

LAME CHARACTERS AND THE DEVIL IN *FORTUNATA Y JACINTA*, *MIAU*, AND *ÁNGEL GUERRA*

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Like his European contemporaries, and his recent Spanish predecessors,¹ Galdós used many lame and crippled characters in his works. In fact, they are present from the first of his *Novelas de la primera época* to the final series of his *Episodios Nacionales*.² In the *Novelas Contemporáneas* these *cojos* are primarily, but not exclusively, minor, one-dimensional mendicants, who have little or no impact on more important characters. In the *Episodios Nacionales* there are additionally *cojos* who in spite of their handicaps, serve heroically in the Spanish military. Although critics may sometimes mention a *cojo* as part of an overall discussion of specific works, there has been no comparative study showing how Galdós's creativity with this character type varied from one novel to another. Therefore, the aim of the present essay is to initiate study of the *cojo* by examining and comparing four such characters, all of whom bear the symbolic marker of the devil. These characters, created within a five-year time span (1886-1891) are Sor Marcela in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Salvador Guillén in *Miau*, and the Fausto Babel-"Maldiciones" pair in *Ángel Guerra*.

Sor Marcela in *Fortunata y Jacinta*

The first of these *cojos*, Sor Marcela, appears in the chapter entitled "Las Micaelas por dentro," (II, 6), where she interacts primarily with Mauricia *la Dura* and Fortunata. The most fully developed of all the convent's nuns, Sor Marcela appears initially on the occasion of Mauricia's first disruptive emotional outburst:

En aquel instante apareció en la sala una figura extraña. Era Sor Marcela, una monja vieja, coja y casi enana, la más desdichada estampa de mujer que puede imaginarse. Su cara, que parecía de cartón, era morena, dura, chata, de tipo mongólico, los ojos expresivos y afables, como los de algunas bestias de la raza cuadrumana. Su cuerpo no tenía nada de mujer, y al andar parecía desbaratarse y hundirse del lado izquierdo, imprimiendo en el suelo un golpe seco que no se sabía si era pie de palo o del propio muñón del hueso roto. Su fealdad sólo fue igualada por la impavidez y el desdén compasivo con que miró a Mauricia (1: 613).

With a combination of firmness and empathy, Sor Marcela is able to dominate the disruptive *la Dura*, and march her off to solitary confinement in the convent's prison. Sor Marcela's repulsive appearance and her odious duty of being the convent's jailer belie her sympathetic understanding of the problems of the women undergoing attempted rehabilitation in the convent. For example, she "[s]ostenía esta tesis: que la privación absoluta de los apetitos alimentados por la costumbre más o menos viciosa, es el peor de los remedios, por engendrar la desesperación, y que para curar añejos defectos es conveniente permitirlos de vez en cuando con mucha medida" (1: 621). Thus she sometimes permits the inmates to dance, and on one occasion she acquiesces to the imprisoned *la*

Dura's request for alcohol.

"La coja," believing it is her Christian obligation to help Mauricia, "porque [. . . ella] sabe lo que es debilidad del estómago y cuánto hace sufrir" (1: 616-17), does return after dark and allows the imprisoned Mauricia to drink from her private bottle of "coñac muy bueno que solía usar para combatir sus rebeldes dispepsias" (1: 617). On another occasion Sor Marcela catches Mauricia smoking a cigarette that some masons had thrown over the convent wall to her. When Mauricia insolently offers her a puff, the nun accepts. "¡Cosa inaudita! Sor Marcel dio una chupada y después arrojó el cigarro, haciendo ascos, escupiendo mucho y poniendo una cara tan fea como los fetiches monstruosos de las idolatrías malayas" (1: 621).

Sor Marcela is important as the main nun interacting continually and effectively with Mauricia *la Dura*. As the narrator says, "Era buena como un ángel para conceder, y firme como una roca para detenerse en el punto que debía" (1: 617). Thus she is well matched to contend with *la Dura*, and their interactions reveal much concerning each other as they move the story forward. When she calls Fortunata and Mauricia to come and kill a mouse, Mauricia is able to steal the bottle of cognac from Sor Marcela's room, and the drinking of its contents brings on an extremely severe mental disturbance which results in her expulsion from the convent. This is Galdós's use of his "engranaje efectivo en la máquina de los acontecimientos" (1: 636) for getting Mauricia out of *Las Micaelas* and into a position for further interaction with Fortunata when the title protagonist resumes secular life outside the convent.

