novel the image of a cloudless sky "stands for the novel as a whole"—as Harriet S. Turner lucidly explains ("The Shape" 131). Some scholars, like Anthony N. Zahareas, extol the novel's "symbolic realism" (32), while others, like Peter Standish, feel the novel's symbolism is "transparent" and "crude" (224, 230). Most critics accept many of the novel's characters, whether viewed as flat or round, as symbols in their own right (indeed, the narrator himself declares that Pepe Rey could pass for "un hermoso y acabado símbolo" [III: 90]). Character studies aside, some essays focus on particular images (for example, light and darkness, the figure of Christ, bird imagery, or the garden and its oleanders—see respectively Vernon A. Chamberlin, J. B. Hall, Joseph G. Kobylas, and Nöel M. Valis), while many more delve into various aspects of the novel's imagery only in passing. Although Donald C. Buck does not view the house as the novel's capital image, to my knowledge he is the only critic who stresses its importance. Buck takes the cathedral to be Orbajosa's dominant building but also studies Perfecta's house as another principal architectural space in the novel. His interpretation of that space, informed by Daphne Spain's *Gendered Spaces*, supports his claim that Perfecta is a victim of a "male-dominant power structure" (421). Chad C. Wright studies the image of the house also, although in *La desheredada* (and to some extent in *La Fontana de Oro*) rather than in *Doña Perfecta*. He views Isidora Rufete's house as "an allegory of the 1873-1875 First Republic of Spain" and provides particularly insightful and comprehensive interpretations of the interior of the house and its furnishings ("The Representational" 232, 233-41).

[2] Akiko Tsuchiya judiciously argues that *Doña Perfecta* "deconstructs the very notion of an absolute truth" through irony, self-referentiality, and explicitly announced polysemy (11). In conformity with her argument, the polysemy of "casa" is announced (albeit implicitly rather than explicitly) through tropology and repetition. In some contexts, it is difficult to decide whether "casa" refers merely to a building, to its residents, to the Polentinos estate or lineage, to Perfecta alone, or to an extended household.

[3] Any room can metonymically represent the house as a whole. Turner astutely submits that for Galdós the tension between part and whole "emerges as intrinsic to the representation of what is real" ("Metaphors" 43). That hermeneutic tension is likewise present when we, as readers, determine the reality of what is represented. Buck proposes that rooms in Perfecta's house can be divided into private spaces that are either "male or female rooms" and public spaces that are both; while he considers these parts of the house to be variously gendered, the house as a whole is for him a "clearly male construct" (419). My approach avoids resolving this tension between part and whole; it stresses instead the elasticity of the image of the house and strives to glean its diverse meanings without regard to gender and without insisting on the full presence of any one meaning.

[4] Writing about *La Fontana de Oro*, Amado Alonso remarks that "si el reloj de las arruinadas aristócratas no anda, es porque representa a una fracción de españoles que se empeñan en desconocer la marcha del tiempo" (208). Writing about a similarly stalled clock in *La desheredada*, Wright notes that "this paralysis of time demonstrates that the static and hollow ideology of the Republic is no longer a valid political concept" ("The Representational" 237).

[5] The iron balconies that resemble castles also signal Perfecta's iron will and protectiveness. As Germán Gullón remarks in his article on *La sombra*, it is not unusual for Galdós to describe "la fachada de una casa como reflejo del carácter de sus habitantes" (351). With respect to the orchard, the text contains a discrepancy that has gone unnoticed: later in the novel, Pepe uses a key to enter the orchard from the street; the key would be useless if indeed the "puertecilla" were "tapiada" (see XXIX: 278; XXX: 280; XXXI: 287). Whether the gate is sealed or locked, the implications are the same: Perfecta means to safeguard Rosario and the fruits of the Polentinos estate. In Wright's words, "el sellar la puerta del jardín

es sólo un ejemplo de la manera en que Doña Perfecta controla el espacio" ("Un millón" 153).

[6] Juan-Eduardo Cirlot suggests the converse, namely, that a house symbolizes an enclosed garden (128). In many respects, house and garden are congruous symbols.

[7] The chapter's original title in the manuscript was "Antecedentes," which carried less punch than the amended title, "Pepe Rey," yet better reflected the chapter's contents (see Rodolfo Cardona 18).

[8] Apparently, Perfecta had thought of the same project herself, but claims that she did not suggest it to her brother because Pepe is highly educated, while Rosario is not (III: 88). The spuriousness of this claim is opaque to most modern readers because we forget that a limited education, rather than an extensive one, was one of the attributes of a virtuous woman in mid-nineteenth century Spain. As Alicia Andreu submits, the virtuous woman lives separated from "toda tentación que pueda dañar su condición virtuosa, protegiéndose de elementos dañinos o destrucción a la moral, incluyendo la educación" (75).

