1-1-1991

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Recommended Citation
Willem, Linda M. "The Narrative Premise of Galdós's Lo prohibido," Romance Quarterly 38 (1991): 189-96.

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In their critical study of Lo prohibido most scholars make only casual mention of its memoir format, and the fictitious circumstances of its composition are all but ignored. Yet this narrative premise has an overall impact on the novel. In addition to determining the discourse order of the text, it is instrumental in establishing the narrator's authorial autonomy as well as permitting him varying degrees of unreliability. Furthermore, it affects the different narrative voice techniques employed in the novel. The following discussion will examine the implications of this neglected facet of Lo prohibido.

The text supposedly consists of the memoirs of the wealthy Jose Maria Bueno de Guzman, covering the period of September 1880 through November 1884--from his early retirement at the age of 36 until his death. They document his romantic entanglements with his three married cousins: Eloisa, his spendthrift mistress; Camila, who steadfastly resists his advances; and Maria Juana, whose openness to seduction is never pursued fully. The memoirs originally began as a pleasant way for Jose Maria to spend a two week period in San Sebastian while waiting for Camila and her husband to meet him there on vacation, and his stated purpose for writing the memoirs was to help him clarify his thoughts and to provide a guide for other men of the world who may find themselves in the similar position of having to juggle various women. This premise, however, is not explained until the fourth chapter of the second volume--over half the way through the lengthy novel--when the chronology of the story reaches the day in which Jose Maria begins his writing. Robert Ricard has commented on the rigidly chronological progression of the events of the novel, which he sees as the salient feature of Lo prohibido.[1] However, this uninterrupted linear progression only applies to the order of the story, not to the

order of the discourse recording those events.[2] The memoirs are not presented as Jose Maria's on-going project, but rather, they are reserved for his isolated periods of free time. This results in four distinct segments which are written during separate time periods and which do not correspond to the formal chapter divisions:

1st segment:

narrator's NOW: Summer 1883 story NOW: 1880--Spring 1883

2nd segment:

narrator's NOW: Semana Santa story NOW: Spring 1883--Semana Santa 1884 1884

3rd segment: (Ido de Sagrario as amanuensis)

narrator's NOW: July and August 1884 story NOW: Semana Santa--August 1884

4th segment:
narrator's NOW: November 1884 story NOW: August--November 1884

The disparity between the time of the writing and the time of the events serves to underscore the dual function of the protagonist narrator: Jose Maria's role as a character within the story, and his status as the narrator of the discourse. Moreover, as we shall see, the focus on Jose Maria's act of writing the memoirs in stages not concurrent with the action of the story establishes the illusion that he is also the actual author of the text.

In the first segment, written in the summer of 1883, Jose Maria tells us that he had intended to relate the events starting in 1880 through his present. However, his writing is interrupted by the arrival of Camila and her husband in mid-August, and he is only able to cover the material through the Spring of 1883--up to death of Eloisa's husband but not including lose Maria's falling out with Eloisa nor his infatuation with Camila. That is, the story NOW (the present of the events of the story) does not reach the narrator's NOW (the narrator's present at the

time of writing). Jose Maria's time-frame as a character is explicitly shown to be different from his time frame as a narrator. Furthermore, he continues to participate in events even though he has not yet recorded them in his narrative. Thus, Jose Maria appears to have an,existence separate from the narration itself; that is, he seems to have a life in the real world which he will eventually get around to narrating in the text.

This illusion is reinforced by the mention of Jose Maria's subsequent writing periods. In the eighth chapter of volume two Jose Maria tells the reader that he resumed his writing during the Semana Santa of 1884, and that during a period of some four or five days he managed to bring the memoirs up to date, relating the events between Eloisa's husband's death and Eloisa's disfiguring illness. He says: "Aqui'di punto, esperando los nuevos sucesos pare calcarlos en el paper en cuanto ellos salieran de las nieblas del tiempo."[3] That is, the story NOW finally caught up to the narrator's NOW and consequently, Jose Maria had to wait for more adventures so as to have more material to narrate. This strongly suggests that he has a life in the outside world and that his interaction with other real people constitutes the experiences from which he draws to write his memoirs.