Because a non-handicapped character could have performed the same novelistic role, one may be permitted to ask why Galdós chose to create a *coja* at this point. There is no definitive answer. However, it is worth noting that no real-life prototype has ever been suggested for Sor Marcela. Moreover, she does not appear in the *Alpha* manuscript and was created in *Beta* shortly after Mauricia *la Dura*.³ Given Mauricia's generally recognized role as demonic temptress to Fortunata, it would have been appropriate for *la Dura* to have a *cojera*—the most distinguishing indication of the devil (Periñán lxii-lxiii). However, Galdós chose not to do so and accomplished much more by having Mauricia resemble the young Napoleon Bonaparte.⁴ Galdós sometimes displaced distinguishing aspects of one character onto another,⁵ and it is possible that after presenting Mauricia and as he started creating his next important character, Sor Marcela, he displaced onto her the demonic hallmark of *cojera*, which could have been very appropriate for Mauricia. Thus, their closeness in the plot enables the metonymic shift of attributes from one character to the other, and thus it is artistically appropriate for Sor Marcela to tell the vituperative Mauricia, "[N]o eres tú que hablas sino el demonio que te anda por la boca"—and for Mauricia to reprise, "El demonio eres tú" (1: 614).

The *cojera* serves as a means of expressing emotional experiences. Let us first note that a mood change of Mauricia's may be seen in her references to Sor Marcela's condition. Initially, as she is being herded off to the convent's "calabozo," she aggressively includes, "coja" and "pata y media" in her vituperations (1: 614). Then later, from behind bars, the

alcoholic *la Dura* now supplicates: “[C]ojita mía [. . .] cojita graciosa [. . .], tráeme nada más que una lágrimita de aquella gloria divina que tú tienes, [. . .] que recetó el médico para tu mal de barriga, [. . .] y así te coronen los serafines cuando entres en el Cielo con tu patita coja” (1: 615-16). Additionally, changes of emotion within Sor Marcela herself are communicated by her own use of the prosthesis. On her initial appearance, she is reported as merely “imprimiendo en el suelo un golpe seco” (1: 613). However, on the occasion of Mauricia’s second emotional upset, Sor Marcela becomes angry, “golpeando el suelo duramente con su pie de madera” (1: 650). And when it is revealed that Mauricia has secretly drunk all of her jailor’s brandy, the narrator reports that “la cojita [. . .] realmente estaba furiosa, y el topetazo de su pie duro sobre el suelo tenía una violencia y sonoridad excepcionales” (1: 651).

Sor Marcela’s wooden leg is utilized in the creation of humor on one occasion. This comic event occurs when the nun, who is so fearless and effective vis-à-vis Mauricia, is afraid of such a small thing as a mouse. Then this incongruity is enhanced by the additional revelation that the idea of the mouse approaching even her wooden leg is terrifying (1: 636).

A symbolic value emanates from the initial presentation of “la Coja.” Here, as already noted, the reader is informed by the narrator that it is unknown whether Sor Marcela’s handicap is “un pie de palo” or “el propio muñón del hueso roto” (1: 613). This question is not answered until the mouse episode, when she is afraid to have the mouse approach even her now-clearly designated “[pie] de palo” (1: 636). Lameness, according to folklore, is often indicative of the devil, and he is so depicted in visual art. The devil was popularly thought to be lame, either because he had injured his foot in the fall from heaven, or because he was, or had been changed into, a hybrid creature with a cloven hoof.⁶ The introductory description of Sor Marcela suffering from a mysterious foot defect does not serve as a point of departure for delineating a demonic character, but rather, as we have seen, serves by association to suggest that nature as proper to another.

