

TIME-SPACE COMPRESSION AND MEMORY IN *FORTUNATA Y JACINTA*

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This essay was prompted by reflections on the relation of memory to modernity. If, on the one hand, modernity requires a break with the past, on the other hand, as Foucault (17-73) and Corbin have observed, one of the main tools for producing a modern sense of individual subjectivity is confession, which requires a review of one's past. The contradiction is only apparent, since the aim of confession—as Freud understood—is to allow the individual to “unburden” himself of the past in order to “progress” satisfactorily. I have been struck by the difference between the treatment of time in the work of Galdós and that of Alas. In the majority of Galdós's novels, time moves forward in a linear fashion (flashbacks explain the factors conditioning this forward-moving process, rather than undermining it), and interior monologues generally provide a running comment on the present rather than the past, as the character decides between alternative options for the future. There is little or no place for memory in this scenario. By contrast Alas's *La Regenta* is one of the great “memory novels” of all time, second perhaps only to Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*—indeed, *Lost Time* would be an appropriate title for Alas's work. If Part I of *La Regenta* is framed by Ana Ozores's preparation for confession at its start and Fermín de Pas's review of his youth towards its end, Part II follows a complex temporal structure of overlapping loops as events are narrated via Ana's memories, ending with us back in the cathedral in October—the novel's starting point. Although the novel's end takes place three years after its start, readers are left with the sense that nothing has progressed; the only change is that the future possibilities open to Ana and to Fermín at the novel's start have by now all been closed off. Their tragedy is that they have run out of a future.

If Freud started to develop his theorization of neurosis as an affliction of memory in the 1890s (he was already working with Charcot at La Salpêtrière in 1885-86, just before *Fortunata y Jacinta*'s publication in 1886-87), it was because, from the late 1870s, belief in progress started to give way to an increasing concern with decadence. Morel's seminal *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine*—well known in Spain—was published in 1857. *La Regenta* (1884-85) betrays the influence of this concern, including the tendency to associate decadence with female transgression (Dijkstra). Galdós's work had been concerned with moral degeneration since at least *La desheredada* (1881), and his novels of the early 1890s—*Ángel Guerra* (1890-91), *Nazarín and Halma* (1895)—depict failed attempts at correcting social degeneration. But in none of these novels—at least, in my reading of them to date—does the subject-matter affect the representation of temporality. *Fortunata y Jacinta*, however, has always struck me as an exception to Galdós's generally forward-looking perspective. The novel ends with a sense of moral restitution, as Jacinta receives the gift of Fortunata's child by her husband Juanito and gives Juanito his come-uppance. But the last third of the novel is marked by a sense of time running out as more and more characters decline and die, and the revitalization of the bourgeoisie represented by Fortunata's newborn child is achieved at the expense of the untimely death of Fortunata herself, eclipsing the symbolic source of the natural energies

which bourgeois society has exhausted. *Fortunata y Jacinta* is also unusual among Galdós's novels in the attention it gives, at certain points in the text, to its characters' memories.

I have discussed elsewhere the novel's illustration of Herbert Spencer's principle of entropy—the progressive exhaustion of energy—which aggravated the pessimism generated by increasing concern at moral and social degeneration (Labanyi 165-208). As noted there (205), the young Don Baldomero Santa Cruz's mid-century belief in *laissez-faire* self-regulation—"La naturaleza se cura sola; no hay más que dejarla" (Pérez Galdós I: 144)¹—is, by the novel's end in the late 1870s, replaced by a growing sense that society is a "machine" that is incapable of repairing itself. In that discussion, I was concerned with the development of a market economy, and specifically of consumerism, as the cause of this exhaustion of energies. Here, I should like to focus on another contributing factor: the time-space compression that David Harvey has seen as a consequence of accelerated capitalist development from around 1848. My argument will be that a consequence of the novel's attention to time-space compression is a turn to memory.

