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Latent Narratives: Sideshadowing in "Fortunata y Jacinta"

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In his book, *Narrative and Freedom*, Gary Saul Morson uses the term "sideshadowing" to identify a set of devices–operating in the works of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky–that are used to counter the closed view of time associated with another term, "foreshadowing." According to Morson, this temporal closure is the result of the backward causation of foreshadowing. That is, in foreshadowing something happens because something else is going to happen. Instead of being caused by a prior event, it is caused by a subsequent one. That means that the future is already set, at least to the extent that it can send signs backwards. Thus, options are closed off and time becomes a single line leading to that existing future. Of course, in a novel–unlike in real life–the future is, in fact, already set, but by calling the reader's attention to the already written nature of narrative, foreshadowing underscores the artificiality of the novelistic world. In contrast, sideshadowing conveys temporal openness by approximating the multiplicity of possibilities and potential resolutions inherent in real life. As Morson explains:

> Alternatives always abound, and, more often than not, what exists need not have existed. *Something else* was possible, and sideshadowing is used to create a sense of that "something else." Instead of casting a foreshadow from the future, it casts a shadow "from the side," that is, from the other possibilities. Along with an event, we see its alternatives; with each present, another possible present. Sideshadows conjure the ghostly presence of might-have-beens or might-bes. While we see what did happen, we also see the image of what else could have happened. In this way, the hypothetical shows through the actual and so achieves its own shadowy kind of existence in the text.
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> In sideshadowing [...] we do not see contradictory actualities, but one possibility that was actualized and, at the same moment, another that could have been but was not. (118)

Through sideshadowing, time becomes "a field of possibilities" leading to various futures, some of which are realized and some of which are not. "The actual is therefore understood as just another possibility that somehow came to pass" (118-19). Sideshadowing mitigates the artificiality of the novelistic world by suggesting that its future is as open as it is in the real world.

Morson contrasts the different types of sideshadowing employed by Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, the former preferring to use extreme situations or critical moments as major turning points, and the latter preferring to focus on the contingencies involved in the ordinary moments of day-to-day existence. Morson characterizes Tolstoy's method as "prosaic sideshadowing" and contends that it is a major contributing factor to the oft-commented realism of *War and Peace* (158-59). Interestingly, many of the sideshadowing techniques he identifies as pertaining to this novel can be seen also in *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Indeed, in

a brief preface to the very scene that will serve as a point of departure for the major plot of Galdós's novel–Juanito's and Fortunata's first meeting–Galdós explicitly directs the reader's attention to the concept of storylines which may or may not come to fruition because of the chance or circumstance of everyday occurrences: "Y sale a relucir aquí la visita del Delfín al anciano servidor y amigo de su casa, porque si Juanito Santa Cruz no hubiera hecho aquella visita, esta historia no se habría escrito. Se hubiera escrito otra, eso sí, porque por do quiera que el hombre vaya lleva consigo su novela; pero ésta no" (I, iii, 3; 181). Thus, in the space of two sentences, Galdós alludes to the myriad of unrealized, but potentially realizable, stories that are latently present, not only in his own text, but also in real life. Furthermore, by mentioning this phenomenon within the first chapters of this lengthy novel, Galdós also alerts the reader to be mindful of the other sideshadowed stories that will be suggested later in the text. In Morson's words, Galdós "invites us to inquire into the other possible presents that might have been and to imagine a quite different course of events" (118). It is important to note, however, that this process does not imply an imaginative free-for-all where anything can happen. Rather, it is tied to something specifically mentioned in the text. That is, sideshadowing overtly raises the possibility of something that can happen, and, in so doing, it directs the reader's imagination to certain possibilities but not others. For example, there is no sideshadowing anywhere in *Fortunata y Jacinta* to suggest the possibility of Juanito becoming a priest, and, therefore, that is not a latent story waiting to be developed. On the other hand, the repeated badgering of Maxi by Lupe to devise a cure-all elixir that could be sold to the public as a money-making scheme does raise the sideshadowed possibility of Maxi doing so, and with it, there arise further possibilities concerning the success or failure of that enterprise.