Salvador Guillén in *Miau*

Although lameness is a sign of evil in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, by association, it is in *Miau* both a metonymic sign and an explicit one in the figure of Salvador Guillén. Already in his first appearance, Guillén is presented in an unfavorable light, even though the narrator refers to this occasion as “aquel fausto día” (144). The choice of the word “fausto” is significant here, for it has the potential to evoke someone—like the historical prototype Faust—who is associated with the devil, the latter’s telltale sign in Goethe’s *Faust* (70) being that he “hinkt auf einem Fuss” (limps on one foot).⁷ Subsequently, Galdós’s narrator refers to Guillén as “maldito cojo” (257) and the protagonist, Ramón Villaamil, vigorously addresses Guillén as “cojitranco de los infiernos” (347).⁸

Clearly Galdós wishes the reader to think of Guillén as evil. Although the narrator had used the word “fausto” in the first appearance of Guillén, he had earlier created another, non-cojo, devilish character, who is more in the Germanic, Faustian tradition (whose devil

is Mephistopheles). This character is Víctor Cadalso, who not only works behind the scenes to destroy Villaamil, but more openly and with extreme cruelty plays with the emotions of Villaamil's daughter Abelarda. At three climactic moments of sadistic emotional manipulation, Galdós's narrator remarks first that Víctor "llevaba en los labios risilla diabólica" (239), and then subsequently that Víctor speaks in a "rpto de inspiración infernal" (321), and finally Víctor departs a scene "como un alma que lleva Satanás" (331).

Far from being a *cojo*, Víctor is very handsome with no physical handicap. However, Villamil warns his daughter:

"[Es] el más malo y traicionero que hay bajo la capa del sol. Para hacerle más temible, Dios que ha hecho tan hermosos a algunos animals dañinos, le dio a éste el mirar con que engaña a los que no le conocen, para atontarlos, fascinarlos, y comérselos después. Es el monstruo mas[...]"(269-70)

Guillén's crutches and lameness may thus be seen to signal the moral traits of another character, also physically unimpaired as had been the case with Mauricia. The two Evil Ones do inadvertently meet and, consistent with the old saw that "It takes one to know one," they provide a bit of humor for the perceptive reader, as the narrator relates that "Guillén le tenía ojeriza y como Víctor le pagaba en la misma moneda, se troteaban con frases de doble sentido, haciendo reír a la concurrencia" (272).

In contradistinction to the Faustian Víctor, Guillén is delineated as the jolly, prank-laying devil of the Asmodian tradition, which is seen in old Spanish ballads, Inquisition records, and Vélez de Guevarra's 1640 novel *El diablo cojuelo* (Rodríguez Marín xiii-xxxviii, Periñán lx-lxvi).⁹ Accordingly, Díez de Revenga, in his edition of *Miau*, glosses the initial mention of "el cojo Guillén": "la cojera del personaje lo pone en relación con el diablo 'cojuelo,' y, en efecto, su maldad es jocosamente absoluta" (243, n. 298).

When Guillén is working at his desk, "tenia las muletas junto a sí" (245). This fact corroborates the evocation of *El diablo cojuelo's* eponymous protagonist, for that seventeenth-century *cojo* is repeatedly seen in the novel using crutches.¹⁰ Although Galdós's characterization of Guillén is also thus reminiscent of the merry, joking, prank-playing devil of old Spanish ballads and Inquisition records,¹¹ Guillén is, nevertheless, an incarnation of the devil. And Christian iconography has traditionally shown the Evil One to be present at the crucifixion.¹² In this novel where the *cojo's* derogatory appellation of *MIAU* is accepted by Villaamil as his *INRI*, and the protagonist says, "Ya me han crucificado entre ladrones," it is quite appropriate for a character representing the devil to be present. However, such critics as Weber and Gustavo Correa, the latter in his "La crucifixión de Villaamil en la novela *Miau*," do not mention the symbolism of Guillén and the special appropriateness of his presence at this juncture of the novel. Ángel Iglesias, however, does link Guillén with the one who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver: "Su función de Judas se apoya en el rasgo icónico de la cojera, defecto específico del diablo" (395-96).

Fausto Babel and "Maldiciones" in Ángel Guerra

Two years after *Miau*, in *Ángel Guerra*, Galdós again created an evil *cojo* to aid in the destruction of his protagonist. This character's relationship to the forces of evil is patent, for his given name is Fausto—and he has a mysterious limp. We may be sure that the character's given name was purposefully chosen, for Don Benito knew the Faust legend, having earlier attended and reviewed a performance of Guonod's opera *Fausto*. In this review he not only comments on the appearance of the devil, but also discusses the importance of Goethe, as well as details of the latter's *Faust* ("*Fausto*" 21-24). Initially the narrator of *Ángel Guerra* says that Fausto's lameness is "semejante a la de Lord Byron, pues ni su familia ni sus amigos supieron nunca de dónde le vino aquella deformación del pie, ni él supo dar explicación razonable de ella, cuando le preguntaron" (1217). Only later does Galdós make explicit the connection between Fausto's wickedness and the onset of his *cojera*. The priest Francisco Mancebo tells Ángel Guerra that Fausto's foot was maimed while attempting to steal from the cathedral in Toledo the *palmatoria* used in Pontifical High Masses.