Harvey sees the Europe-wide capitalist crisis of 1846-47 and the ensuing wave of political insurrections that swept across Europe in 1848 as responsible for a related crisis in the perception of time and space. Harvey argues that this economic and political crisis brought home the realization that capitalism had linked broad sweeps of the world in ways that made any idea of discreet, controllable units of space untenable, at the same time introducing a sense of living under a temporal order ruled by simultaneity rather than progress. Harvey sees this as calling into question earlier Enlightenment attempts to rationalize and standardize time and space in the name of progress—attempts that were based on the notion, fundamental to Renaissance perspective, that the individual stood at the center of a world laid out for his surveillance and command (258-59). As Harvey notes: "The certainty of absolute space and place gave way to the insecurities of a shifting relative space, in which events in one place could have immediate and ramifying effects in other places" (261). One needs to add here that the Enlightenment's goal of rationalizing and standardizing time and space was never realized successfully in even the most technologically advanced Western societies, much less so in Spain; and that contradictory perceptions of time and space were thus not new in 1848. What was new was the sense that different spaces were bound up with one another, with the individual being affected by events occurring in distant places and beyond his control or understanding, decentering the individual and producing a new "flattening" of time, as well as an awareness that all this was the result of the global expansion of the capitalist market system. Spain did not have an 1848 Revolution, but the second chapter of Part I of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, subtitled "Vistazo histórico sobre el comercio matritense," makes it clear that, in the mid century, Spaniards experienced a new consciousness of their involvement in the global reach of capitalist commerce, which, thanks to the press and the availability of imported consumer goods, impacted widely on public consciousness. It might seem ironic that this global consciousness should have come into being *after* the loss in the 1820s of most of Spain's early modern

empire, but this is not so illogical: Spain's loss of control of maritime trade—a process begun in the seventeenth century as Amsterdam took over from Seville as the seat of Atlantic traffic—placed it at the mercy of international circuits of commerce, which created a sense of being enmeshed in a global order that affected Spaniards without their being able to control it.

In their book *TimeSpace*, Jon May and Nigel Thrift insist that nineteenth-century capitalist expansion, made possible by faster communications, created a simultaneous sense of space expanding and shrinking, since awareness of the interconnectedness of different parts of the world expanded geographical horizons while making distant places seem nearer (8, 10, 12). The term “time-space compression,” coined by Harvey and borrowed from him by May and Thrift, is the corollary of a new awareness of geographical expansion. This expansion is experienced as a compression since the individual becomes aware of his ensnarement in global networks that are beyond his control or understanding. What interests me particularly is Harvey's observation that this time-space compression is related to the late nineteenth-century obsession with world exhibitions and museums: institutions dedicated to the production of memory. These memory-factories contributed to the new awareness of the interconnectedness of the different parts of the world which they displayed to visitors, as well as resulting from it: “The ideological labour of inventing tradition became of great significance in the late nineteenth century precisely because this was an era when transformations in spatial and temporal practices implied a loss of identity with place and repeated radical breaks with any sense of historical continuity” (Harvey 272).

Chapter 2 of *Fortunata y Jacinta* is a textbook illustration of Harvey's and May and Thrift's theorization of time-space compression.² It is precisely in 1848 that Juanito's father, Don Baldomero Santa Cruz, inherits his textile retail business from his father: the date that marks a shift from trade in “géneros del país” to “géneros de fuera” (I: 119-20; emphasis in original). Don Baldomero passes the business to his employees (“los Chicos”) when this foreign commerce gets too complicated for him. If Don Baldomero dealt with both domestic and imported products, Madrid's other leading textile retailer, “el gordo Arnaiz,” deals exclusively in imports, having banking connections in London. Don Baldomero's wife, Doña Bárbara (related to both “el gordo Arnaiz” and to the Santa Cruz family) is the daughter of Bonifacio Arnaiz, “comerciante en pañolería de la China” and owner of a textile store popularly known as “la tienda de Filipinas,” since its Chinese goods are imported via Manila (hence the name “mantón de Manila” of the store's speciality) (I: 124-25, 132). It is at this point that the first reference in the novel to memory occurs, when we are told that Doña Bárbara remembered for the rest of her life the two Chinese mannequins in her father's store:

Como se recuerda a las personas más queridas de la familia, así vivieron y viven siempre con dulce memoria en la mente de Barbarita los dos maniqués de tamaño natural vestidos de mandarín que había en la tienda y en los cuales sus ojos aprendieron a ver. (I: 126-27)

What lodges these life-size figures in Bárbara's memory, together with the portrait of the Chinese designer of the embroidered shawls, Ayún, is the loss of this oriental trade when, on her father's death, the family firm is threatened with bankruptcy. This economic crisis results from a mix of capitalist over-accumulation (her father orders more "mantones de Manila" than he can sell) and unpredictable changes of fashion. As the business passes into the hands of the next generation (Gumersindo Arnaiz, Bárbara's brother and the future father of Jacinta), Spanish trade with the Far East is thrown into crisis thanks to global geo-political changes: the growth of the British merchant navy, the establishment of the British trading port of Singapore, and the opening up of a new trade route to the East via the British-built railway across the Suez isthmus, the combination of which makes unviable the much longer and slower Spanish trade route round the Cape of Good Hope to Manila. As the narrator notes, the Arnaiz family business's contacts with China become redundant, when it is so much quicker and cheaper to buy imported Chinese fabrics from traders in Liverpool. The decline of Spain's Far Eastern trade is clinched by new fast steamship routes between Spain and northern Europe, leading to an influx in Spain of British, Belgian and French merchants, and a new taste for Parisian imports which, with faster communications, can be guaranteed to be in fashion. Gumersindo Arnaiz's wife, Isabel Cordero, is the first to realize the consequences of these geo-political shifts. The narrator comments that these changes result from processes taking place in distant places about which she has no knowledge but which impact on her family's business nonetheless: "Sin saber palotada de Geografía, [Isabel Cordero] comprendía que había un Singapore y un istmo de Suez" (I: 153). Advised by his canny wife, Gumersindo Arnaiz abandons Far Eastern imports for textiles shipped from France, England, and Switzerland (I: 150-52, 155). The result for Spaniards is a sense of geo-political contraction that is the other side of an awareness of global spatial expansion and temporal acceleration: an expansion and acceleration achieved at Spain's cost. Doña Bárbara's lifelong memory of the Chinese figures in the store in which she grew up is the result of a complex reorientation of time and space on a global scale. Harvey insists on the paradox whereby faster communications between distant places, while opening up world trade, result in a sense of compression: "as time horizons shorten to the point where the present is all there is [...] so we have to learn how to cope with an *overwhelming sense of compression* of our spatial and temporal worlds" (240; emphasis in the original). To put this slightly differently: faster capitalist turnover time, with improved communications, produces a sense of simultaneity and instant gratification which eliminates the sense of a future. Consumerist growth not only exhausts natural energies, as *Fortunata y Jacinta* illustrates so well; it also eats up the future. In Spain's case, the loss of Far East trade to British competition further aggravates this sense of the loss of the future. What is left is memory: Doña Bárbara's memory of the Chinese figures in her father's store. When her brother Gumersindo drops Far Eastern imports, Bárbara insists he keep the Chinese mannequins and portrait of Ayún in the store as material memories (I: 155-56).