[9] Perfecta acknowledges that her gratefulness to her brother will not be short-lived: "Mi agradecimiento durará toda mi vida" (III: 86).

[10] Bird imagery is common throughout Galdós's work and has been studied by Chamberlin and Wright, among others. In *Doña Perfecta*, which enjoys its share of bird imagery (see especially Kobylas), this image of the nest is carried forward later, when Rosario and Pepe are depicted as two lovebirds "agitando las alas" in the orchard (VIII: 118-19).

[11] Nöel M. Valis has studied the importance of the orchard and, with eminent perspicacity, the symbolism of its oleanders. She also notes the manner in which "Galdós refuerza las conexiones entre su héroe y el jardín" by having Rosario show Pepe the guest room windows to which I have just referred (1034). For Valis, the garden represents "el mundo en sí, la pureza, el alma, lo femenino, y ante todo, el paraíso" (1032).

[12] Valis associates this black opacity with an unrevealed, secret, and menacing reality (1034). Referring to this same image, Eamonn Rodgers warns that "it would be oversimplifying Don Inocencio's role to see him exclusively as the personification of religious fanaticism, for his behaviour springs in large measure from social and economic causes which have very little to do with religion" (54). Rodgers is correct, although it is also true that religion helps preserve Orbajosa's economic and social order. The parallel I draw between the black shadows cast by Inocencio and those cast by the cathedral is in evidence elsewhere, as when a winding street is "sombreada toda por la pavorosa catedral, que al extremo alzaba su negro muro carcomido" or when Inocencio's semblance is described as "una recortada sombra negra y espesa" (XII: 154; XXIV: 241).

[13] Notably, that ideological sparring begins on economic grounds, with Pepe prescribing modern capitalist remedies to cure Orbajosa's poverty (see Zahareas 40-42). To underscore how each reference to the house reflects a distinct point of view, the four lines just cited are worth parsing: in the first, Pepe believes himself to be at home ("en casa"); in the second, Perfecta accepts him as if at home ("como si estuvieras en tu casa"); in the third, the narrator highlights Pepe's mistaken belief ("se creía ya en su propia casa"); finally, Inocencio implies that Pepe is actually an outsider ("en la [casa] ajena"). In context, the referent of "casa" in Inocencio's proverb is not merely Perfecta's house but all of Orbajosa.

[14] Inocencio's pervasive influence in Perfecta's household brings to mind a warning issued in *La desheredada*. In a letter that Santiago Quijano-Quijada dictates "in articulo mortis," he counsels Isidora Rufete not to open her door to "los señores de hábito negro, los cuales, si les dejaras, pronto imperarían en ti y en tu casa" (250).

[15] Nevertheless, Cayetano's obsession is linked to the themes I am exploring. Oblivious to what goes on in the house, he is interested, instead, in the history of the houses of Orbajosa, in tracing lineages and nobility (he claims, for example, that "en todas las épocas de nuestra historia los orbajosenses se han distinguido por su hidalguía, por su nobleza, por su valor, por su entendimiento" [X: 141]), and therefore in raising the status of the house of Polentinos. Additionally, it is Cayetano who informs us that Rosario's supposed madness is an inherited trait—perhaps caused by the inbreeding that is sometimes practiced by nobility (XVI: 177; XXXII: 292).

[16] Although Pepe suspects that his decommission is the result of foul play, he claims not to accuse either Perfecta or any of her household (an ill-defined lot): "No crea usted—dijo Rey—que acuso a las personas de esta casa" (XI: 149). Only later does he accuse Perfecta directly (XIX: 202).

[17] This is not to imply that Perfecta is never depicted as engaged in ordinary household chores, even if these mostly consist of issuing orders to servants or controlling "los asuntos de la casa" (VI: 102). Yet her activities only occasionally take on menial, domestic overtones, as when we are told that "Doña Perfecta andaba por la casa tras sus quehaceres" (VIII: 112).

[18] J. E. Varey has remarked that the lawsuits in which Pepe is involved "may be reminiscent of the practice in the provinces during the First Republic of abolishing absentee landlordism, and in particular of the backstairs negotiations which characterised such practices." He adds, however, that "it would be wrong to insist too much on such detailed historical parallels" (66).

[19] Privately, Perfecta directly contradicts this statement when she flatly disowns her nephew in this fashion: "Mi sobrino no es mi sobrino" (XXV: 248). By disowning him, she casts away any sense of family obligation she may have felt when she approved the marriage of the two cousins.