As in real life, Galdós's novelistic world provides more options to the characters than they avail themselves of, and, consequently, it asks readers to respond in ways more appropriate to reality than to fiction. As Morson notes, readers of fiction are trained to seek significance because they know that the work is an artistic artifact that has been planned in advance. Readers expect things and incidents that are mentioned in the text to mean something, or else they would not be included. But heavily sideshadowed texts such as *War and Peace* and *Fortunata y Jacinta* subvert this process by presenting numerous possibilities to the reader's attention, and then leaving many of them unexplored. Since mere presence does not guarantee significance, the text acquires the open-ended feel of real life.

Thus, it is the preponderance of unrealized potentialities that gives sideshadowing its reality-producing effect, and that preponderance is achieved in various ways. One of the easiest is through the choices that the characters make, because each choice requires a commitment to one course of action over another. While all novels involve some choices, *Fortunata y Jacinta* is particularly rich in this regard. Not only do characters make many choices, but more significantly, they frequently declare their intent to do something and then chose not do it. This is particularly true of Fortunata. For example, when she is informed by Mauricia of Juanito's plan to seduce her by renting the apartment next to hers and by bribing her maid, Fortunata says that she will ask Maxi to fire the maid and take a different apartment instead. But she does not do that, and, although she reiterates her intention to do so after Juanito comes to her door on her wedding night, she again fails to carry

it out, thereby allowing Juanito and her maid to entrap her. A similar situation occurs later in the novel, when Lupe invites Fortunata to live in her home in order to effect a reconciliation with Maxi. Although Fortunata declares her intent to leave on the second day, she remains in the home and re-establishes her relationship with her husband. In both cases, Fortunata's lack of action has major consequences for her marriage, leaving the reader to wonder what might have happened, had she done what she said she was going to do. Indeed, it is the disparity between what is said and what is done that allows the reader to ask the question that all sideshadowing aims for: "What if?"

Coincidences are another way of eliciting this same question, because they propel the novel in one direction, when it easily could have gone in another. While the most important of these coincidences is Juanito's meeting of Fortunata while visiting Estupiñá, many others are found throughout the novel. The entire relationship between Maxi and Fortunata, for example, is built upon a series of coincidences, beginning with their first acquaintance, which occurred simply because Fortunata had been staying temporarily at the home of Olmedo's girlfriend the evening that Maxi was invited to dine there. In addition, on the day that Lupe was confronting Maxi with her knowledge about his liaison with Fortunata, the unexpected event of Joaquín Pez paying off his bills led Torquemada to arrive at Lupe's house with her share of the profits at the very moment that she was forbidding Maxi to see Fortunata any more, and the good mood that this lucrative interruption produced in Lupe gave Maxi the courage to defy his aunt for the first time in his life. Also, since one of Nicolás's rare visits to Madrid–caused by a death in the family–coincided with Maxi's announcement about wanting to marry Fortunata, Nicolás was able to provide the solution of sending her to Las Micaelas. Furthermore, the sudden arrest of Juan Pablo on the day after the couple's wedding required Lupe and Maxi to leave Fortunata alone, and her subsequent walk down the Calle de Santa Engracia freed her maid to smuggle Juanito into the apartment, thus precipitating the second affair between the couple. Also, the reconciliation between Fortunata and Maxi was brought about by Feijoo, whose interest in Fortunata began when he was introduced to her by Juan Pablo in an accidental encounter on the street one day. In addition, Maxi was able to ascertain Fortunata's hiding place after her pregnancy because he happened to see Izquierdo carrying items for her, and the only reason that he recognized Izquierdo was because Fortunata had introduced him to Maxi when they bumped into him once during a walk. Similarly, Maxi's chance sighting of Juanito and Aurora together allowed him to inform Fortunata of their affair. Coincidences such as these set in motion events which profoundly affect the lives of the characters. But since they are coincidences, they need not have happened, and as a result, the consequences of those coincidences need not have happened either. Therefore, the reader is left to imagine how things could have turned out differently. Each coincidence is a pivotal moment that takes the text in a certain direction. But as a coincidence, each has the appearance of being unplanned. Thus, these coincidences help to give the fictional realm of *Fortunata y Jacinta* the improvised feel of real life.