Although confession does not function in *Fortunata y Jacinta* as a device for the construction of subjectivity as it does in *La Regenta*, nevertheless Galdós's novel contains

a significant number of confessions (unparalleled, I think, in Galdós's work). They are sufficiently symmetrically distributed to suggest that Galdós thought carefully about their role. In Part I, Juanito confesses his liaison with Fortunata to Jacinta; in Part II, Fortunata is interrogated about her past life by Maxi in his adopted role as "misionero"; and in Part III, Feijoo not only encourages Fortunata to tell him about her past but reciprocates with his own erotic "confessions." I do not include here Fortunata's interrogation and "absolution" by Maxi's priest brother, Nicolás Rubín, in Part II, since the focus is on Nicolás's incompetence, with Fortunata saying very little. The above-mentioned three confessions have the role of flashbacks, filling in the reader's gaps in knowledge about Fortunata's past, rather than being formative experiences for the confessant. In all three cases, the confessions are the result of prodding by another character, rather than spontaneous exercises in memory. As the equivalent of flashbacks, they largely underpin the novel's linear construction, and thus cannot be seen as a consequence of time-space compression. However, in all three cases these confessions reveal important information about the extensive spatial circuits into which the characters are inscribed. It is through Fortunata's "confession" to Maxi in Part II that we hear the story of how prostitution—a form of market exchange—took her not only to Barcelona but even to Paris, something that is quite extraordinary for an illiterate, lower-class woman. Her "confession" to Feijoo in Part III, which follows her genuinely spontaneous urge to go over her past in order to come to terms with her lapse into adultery, adds no new information for the reader (though it is new to Feijoo). It is Feijoo's erotic confessions to her that expand the novel's spatial horizons, as he tells of his amorous exploits "en las cinco partes del mundo," particularly in the Far East with "chinas, javanasas y hasta con joloanas" (II: 107). He also recalls for her his military exploits in Cuba and Rome. Juanito's confession to Jacinta in Part I takes place in the course of their honeymoon tour of Spain, taking advantage of the new railway network which makes travel both easier and faster. This nationwide tour not only serves to inscribe them (and the Spanish reader) into a national framework, teaching them (and the reader) that Madrid is merely one part of a diverse tapestry of regions making up the nation; it also introduces them to the principal industrial and agricultural products of the various regions, showing that the nation is a network of commerce. It is important that they should tour Barcelona's textile factories: May and Thrift (14) note that factory production, with its strict timetables and routines, played a key role in changing the experience of time and space. Jacinta expresses her compassion for the female factory workers trapped in the factory's mechanized rhythms; but she and Juanito are also learning that they form part of a wider system of interlocking networks, coordinated by the railway whose own timetables and mechanized rhythms alter perceptions of time and space. Jacinta pries Juanito's confession out of him at a point when they are feeling a sense of temporal dilation—"Ni Jacinta ni su esposo apreciaban bien el curso de las fugaces horas" (I: 201)—as well as an exhilarating expansion of spatial horizons as they speed through the landscape. The final and most substantial instalment of his confession occurs when Juanito gets drunk at the wedding party in Seville of some anglicized Spaniards from Gibraltar (I: 225): as his memories pour out uncontrollably, they

experience the sensation of being bound up in networks crossing international frontiers as well as past and present.

Both Fortunata and Juanito want to escape their pasts but find themselves lapsing back into it, again and again. This oscillation not only reflects the U-turns of Spanish politics of the time,³ but also embodies the flattening of linear time that Harvey has seen as a feature of the second half of the nineteenth century. This temporal experience is related to the characters' simultaneous sensation of being caught up in networks of relationships that collapse spatial difference. The term "enredadera" is used repeatedly to refer to this simultaneous expansion and closing in of social networks. The more extensive the relationships—based on kinship and commerce—that bind the characters together, the more they (and we) are made aware of the plurality of spaces comprising Madrid society, and of their links to international banking and trade. At the same time, the characters experience the sensation of becoming ensnared in a web of lives and events beyond their control. The metaphor of the "enredadera" first occurs in the context of the convoluted cross-class family and social relationships of the Santa Cruz family, comprising a "dilatado y laberíntico árbol que más bien parece enredadera" (I: 241; see also I: 245 and I: 403). The "enredadera" is an apt metaphor, for these relationships proliferate like a fast-growing climbing plant which, the more it spreads, the more it threatens to strangle what it encompasses. The sprawling structure of the novel is itself that of an "enredadera" which, the more it grows, the more it presses in on its characters, reducing their options through the very same process that appears to open them up.