[20] Among the points on which José F. Montesinos and I disagree with respect to *Doña Perfecta* is the questioning of Pepe's love for Rosario, which Montesinos characterizes as "mucho idilio en poco tiempo" (189). Even if the narrator's description of Rosario better captures the virtues of her character than the contours of her comeliness, Pepe has been told by his father that she is virtuous and attractive, confirms the latter when he first sees her, and has several occasions to be and speak with her before declaring his love. Moreover, a love-at-first-sight is not beyond the pale of human experience.

[21] The Troya sisters' humble abode, with its "tragaluces y agujeros," stands in sharp contrast to Perfecta's mansion. Pepe is struck by its inferiority as soon as he enters: "El aspecto de la miseria, que con horribles esfuerzos pugnaba por no serlo, afligió al joven" (XII: 157).

[22] The devil motif in *Doña Perfecta* is complex and worthy of study in its own right. Suffice it to say here that when Pepe thinks of believing in the devil, he imagines that he is one himself. Later, Caballuco deems him the equivalent of a legion of devils (XVII: 188; XXI: 224). The bedeviled-house motif surfaces again when Rosario blames devils for the change that has come over her since Pepe came into her life: "Los demonios se han apoderado de mí [. . .]. Un impulso terrible me arroja de esta casa" (XXIV: 240).

[23] On Pepe's linguistic awareness during this confrontation with his aunt, see my "El metalenguaje" 474.

[24] Although *Doña Perfecta* lacks the English Gothic novel's two principal devices—terror and the supernatural—it contains a surprising number of its secondary ones: the home as fortress, cloister, and prison; the double; the identification of the house with its owner; the closed world of a small town; the presence of an insane asylum; and, to paraphrase Kate Ferguson Ellis, the house as the place from which fallen men are locked out and in which innocent women are locked in (ix).

[25] Though more brutal and definitive, this act is reminiscent of Pepe's fist-pounding when he expresses his frustration over not being permitted to see Rosario (XVI: 177).

[26] I agree with Rodgers's assessment that probably "Don Inocencio would have undertaken his campaign of detraction against Pepe in any case, but the major motivating force is the pressure brought to bear on him by his niece" (55). Bridget A. Aldaraca writes that public opinion is "an impregnable power; nameless and faceless, the public voice emanates from no definable source" (71). In *Doña Perfecta* only the omniscient narrator and perhaps Inocencio and the Troya sisters know the name and face of the person who shapes public opinion about Pepe in Orbajosa (XII: 158; XIV: 168). That opinion is especially evident in gossip overheard at the Casino (XI: 143-44). Pepe is unaware that Remedios is the secret source from which, to use Aldaraca's words, "the public voice emanates."

[27] Once the house no longer contains Rosario, the Polentinos estate is unattainable and of no interest to Remedios. Yet, unlike the characters just mentioned, Remedios and Jacinto are hardly downcast. Instead, Cayetano writes that they have high hopes in Madrid, where Remedios "dice que su hijo ha

de ser ministro" (XXXII: 294). In many ways—all of them ironic—Jacinto supplants Pepe in Galdós's revision of the novel's ending: Pepe came from Madrid, but now it is Jacinto who returns to it; both characters are nearly indistinguishable in Cayetano's letters, where he refers to each as "el joven" (XXXII: 289, 290, 291, 294). We presume that in Madrid, with Cayetano's letter of recommendation in hand, Remedios might succeed in doing precisely what she pledged to Inocencio she would do: "Revolveré la tierra para buscar una posición a mi hijo, para que suba y sea rico [. . .] y propietario" (XXVII: 265).

[28] I reported on the salience of the word "casa" in the conclusion in another study ("Galdós en la red"). The word—by far the most frequent common noun in the novel—appears 181 times in a 65,000-word corpus, or thrice its usual frequency elsewhere (see Víctor García Hoz 98).

[29] To the extent that the house is Perfecta, calling the novel *La casa de doña Perfecta* would have been redundant. This hypothetical title brings to mind the remarkable parallels that, individually, Emma Susana Speratti Piñero, Jaroslav Rosendofsky, and Linda C. Fox find between *Doña Perfecta* and Federico García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. If it is true that, as Fox maintains, Lorca "almost certainly found inspiration in the Galdosian novel" (57), then it may also be true that images of the house in *Doña Perfecta* inspired him to include "casa" in the title of his drama. On the title of Galdós's novel, see, among others, Ricardo Gullón (23) and Richard A. Cardwell, who speculates that "it may be that the title of the novel has been instrumental in obscuring the intentions of the novelist" (38).

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