The author includes Fausto in his narrative plan by making him a brother to Guerra's mistress, Dulcenombre. As such, he is a member of the degenerate Babel family that encouraged Dulcenombre into prostitution, through which she became acquainted with the title protagonist. Fausto is a minor character who is seen only occasionally in the novel until the concluding pages when he reappears in relation to the protagonist as a fugitive from justice because of his counterfeiting activities. Along with his brother Arístides, he is granted asylum at Guerra's newly established charitable institution, but Fausto remains taciturn, resentful, and lurks in the background. Then, at the climax of the novel, in the company of his brother and a cousin, Fausto attacks Guerra in his study, robbing and mortally wounding him.

Unlike his admired predecessor Dickens, who was greatly interested in villainy and evil (Lane 31-35, 255), Galdós does not have the villains pursued and brought to justice. On the contrary, they escape to Portugal. The author is no longer interested in Fausto and his companions. Their function has been to end the life of the controversial protagonist. Galdós's main focus now stays on Ángel Guerra, and in the final pages of the novel, he concentrates on the "ángel" part of his protagonist's dualistic nature as he makes his generous last will and testament, all the while steadfastly refusing to name his murderers. Thus one sees that the title protagonist is the polar opposite of Fausto, whose *cojera* and name are designed to evoke strong indications of a person in league with the devil.

The stature of Galdós's eponymous protagonist is enhanced by having to deal late in the novel with a second *cojo*. Known only as "Maldiciones," this mendicant is also admitted to Ángel Guerra's charitable institution, where he and Fausto are co-residents, though they never interact. "Maldiciones" performs some fictional tasks, not appropriate or plot-wise possible for Fausto, (who, for example, could not mortally wound Ángel and then logically be provided lifetime financial care in Ángel's will). After being admitted to Ángel Guerra's charitable institution, "Maldiciones" repays his benefactor by trying to seduce the blind girl Lucía. After brazenly defending himself and being expelled, "Maldiciones" is subsequently

granted readmission, but he continues to behave ungratefully during the rest of the novel. His presence does, however, serve to stimulate the *ángel* facet of Ángel Guerra's dualistic nature and the protagonist compassionately remembers "Maldiciones" in his will, making provisions for his lifetime care. Noël Valis has reminded us that one facet of this novel concerns "the traditional dialectic between devils and angels" (223), and in this regard we will add that Ángel, Galdós's protagonist, clearly triumphs spiritually over two antagonistic *cojos*.

Conclusions

The devil motif is an important facet of Galdós's creativity in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, *Miau*, and *Ángel Guerra*. Lameness is most often—but not always—an indicator of the Evil One in these novels. In *Fortunata y Jacinta* Sor Marcela is not only *coja*, but also grotesque in physical appearance. Thus she manifests two traditional folkloric indicators of the devil; yet she is not demonic at all, but rather a very good-hearted, well-intended person. The reason for her symbolic markers probably lies in the fact that because Sor Marcela interacts most importantly with Mauricia, Sor Marcela's devil-associated signifiers symbolically affect the presentation and character delineation of *la Dura*.

As Galdós explores the devil motif in *Miau*, he has recourse to lameness as the traditional signifier for one of his two devilish characters. The *cojo* is Salvador Guillén and he recalls the merry, prank-playing devil of the Asmodian tradition in old Spanish *romances*, Inquisition records, and Vélez de Guevarra's 1640 novel *El diablo cojuelo*. As in the case of the eponymous protagonist of Vélez de Guevarra's novel, crutches in *Miau* are a prime clue to the antagonist's true identity. The second evil doer, Víctor Cadalso, who also strives to destroy Villaamil and his family, is more in the Germanic, Faustian-Mephistopheles tradition. However, unlike Mephistopheles—and Guillén—he evidences no lameness at all—that characteristic having been expressed in his fellow evil-doer. It is the *cojo* Guillén, whom Galdós chooses to have, consistent with Christian iconography, present at Villaamil's symbolic crucifixion.