The next addition to the memoirs occurs in July and August of 1884 and relates the events leading up to and including Jose Maria's accident and financial ruin. Due to Jose Maria's illness, he uses a recurring Galdosian character, Ido de Sagrario, as his amanuensis. Jose Maria's impaired verbal ability forces him to rely on Ido to read his thoughts and fill in the narrative from sketchy details, an arrangement which works out well since Jose Maria tells us that "con solo mirarme adivinabame los pensamientos. Tal traza al fin se daba, que contandole yo un cave en dos docenas de palabras, lo ponia en escritura con tanta propiedad, exactitud y colorido, que no lo hiciera mejor yo mismo, narrador y agente al propio tiempo de los sucesos" (2.11: 482). Ido's

previous appearance in El doctor Centeno and Tormento, however, immediately causes the reader to associate this character with the type of writing found in the popular serialized nove.[4] The reader suspects that Ido will incorporate folletinesque elements-- melodrama, suspense, formulaic plotlines, romanticized characters-- into the portion of the memoirs he writes. In response to our worries, Jose Maria assures us that he has held a tight rein on Ido's literary imagination, thereby curtailing Ido's inclination to fabricate scenes. Jose Maria's power of veto makes him appear to be the ultimate authority for what was or was not included in the memoirs. Thus, the illusion that Jose Maria is the author of his own autobiography is further solidified since the events contained in the text are presented as ones which actually occurred, as opposed to those which Ido wanted to invent. Though a fictional narrative, Lo prohibido takes on the guise of narrated fact; the fictional narrator, Jose Maria, is projected into the role of an actual author; and the fictional characters appear to populate the real world in which Jose Maria lives.

In the fourth and final segment Jose Maria adds information concerning the period between August and November 1884. More importantly, he looks over the memoirs to make sure that Ido did not falsify aspects of his life and to see that the names have been sufficiently disguised so as to be unrecognizable. Stating that the names have been changed reinforces the illusion that the characters are real people whose identity needs to be hidden in order to protect their privacy. Also, rechecking the content of the manuscript for Ido's untruths gives additional credence to Jose Maria's contention that the events narrated are facts documenting actual occurrences. The novel closes with an explicit reference to Jose Maria's manuscript being under consideration by a publisher who not only recognizes Jose Maria's claim to authorship but also promises to honor his request that it not be printed until after he dies. His status as author fully secured, he can leave his manuscript in the hands of his publisher and calmly await his own

death.

Unlike another Galdosian narrator, Maximo Manso, who achieves authorial independence by recognizing his fichonality,[5] Jose Maria gains autonomy by establishing himself as a nonfictional person who physically wrote a book about his life which was published posthumously and which the reader is holding in his hands. Both Manso and Jose Maria are aware of their roles as narrators and focus reader attention on the conventions associated with first-person narration. But whereas Manso revels in his fictional status, Jose Maria rejects it entirely. Jose Maria's authorial autonomy, though illusory, gains credibility through the segmented memoir format of the text which seems to endow him with a life outside the narration as well as within it.

The novelistic premise also affects another aspect of Jose Maria's persona as narrator--his degree of reliability. Previous studies of Lo prohibido have discussed Jose Maria in terms of Wayne Booth's concept of the "unreliable narrator," defined as one who rejects the true values suggested in the text by its guiding principle, the implied author.[6] Jose Maria is a representative of Spain's nouveau riche middle class eager to take on the material trappings of the declining aristocracy. Affectation and social climbing were its hallmarks, and its members abided by a code of ethics which Jose Montesinos calls an elastic morality based on a relativistic justification of reprehensible behavior.[7] For Jose Maria money and sexual conquest--usually presented in combination--define his world and color each of his personal relationships. He describes the daily life of a segment of society that holds values which in the main are even more distorted than his own, yet he generally accepts the validity of that worldview and restricts his criticism to the extreme manifestations that it produces, such as Eloisa's chronically extravagant spending. He not only condones but perpetuates the shallow and immoral behavior of his social

circle by participating in its financial indulgences and adulterous activities. When he measures his own worth against the depravity and corruption of his peers, he hypocritically finds himself to be somewhat culpable but on the whole more decent than they. Indeed, the memoirs represent his rationalization of a lifestyle that the implied author condemns for its waste of human potential.

So evident is Jose Maria's unreliability that no scholar has misread this narrator as being a spokesman for the implied author. Nevertheless, Arthur Terry has noted that Jose Maria's reliability does increase toward the end of the novel.[8] How is this shift possible? Again, it is necessary to keep in mind the narrative premise of the text. During the entire first volume Jose Maria conforms to the standard expectations of a fictional protagonist narrator. Since the text is presented as his memoirs, the reader assumes that they are being written from the globally retrospective point of view associated with that genre. Suddenly in the second volume--hundreds of pages into the novel--this narrative convention is subverted. We learn that the text was composed in various stages, and therefore that it combines elements of both a diary and a memoir. Generally the narrator of a memoir is in command of all the facts and is aware of how the events interrelate and how the various situations eventually were resolved. Jose Maria does not have the benefit of such global hindsight. Because his memoirs are a collection of four separately written segments, certain portions were penned before he knew the final outcome of the events. Like a diary, the text is a collection of discrete units; however, the time span covered in each unit is greater than normally found in diary notations. The overall format, then, allows Jose Maria more retrospective knowledge than a daily diary, but less than a true memoir. If we examine the individually written segments in terms of narrator reliability, we find that in the first two sections Jose Maria clearly holds values contrary to those of the implied author, while in the