True to this structure, the last third of the novel—from the start of Feijoo's decline in Part III, Chapter 4—traces a series of deaths and snuffing out of possibilities. First Mauricia dies; then Moreno Isla; then Fortunata; then, finally, Feijoo. In Part IV, Chapter 3, titled "Disolución," Fortunata breaks first with Juanito and then with Maxi; at the end of the novel, Jacinta ends her marriage to Juanito in all but name. Harvey singles out Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* as an illustration of the new sensation of time-space compression, in which the characters' experience of multiple spaces as they "[g]lide] in and out of the differentiated spaces of the city" leads to a proliferation of infinite possibilities, but at the same time to ensnarement in webs beyond one's control which close off one's options. The result is an overwhelming sense of wasted opportunities, of "time lost" (to return to Proust's title). As Harvey puts it, referring to Flaubert's novel: "Action is reduced to a set of paths that might have been but were not taken" (263). Unlike *La Regenta*, not all time is lost in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, for Fortunata does give birth to a son who will continue the Santa Cruz dynasty, and she does acquire social "polish" in the course of her moves around Madrid's socially differentiated spaces. But the novel's overall spatial structure is cyclical, as she returns to the working-class quarters in the Cava de San Miguel where Juanito and the reader first met her in Part I. This return sparks-off in her memories of her past life in that space, as she draws comparisons between its state of disrepair and the household comforts she had got used to in the petty-bourgeois Rubín home and the various love-nests that Juanito and Feijoo had set up for her:

Aquel barrio y los sitios aquellos éranle tan familiares, que a ojos cerrados andaría por entre los cajones sin tropezar. ¿Pues y la casa? En ella, desde el portal hasta lo más alto de la escalera de piedra, veía pintada su infancia, con todos sus episodios y accidentes [...]. ¡Las vueltas del mundo!—decía dando las de la escalera y venciendo con fatiga los peldaños. ¡Quién me había de decir que pararía aquí otra vez!... Ahora es cuando conozco que, aunque poco, algo se me ha pegado el señorío. Miro todo esto con cariño; ¡pero me parece tan ordinario...! (II: 396)

She reflects (in free indirect style) in an eloquent recognition of time-space compression: “Era como una red que la envolvía, y como pensara escabullirse por algún lado, se encontraba otra vez cogida” (II: 398). Her return to her spatial origins means that the novel ends on a note of memory. This is not nostalgia for lost origins, but memory triggered by the unwanted return to origins resulting from failed opportunities. The narrative logic of this cyclical structure suggests that, despite the fact that she is about to give birth, there is nothing left for her but to die.

Feijoo’s physical decline is experienced by him explicitly as a case of failed opportunities. On Fortunata’s last visit to him, he emerges briefly from his senility to reflect: “¡Ah, qué tiempos aquellos! ¿Te acuerdas? Lástima que yo no hubiera tenido veinte años menos. Entonces sí que habríamos sido dichosos” (II: 393). Fortunata says goodbye to him for the last time with a sense of irreparable loss. The chapter devoted to Moreno Isla—Part IV, Chapter 2, the only chapter in which he appears—has the sole function of reinforcing the theme of lost opportunities which is the novel’s closing note. In his late forties, Moreno comes to regret never having married. The heart attack from which he dies represents the impossibility of reconciling the contradiction between the possibility of love which Jacinta has opened up, and the impossibility of satisfying it since she is married to someone else. It seems significant that the character whose sole function is to represent failed opportunity should be an international banker based in London, whose career has been devoted to extending the global financial networks that open up opportunities while producing time-space compression. His sudden pain is that of a terrible “opresión” (II: 363). His last few days are devoted to memories—memories of what he might have done but didn’t, represented by the two beggars to whom he could have been generous but wasn’t—as well as fantasies about what might have happened if he had married Jacinta. He feels intense empathy with Jacinta because her life too, as a childless wife who adores children, has been one of wasted opportunities. Moreno compensates for the impossibility of fathering children with Jacinta by turning to memories of his own childhood relationship to his father (Pérez Galdós II: 347-48). Moreno’s death actualizes his acute sense of loss of the future; that is, his realization that the only future he can conceive of consists of what he might have done but didn’t.