In *Ángel Guerra*, which contains aspects of the traditional contest between angels and devils, Galdós is not interested in playful disguises or transferred metonymic signifiers; rather, he wants his two most important evil doers to suggest the devil incarnate. Consequently, he gives both evocative names and delineates each as a *cojo*. The first of these *cojos* recalls the Germanic, Mephistopheles tradition, for his given name is Fausto. Fausto's climactic transgression is the murder of the novel's eponymous protagonist. The supplementary second *cojo*, "Maldiciones," appears late in the novel to perform fictional tasks, either inappropriate, or plot wise impossible for Fausto. Both *cojos* serve at the end of the novel as foils to enhance the goodness of the title protagonist—and to confirm Ángel's spiritual triumph over not one, but two, incarnations of evil.

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NOTES

¹ Contemporary novelists and their *cojo* characters include Flaubert's Hippolite in *Madame Bovary*, Zola's Gervaise Maquart in *L'Assommoir* and *La Teuse* in *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*, as well as Dickens's *Tiny Tim* in *A Christmas Carol*. In Spain during the Romantic Movement the *cojo* is a major character in Estébanez Calderón's novel *Moros y cristianos*, and in Angel Saavedra's drama *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino*, he is a minor character.

² Named *cojos* in the novels include Matías Alonso in *La desheredada*, Sor Marcela in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Roque, Fausto Babel, and "Maldiciones" in *Ángel Guerra*, Tristana Reluz in *Tristana*, Eliseo Martínez in *Misericordia*, and Juana Samaniego (reincarnated) in *Cassandra*; in the *Episodios*: "Medio-hombre" *Trafalgar*, Pepe Pallejos ("Sursum corda") *Zaragoza*, Pablo Rodríguez ("El cojo de Málaga") *Memorias de un cortesano*, Romualdo Cantera ("El Cojo de las Peñuelas") *España trágica*, and Vicente Calpena, the protagonist of the entire fifth series.

³ In *Alpha*, Mauricia is prefigured very briefly by characters named Lorenza, Severiana, and Feliciana. Only after writing the first two parts in *Alpha* did Galdós decide to add a character named Mauricia when he outlined points for a rewrite of Part II, including: "Mauricia, Pintura de este tipo" (788).

⁴ For the importance of having Mauricia resemble Napoleon, see Chamberlin (95-97).

⁵ For example, Galdós uses repeated feline imagery in connection with the character José Manuel Regato in *El Grand Oriente*, but none when he reappears in *Los cien hijos de San Luis*, however, the character immediately following Regato has catlike eyes (IV, 1622-23).

⁶ For visual depictions of the devil with one animal foot with a hoof and the other with a prosthesis, see Rodríguez Cepeda 29, 51, 62.

⁷ When Faust and Mephistopheles enter Auerbach's tavern, Mephistopheles thinks that none of the patrons would ever suspect that he is the devil. However, one (Siebel) immediately notices that Mephistopheles limps (70).

⁸ Although omitting the infernal emphasis, Doña Paca also deprecates Guillén as "cojitranco" (XXIV, 272).

⁹ Rodríguez Marín was the first to discuss, in the prologue to his edition of *El diablo cojuelo*, the limping devil as he appears repeatedly in Inquisition records, where women are accused of invoking his help to obtain a lover. Those charged believed the *cojuelo* to be a friendly spirit, who could quickly deliver the specific type of mate, which each woman desired—and Spanish women performed non-Christian rituals for this purpose. Rodríguez Marín also includes an exemplary *romance* of the period, as well as a discussion of the title protagonist of Vélez de Guevarra's novel. The *prologuista* also reminds us that the Spanish *cojuelo* has his origin in the tradition of the Hebrew demon Asmodeus, rather than in that of Mephistopheles, as occurs in the Faustian tradition (xxxiii-xxxviii).

¹⁰ The limping devil's crutches are mentioned in the Perinián edition I, 18; V, 59; VI, 67; IX, 112; X, 127.

¹¹ For the best post-Rodríguez Marín discussion of the merry, prank-playing *cojuelo*, see Perinián, xl-xlvi.

¹² For a visual depiction of the devil at the crucifixion, see Marx and Skey 232-35.

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