

2011

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### Recommended Citation

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## Palacio Valdés's "El Pájaro en la nieve" and the Importance of its Historical Moment

Vernon Chamberlin

In the late nineteenth century, Spain had the highest percentage of sightless people of any nation in Europe, thus offering writers of the Realist period a vast panorama from which they could draw upon for the creation of similarly afflicted fictional characters.<sup>1</sup> While the blind characters in Galdós's novels and *Episodios Nacionales* have already been studied, to date there has been no study of the blind stock character of sightless street musicians in the nineteenth-century short story.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the present study is to initiate investigation of this *tipo costumbrista* by focusing on Palacio Valdés's "El Pájaro en la nieve"—which received some praise from Juan Valera,<sup>3</sup> but only superficial mention by Baquero Goyanes in his monumental *El cuento español en el siglo XIX*: "[A]unque ligeramente sensiblón y cargado de tópicos, es un buen cuento de su género y estilo, y significa la estilización del tema romántico y lastimoso del ciego en la nieve" (417).

We shall show that "El Pájaro en la nieve" is much more complex and meritorious than previously evaluated. Initially, we shall consider the traditional presentation of the blind street singer before the Revolution of 1868. Then we shall observe how changes in outlook and government policy in the attempt at a re-formation of the nation are reflected even in the circumstance of a fictional blind street musician.

Since the time of Homer, the blind singer of adventure tales has been a prototype throughout the Mediterranean world, both north and south of that sea, and in Moslem as well as in Christian countries (Caro Baroja 46). In Spain, the blind singer of ballads (and other kinds of songs) had become a *tipo costumbrista* long before the advent of Realist fiction in the second half of the nineteenth century. Evidence of this may be found not only in diverse literary genres during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, but also in the paintings of Goya, in *costumbrista* collections of popular types, and in contemporary magazines.<sup>4</sup>

Charles E. Kany's *Life and Manners in Madrid: 1750-1800* (64-65) is a valuable source of information about the blind in the early modern period. Already in 1614 the Madrid *ciegos* in the Puerta del Sol had their own fraternal organization (under the patronage of the *Nuestra Señora de la Visitación, Convento de Carmelitas Calzados*). Initiation fees and annual dues were used not only to furnish dowries for each blind man's daughters, but also to

help the sick, to bury the dead, and to perform other charitable functions commonly associated with fraternities. In addition to selling ballads, *all* blind men enjoyed the monopoly of selling newspapers. However, members of the fraternity were distinguished by the wearing of a medal suspended from the neck and bearing an image of *Nuestra Señora de la Visitación* (a non-member blind vendor could show an official municipal license on demand). Kany states further:

Another privilege of the society of blind men seems to have been that of soliciting from law courts official accounts of the details of various crimes (for which the perpetrators had been condemned to death and were about to be executed) in order that the blind singer might put them into verse and sing them in the streets. [. . .] They were the popular chroniclers of the day. (64-65)

Some clerics gained supplemental income by writing ballads and other types of songs for the blind; yet other literate people found a niche in rewriting and enlivening current ballads with the aim of enhancing their appeal to the alms-giving and ballad-purchasing public (Caro Baroja 44, 55-56).

The blind street singer almost invariably had a companion, most often a younger person, who would not only serve as a guide, but also carry and sell *romances*, including those the *ciego* was currently singing. Probably the best-known painting depicting this street pair is that by José Domínguez Bécquer (Caro Baroja 47, painting 49). At times the life of the *lazarillo* could be very difficult.<sup>5</sup> For example, in Galdós's *Episodio* entitled *Cánovas*, Crescencia relates how five years of her life were made wretched because her mother had rented her out to a blind man: “Desde los cinco a los diez años anduve por las calles, descalza con un ciego que tocaba la bandurria. Largo tiempo pasé durmiendo en un banco, sin más abrigo que unos trapos indecentes [. . .] entre mendigos asquerosos y borrachines” (II, 1281).

That singing for a living was a common practice as early as the fifteenth century may be seen in a contract that dates from 1495, in which a mother entrusts her blind, twelve-year-old son to an older *ciego*. The latter will teach him his trade and “le daría de comer, beber y vestir, casa y lecho. El discípulo le daría en cuanto le mandase, siempre que fueran cosas honestas y factibles” (qtd. in Caro Baroja 46). A teaching of the trade in the nineteenth century may be seen in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, when Guillermina Pacheco and Jacinta view the following scene in the patio of the tenement house where José Ido del Sagrario lives:

[Había] un niño como de diez años, ciego, sentado en una banqueta y tocando la guitarra. Su brazo era muy pequeño para alcanzar al extremo del mango. Tocaba al revés, pisando las cuerdas con la derecha y rasgueando con la izquierda, puesta la guitarra sobre las rodillas, boca y cuerdas hacia arriba. La mano pequeña y bonita del ceguezuelo hería con gracia las cuerdas, sacando de ellas arpegios dulcísimos y estos punteados graves que tan bien expresan el sentir hondo y rudo de la plebe. La cabeza del músico oscilaba como la de los muñecos que tiene por pescuezo una

espiral de acero, y revolvía de un lado para otro los globos muertos de sus ojos cuajados, sin descansar un punto. Después de mucho y mucho puntear y rasguear, rompió con chillona voz el canto:

*A Pepa la gitani . . . í . . . í .*

Aquel *íí* no se acababa nunca, daba vueltas para arriba y para abajo como una rúbrica trazada con el sonido. Ya les faltaba el aliento a los oyentes cuando el ciego se determinó a posarse en el final de la frase:

*Illa-cuando la parió su madre. . .*

Expectación, mientras el músico echaba de lo hondo del pecho unos ayes y gruñidos como un perrillo al le están pellizcando el rabo.