The reader's "What if?" questions are also stimulated by the characters' own speculations about what might happen in the future. Two prime examples occur when characters offer Fortunata advice by painting scenarios of possible outcomes to her actions. When

Fortunata mentions to Mauricia that she can escape Juanito's plans to seduce her after marriage by asking Maxi to take her to live in the small town associated with his inheritance, Mauricia describes the boredom and the constant exposure to the same, small circle of acquaintances that could lead Fortunata to have an affair with the mayor, the doctor, the judge, or even the priest of the town. Since this portrayal in no way exhausts all the possibilities of small town life, the reader is left to imagine others, including ones that could yield positive results instead. Later, a more elaborate set of scenarios is formulated by Feijoo as part of his "curso de filosofía práctica." When his declining health convinces him of the need for Fortunata to reconcile with Maxi, he describes two situations that Fortunata could expect to find in her married life. He first mentions what Fortunata considers to be the unlikely event of her and Maxi living happily together and perhaps having children. If this were not to happen, the alternative would be for Fortunata to take solace from an unhappy marriage by having an affair with a discreet man, while keeping up the appearance of propriety. Once again, the reader is provided with future events that may come to pass, but, despite the more comprehensive scope of Feijoo's predictions, room does still exist for the reader to think of possibilities he does not cover.

Affirmative or negative responses to questions posed to characters within a text are another way to spur the imagination, because the reader is allowed to wonder what might have happened had the questions been answered in the opposite way. A particularly interesting case occurs early in *Fortunata y Jacinta* when Jacinta meets Izquierdo for the first time. During their discussion, Jacinta suddenly asks if he happens to have a portrait of Fortunata anywhere in the house. Rather than record the actual words that Izquierdo answers, the narrator indicates his negative response by saying: "Si Izquierdo hubiera respondido que sí, ¡cómo se habría lanzado Jacinta sobre él! Pero no había tal retrato, y más valía así" (I, ix, 7; 356-57). Thus, the narrator himself posits a hypothetical if/then situation, which models that behaviour for the reader. But since the narrator restricts himself to saying how things immediately would have been different, the possible long-term effects are left unexplored, thereby leading the reader to wonder how a picture produced at this point in the text might have altered future events as well. Furthermore, the narrator's closing comment leads the reader to ask why it was better for the portrait not to have existed. Since nothing concrete results from Jacinta's question, it has no significance whatsoever for the development of the novel's actual plot. But it does take on importance when viewed as a sideshadow. If Jacinta had seen a picture of Fortunata in Izquierdo's home, then she would have been able to recognize Fortunata later in the novel when both women were brought together by Mauricia's illness. And this, in turn, would have destroyed the dramatic irony of the scenes leading up to and including Fortunata's attack on Jacinta. Since this anagnorisis scene derives its power from that dramatic irony, it is indeed better that the portrait had never existed.