last two sections his materialism and hedonism abate. Thus, the narrator displays an abrupt shift toward greater reliability between the second and third segments. This phenomenon is made possible by the hybrid quality of the text which incorporates aspects of both the diary and the memoir genres. If the text were just a daily diary, it would show a gradual movement away from unreliability as Jose Maria slowly comes to realizations affecting his ongoing conceptual outlook. If the text were a true memoir, Jose Maria's reliability would remain constant since he would be writing from a single conceptual perspective. It is the segmentation of the text into individually written parts which permits this sudden change in his reliability status since Jose Maria's worldview is altered by the events occurring during the several months between the writing of the second and third sections. This period is one of personal crisis affecting all aspects of his life--monetary, social, and physical. He is financially ruined, Camila and Constantino withdraw their valued friendship, and he is partially paralyzed due to an accident. It is well within the bounds of verisimilitude for Jose Maria to indulge in introspective examination during his convalescence with the resulting insights bringing about a degree of character growth that would narrow the gap somewhat between his values and those of the implied author. The third and fourth segments, comprising the last three chapters of the novel, reflect this alteration in Jose Maria's conceptual perspective.

The segmented nature of the memoirs also permits the introduction of a further complication which has a bearing on Jose Maria's reliability--Ido de Sagrario as the amanuensis of the third segment. Since Ido must divine Jose Maria's thoughts and the details of the events from a very broad outline, he goes beyond the passive role of scribe and becomes a collaborative narrator of the third segment. Despite Jose Maria's repeated assurances that he has held Ido's imagination in check and that he allowed no falsification of the facts, the reader is reluctant to

discount Ido's contribution to the text. After all, this segment represents Ido's interpretation of events as conveyed to him "en dos docenas de palabras." Jose Maria did not actually think the words recorded in the text, but rather, he merely approved them as written. Given Ido's tendency to romanticize situations, the reader wonders to what degree Ido embellished the truth. Even if we accept Jose Maria's contention that Ido did not alter the content of the memoirs, we cannot ignore that he left his mark on their style. In addition to the numerous literary, classical, historical, and Biblical allusions noted by Kay Engler,[9] Ido's influence is discernible in the subtle shift in narrative voice techniques in this segment. Above all, there is a decided increase in the number and length of interior views. During the first two segments Jose Maria's interior monologues are brief, infrequent, and merely reaffirm his negative traits since his thoughts record his adulterous intentions and the schemes he devises to achieve his sexual conquests. In the third segment, however, Jose Maria's interior monologues occur more often, are more extensive, and take on a new tone as he questions the validity of his long-held values and recognizes the desirability of the pure and innocent love between Camila and Constantino. Free indirect style passages, which are absent in the other segments, are introduced here to convey further Jose Maria's inner turmoil. His interiorization somewhat tempers the previous negative portrayal of Jose Maria and elicits a certain amount of reader compassion for his plight. This effect is in part attributable to Ido's rendering of Jose Maria's story content in a more intimate style. As Wayne Booth has observed, the sustained use of a sympathetic inside view is one of the most successful devices for inducing a parallel response in the reader, and as such it is a particularly effective means of reducing the emotional distance between the reader and a morally deficient character (Booth, pp. 243-49). Although the reader is only receiving Ido's version of Jose Maria's thoughts, the stylistic presentation gives us the impression that we have direct

access to Jose Maria's consciousness. Thanks to the many interior monologues and free indirect style passages, we feel that we are experiencing Jose Maria's moral transformation first hand. The difference in the narrative voice techniques employed here is acceptable and plausible due to the segmentation of the memoirs into discretely written units, with Ido in control of the third one. The brief fourth section, in which Jose Maria again takes charge of the narration, returns to the narrative voice orientation found in the first two segments, relying heavily on dialogue and direct narrative commentary.

Ido's considerable role in the production of the third segment calls into question the depth of Jose Maria's moral conversion. Though it is fully possible that Jose Maria did in fact learn the error of his ways, the reader is somewhat uneasy with his embrace of the implied author's values at the close of the novel--a reversal more suited to the folletin so favored by Ido de Sagrario. That this change occurs at the very point where Ido takes charge of the narrative is further disquieting. As Michael Nimetz states, "one has the nagging sensation that these so-called `prosaicas aventuras' are in some way a product of Ido de Sagrario's fecund imagination.... Apparently, Jose Maria's document is true; in reality, it might well be romanticized."[10] In this segment Ido fleshes out the insights that Jose Maria achieved through crisis caused introspection, and he conveys them to us in imaginary interior views. That is, not only are we reading Ido's interpretation of Jose Maria's feelings, but we are reading them in a stylistic medium that typically is used to engender a sympathetic response in the audience. Since Jose Maria affirms the validity of the content of the segment, we can accept that he did experience some change in his worldview. However, the extent of his repentance may have been exaggerated. Whereas the segmented nature of the narrative permits an altered worldview to appear suddenly in the third section, Ido's dominion over that portion of the memoirs casts into doubt the degree to which