Moreno’s retreat into memory, as he comes to realize that the past is all he has, is echoed by the sensation of loss of the future experienced by Juanito when he finally loses his wife’s love: “experimentó por vez primera esa sensación tristísima de las irreparable pérdidas y del vacío de la vida, sensación que en plena juventud equivale al envejecer [...]

y marca la hora en que lo mejor de la existencia se corre hacia atrás, quedando a la espalda los horizontes que antes estaban por delante” (II:533). This statement is every bit as desolate as the sense of wasted opportunities left by the end of *La Regenta*, or by that of Flaubert’s *L’Éducation sentimentale*—the example of the literary expression of time-space compression given by Harvey. The desolation is increased by the repeated reminders that even memories do not last: as Mauricia’s body is taken away in the funeral carriage, the narrator comments: “de Mauricia no quedó más que un recuerdo, todavía fresco; pero que se había de secar rápidamente” (II: 234). Fejoo’s decline consists not just of loss of the future, in the form of his realization of wasted opportunities, but in his added loss of memory: “El ayer se borró absolutamente del espíritu de aquel buen caballero” (II: 392). Guillermina comforts the dying Fortunata by telling her she has left a “buena memoria de sí” by giving Jacinta her child; but, on his return from Fortunata’s funeral, Segismundo Ballester (another character afflicted with a sense of lost opportunity, having never been able to express his love for Fortunata) declares: “Esta imagen [...] vivirá en mí algún tiempo; pero se irá borrando, borrando, hasta que enteramente desaparezca. Esta presunción de un olvido posible, aun suponiéndolo lejano, me da más tristeza que lo que acabo de ver [...]” (II: 535).

Perhaps the most curious feature of the novel is that it ends, not just with the evacuation of the future and the threat of loss even of memory of the past, but with the creation of false memories. Jacinta starts to “remember” her labor pains in giving birth to a son who is not her own (II: 534), at the same time as she takes to fantasizing about an “if only” world in which the baby is her child with Moreno Isla and Moreno Isla is still alive and has Juanito’s good looks. Ironically, it seems that the only future left at the end of the novel is that provided by the projection of false memory. There is nothing new in signaling that this ending—together with the extraordinary depiction of Maxi’s lucid derangement, not relevant to this discussion—anticipates the exploration of delusion in Galdós’s novels of the 1890s. What I hope to have shown is that the novel’s attention to memory, unusual in Galdós’s work, is related to the bigger issue of time-space compression, whereby the expansion of global horizons simultaneously opens up limitless opportunities and creates a sense of being ensnared by events happening elsewhere. The result, to cite Harvey’s phrase again, is the reduction of action to “a set of paths that might have been but were not taken”: belief in the future is replaced by an acute awareness of lost opportunities. The linear time of progress—living for the future—is replaced by memory not in its usual form of living in the past, but in the form of remembering what did not happen but might have happened. The future has become an empty time whose barrenness those characters still living at the end of the novel have to face. In other words, the future has been replaced by the future perfect.

NOTES

¹ All citations of *Fortunata y Jacinta* are from the the edition indicated in the list of works cited.

² The historical implications of this chapter have been thoughtfully analyzed by Peter Bly (88-91).

³ For the parallels between Juanito's oscillation between attraction to the working-class Fortunata and attraction to his wife Jacinta and the historical vicissitudes of the period 1869-76, see Ribbans and Bly (87, 91-93).

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