A similarly important sideshadow arising from another seemingly insignificant, negative response is found near the end of the novel, when Ballester tells the convalescent Fortunata that he can not stay with her during what turns out to be the last night of her life, because he is fearful of losing his job if he misses any more time at the pharmacy. When Fortunata expresses her willingness to support him financially if he wants to quit his job,

Ballester declines her offer out of pride. Had he accepted it and stayed that evening, might Fortunata's death have been avoided? He certainly would have been more effective than the drunken and sleeping Izquierdo in preventing Fortunata from exerting herself by getting out of bed and putting on her street clothes. This may have prevented the attack that Fortunata suffered the next morning, and even if it did not, Ballester's presence would have assured, at least, the administration of the proper drugs to Fortunata as soon as the attack occurred, which may have lessened its severity. This "What if?" scenario not only is made possible by the sideshadow resulting from Ballester's answer during his final conversation with Fortunata, but it is also later validated by Ballester himself when he returns to Fortunata's side after it is too late to do anything to help her. Speaking to Guillermina he says: "La hemorragia ha provenido sin duda de no haberse verificado la involución ... Me lo temía ... La salida antes de tiempo, la agitación moral ... Añada usted descuidos, falta de asistencia, de vigilancia, y de una autoridad que se le hubiera impuesto. ¡Ah!, si yo hubiera estado aquí. Pero no podía, no podía. Mis obligaciones ..." (IV, vi, 15; 529).

All forks in the novelistic road produce sideshadows, because they invite the reader to conjecture what might have happened if other roads had been taken. If Fortunata had accepted Lupe's offer to confide in her, would Lupe have helped Fortunata to carry on her affair with Juanito behind Maxi's back? If Jacinta had not suddenly arrived to eavesdrop on Guillermina's conversation with Fortunata, would Guillermina have been able to convince Fortunata not to see Juanito again? What would have happened if Baldomero and Barbarita had indulged Jacinta's desire to adopt Adoración? What if Fortunata had made an angry scene in the Santa Cruz home, instead of simply standing across the street? What if Lupe had acted on her threats to tell Barbarita about Juanito's affairs with Fortunata? If Moreno-Isla had lived, would he have won Jacinta's heart upon returning from England? If Fortunata had lived, would she have responded to Ballester's romantic advances? These questions arise, because issues that are raised in the text are left unexplored. The characters' actions, statements, intentions, and wishes can not simply be ignored by the reader, but neither can they be accepted as hints pointing to what will follow. Maxi's potential for harming others, for example, is repeatedly sideshadowed, but never pursued. At various points in the text, he displays guns, a knife, and poison to Fortunata, while speaking of killing either Juanito, Fortunata, or himself. But none of these lethal weapons is ever used. Furthermore, Maxi admits to Fortunata that, if it were not for Ballester's vigilance, he would have accidentally blinded a man with one of his badly-mixed medicines, and later Ballester finds more mistakes in the prescriptions he fills. Maxi, in fact, continues to dispense his medical preparations, at times without Ballester's supervision. Yet no patients are ever harmed by any of the medicines that Maxi gives them. In both cases, the reader is given strong indications that something disastrous will result, but nothing does. These possible story-lines remain latent, as do so many others in the text. As in life, not everything that can happen does happen. But this is not how things normally operate in novels. Authors can choose what to include in a text, and usually what they include does lead somewhere. This is especially true of nineteenth-century realist authors. But since Galdós provides so many potential story-lines that do not develop, the reader of *Fortunata y Jacinta* can not automatically attach significance to things mentioned in the text. Unable to rely on narrative

convention, the reader is freed to view the text as if it were not a work of fiction. Morson explains this phenomenon by saying that it is the opposite of the "aesthetic necessity" identified by Mikhail Bakhtin as a freedom-restricting feature of most novels (160). In heavily sideshadowed texts, individual elements are liberated from this "aesthetic necessity" by not being required to lead anywhere. Rather, they have what Morson calls "aesthetic potentiality." From a large body of data mentioned in the text, some stories emerge while the others remain latent. This potentiality is especially evident in the way that some secondary characters are introduced in *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Galdós frequently provides the reader with long lists of characters, few of whom are ever mentioned again, but all of whom represent sideshadowed possibilities. For example, when the narrator names the members of the intertwining family trees of the Santa Cruz and Arnaiz families in the sixth chapter of Part One, any of the names cited so early in the text could well assume an importance as the novel progresses. And even though the narrator does single out the Samaniego family and Guillermina Pacheco as characters we will hear more about later, no such significance is attached to Moreno-Isla's name, despite the prominent role he will subsequently play in the novel. This practice of introducing a secondary character by simply placing his name among those of minor characters leaves the reader at a loss to determine which names will eventually become important. Sometimes none will, as is the case with the list of delinquent debtors chronicled by Torquemada in the third chapter of Part Two. This situation is further complicated by Galdós's practice of using recurring characters. Since he often elevates a lesser character from one novel to a more prominent position in another, the presence of a familiar name on one of the lists can raise expectations in the reader that are never satisfied. Faced with such an array of names that are given at various points in the novel, the reader cannot be sure who will emerge as a functioning character until it happens.