Jose Maria actually has aligned himself to the implied author's value system. In short, a change may well have taken place, but was it as spectacular as presented? Once again Ido has been used by Galdos--albeit in a more subtle way--to make the reader aware of the conventions of popular fiction. In addition to the criticism of the novela por entregas implied in Jose Maria's rejection of Ido's fanciful and romantic episodes for the memoirs, Galdos introduces an element of doubt that Jose Maria's efforts to control Ido's literary inclinations were completely successful. These clashes between Ido and Jose Maria ask the reader to mentally juxtapose the conventions of the folletin against those of the realistic novel, thereby making it clear that these two forms of literature are philosophically at odds with each other.

In summary, Lo prohibido is stated as being composed of memoirs written in segments during four separate time periods. This narrative premise grants the protagonist-narrator a degree of flexibility normally denied him. By allowing discrepancies between the story order of the events and the discourse order of the segments, and by focusing reader attention on the act of writing, the narrator is able to assert his independence from the narrative and attain the illusion of authorship. In addition, the time which elapses between the writing of the segments accounts for the seemingly abrupt change in the narrator's reliability in the last chapters of the novel. Finally, Galdos capitalizes on the reader's expectations of Ido de Sagrario in order to reinforce the illusion of Jose Maria's autonomy as well as to undermine the impact of his moral conversion at the end of the novel, resulting in the reader's renewed awareness of the differences between the realistic novel and popular fiction.

[1.] Robert Ricard, Galdos et ses romans (Paris: Centre de Recherches de l'Institut d'Etudes Hispaniques, 1961), pp. 75-80.

[2.] Central to this discussion is the structuralist distinction between the basic components of the narrative: the story and the discourse. The story is the content plane of the narrative, and as such it includes the characters, the setting, and the chain of events. The discourse is the expression plane that transmits the story to the reader. The discourse refers to the how of the narrative while the story deals with the what. For further elaboration see the first chapter of Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 15 42, esp. pp. 19-27.

[3.] Benito Perez Galdos, Lo prohibido, ed. Jose F. Montesinos (Madrid: Castalia 1971), pp. 389-90. Subsequent page references to this novel appear in the text.

[4.] Indeed, numerous critical studies have examined Galdos's use of Ido's literary tastes to parody and/or satirize the conventions of the novela por entregas. Among the scholars who focus on Ido's function in novels preceding Lo prohibido are Alicia G. Andreu, "El folletin como intertexto en Tormento," Anales Galdosianos 17 (1982): 55-61 Rodolfo Cardona, "Cervantes y Galdos," Letras de Deusto 4 (1974): 202, Frank Durand "Two Problems in Galdos's Tormento," MLN 79 (1964): 519-25; Ignacio Elizalde, Perez Galdos y su novelistica (Publicaciones de la Universidad de Deusto, 1981), p. 79, pp. 173-82; German Gullon, "Tres narradores en busca de un rector," Anales Galdosianos 5 (1970): 75-80; and Anthony Percival, "Melodramatic Metafiction in Tormento," Kentucky Romance Quarterly 31(1984):153-60.

[5.] See John W. Kronik, "El amigo Manso and the Game of Fictive Autonomy," Anales Galdosianos 12 (1977): 71-94, esp. 72-81; and Arnold M. Penuel, "Some Aesthetic Implications of Galdos' El amigo Manso," Anales Galdosianos 9 (1974): 145-48.

[6.] These terms were coined in Booth's watershed study, The Rhetoric of Fiction (University of Chicago Press, 1961). For an explanation of the concept of the implied author see pp. 70-75, and for a definition of reliable narration see pp. 158-59. Booth recently expanded on these terms in the afterward to his 1983 second edition, pp. 428-31.

[7.] Jose F. Montesinos, Introd., Lo prohibido, by Benito Perez Galdos (Madrid: Castalia, 1971), p. 21.

[8.] Anthony Terry, "Lo prohibido: Unreliable Narrator and Untruthful Narrative," in Galdos Studies, ed. J. E. Varey (London: Tamesis, 1970), pp. 67-68, p. 86.

[9.] Kay Engler, The Structure of Realism: The "Novelas Contemporaneas" of Benito Perez Galdos (University of North Carolina Press, 1977), p. 166

[10.] Michael Nimetz, Humor in Galdos: A Study of the "Novelas contemporaneas" (Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 92-93.