"Always in *War and Peace*," says Morson, "possibilities are not just in excess, but far in excess, of actualities" (161). The same can be said about *Fortunata y Jacinta*. The examples cited above are only a sampling of the many sideshadows that permeate Galdós's text. As in *War and Peace*, "An immense number of characters appear, are sometimes described at length, and then disappear, never to be seen again; and incidents are multiplied which we expect are to lead to something important, which do not" (159). The abundance of possibilities that are afforded both Tolstoy's and Galdós's characters comes about through coincidences, choices, interruptions, suggestions, chance encounters, and other ordinary occurrences in daily life. Of the potential story-lines represented by each of these possibilities, only a few take shape, while the others remain as shadows pointing to what could have happened instead. The steady accumulation of one sideshadowed possibility after another adds the texture of life to the fabric of fiction.

Given the similarities between the sideshadowing techniques in *War and Peace* (1865-1869) and *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886-1887), can it be said that Galdós was influenced by Tolstoy's masterpiece in the writing of his own? Perhaps. Vernon Chamberlin and Jack Weiner have speculated that Galdós probably was introduced to Russian literature through a series of lectures given on the subject at the Ateneo in 1869 (19-20). Furthermore, Harriet Turner (885-86) has suggested that Galdós's knowledge of Russian authors

could have been deepened through his close personal relationship during the 1880s with Pardo Bazán, whose own interest in Russian literature resulted in her 1886-1887 book, *La revolución y la novela en Rusia*. More concretely, an 1884 French translation of *War and Peace* is listed among the books in Galdós's personal library (Nuez 230), and Walter Pattison has demonstrated that Galdós used French to read foreign literature not in Spanish translation. Since, as Turner has noted (885), Pardo Bazán spent the winter of 1884 in Paris, Galdós may have received his French copy of Tolstoy's masterpiece from the Countess upon her return to Spain. Regardless of how Galdós acquired the text, however, its 1884 publication date does, at least, allow for the possibility that Galdós read it before or during his writing of *Fortunata y Jacinta*. If so, he may have incorporated, either consciously or unconsciously, Tolstoy's sideshadowing techniques into his own work. Indeed, the markedly greater length of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, compared to that of Galdós's earlier novels, may, to some degree, be the result of an intertextual connection to *War and Peace*. As Morson has observed, Tolstoy's form of sideshadowing requires an extended novel in order to accommodate all of the seemingly irrelevant details it contains.

As tempting as this sort of speculation may be, however, it is not necessary to assign a causal relationship between *War and Peace* and *Fortunata y Jacinta* in order to appreciate how the set of devices Morson collectively refers to as "prosaic sideshadowing" contributes to the realism of Galdós's masterpiece. By presenting the world of the novel as a field of possibilities, sideshadowing simulates the vast randomness of real life, rather than revealing the prescribed orderliness of fiction. By encouraging the reader to ask "What if?" questions that envision alternative futures, sideshadowing replaces the inevitability of the already-written ending with the semblance of reality's open-endedness. And, by depriving the reader of the security of being able to predict which elements of the text will become important, sideshadowing obligates the reader to let go of literary convention and to approach the novel as if it were life rather than art.

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