¡Ay, ay, ay!

Por fin concluyó:

*Sólo para narices  
Le dieron siete calambres.*

Risas algazara, pataleos . . . Junto al niño cantor había otro ciego, viejo y curtido, la cara como un corcho, montera de pelo encasquetada y el cuerpo envuelto en capa parda con más remiendos que tela. Su risilla de suficiencia le denunciaba como autor de la celebrada estrofa. Era también maestro, padre quizás, del ciego chico y le estaba enseñando el oficio.  
(I, ix, 7: 353-54)

Even as late as the final years of Isabel II's reign, the blind street singer still enjoyed popularity and protection from official harassment—even if he criticized the queen herself. A case in point is that of the well-known “Perico el ciego.” The latter was so popular that a sketch of him appeared in the magazine *El Museo Universal*, and a book about his life enjoyed a second edition (“Tipos” 186).<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in the *Episodio* entitled *Prim*, Galdós has his protagonist (José García Fajardo) report:

Anoche me paré en los corrillos que rodean a *Perico el Ciego*, que es un magnífico trovador. [. . .] Al son de su guitarra canta, no las proezas de los héroes, porque no los hay, sino las vivas historias de bandoleros y ladrones. Atento público le escucha con simpatía y emoción. Yo me he sentido medieval agregándome a este pueblo. Anoche hicieron furor dos o tres coplas de Perico harto ingeniosos. O me engañé mucho, o eran alusivas a nuestra reina, que anda ya en jácaras de los cantares callejeros. Desengáñate, Manolo, aquí no hay cronista más popular que *Perico el Ciego*.  
(XIX, 587)

Tolerance and acceptance of the blind street singer was so well established that women also felt safe to engage in this occupation. The best known was “la Ciega de Manzanares,” who distinguished herself from “Perico el Ciego” by being more poetic (*Prim XIX*, 587). A blind gypsy girl, accompanied by a “viejo guitarrista,” appears in *Fortunata y Jacinta*. She sings like an angel, deeply affecting Moreno Isla. The native “carácter” and beauty of her singing overrides the spectacle of her empty eye sockets (IV, ii, 361). By law, only the blind were allowed to sing and recite in public places before 1868 (French 65). Nineteenth-century Spaniards still followed the dictums of the sixteenth-century Council of Trent, which had rejected the belief that salvation may be obtained through faith alone. To enter heaven the sincere Catholic of Palacio Valdés’s time was required to have not only faith, but also a sustained dedication to good works.

The latter included charitable alms-giving to those in need. Angel Bahamonde Magro’s study of nineteenth-century archives and newspapers has shown that an unfortunate consequence of this belief and practice was that many able-bodied, non-physically-challenged persons chose to exploit the charitable appeal because they could earn more by feigning physical defects, or hiring handicapped children, than they could in a non-mendicant occupation (168-89). Thus alms-beseechers became so numerous and aggressive on the streets of the Spanish capital that they were offensive to Madrilenians—and also shocking to foreign visitors—as eyewitness activist reformer Gabriel Vergara pointed out in a 1904 article entitled “Mendicidad en Madrid” (345). Moreover, an authoritarian Church and an authoritarian monarchy, Bahamonde Magro believes, felt more secure with such a subservient underclass in a “cultura de la pobreza y mendicidad” (163-70).

All this seemed to change with the overthrow of the monarchy, the granting of religious freedom, and efforts to disestablish Catholicism as the official state religion. The Revolution of 1868, called *La Gloriosa* after the English model of 1688, invigorated the spirit and reoriented the outlook of a new Spanish government. The favorable conditions for street performers in Catholic Spain were thought to be different from those of the Protestant countries of Northern Europe, where hard work and worldly success were often considered as a sign of personal salvation. So now the new Spanish desire was to become more like an idealized Great Britain, where street mendicancy was considered to be much less because alms were given primarily through the workhouse. Toward this aim, article 258 of the Spanish penal code was changed in 1868.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in the same year some of the buildings of the royal winter residence at El Pardo, about fifteen kilometers from the Puerta del Sol, were acquired to house newly rounded-up street mendicants (as Galdós later so well illustrates in *Misericordia*).<sup>8</sup> The following year (1869) the magazine *El Museo Universal* featured a sketch of the new institution at El Pardo, showing residents working on the grounds under the direction of a supervisor (228). It also published a photograph of the asylum’s founding director, Moreno Benítez (231).

The latter had been a tireless, and well-known, promoter of the *Revolución Gloriosa*. Now he was continuing his public service, the magazine affirmed, at El Pardo; and in its article “Asilo de pobres en el Pardo,” the magazine rejoiced that “Puede decirse que (ahora) ha cambiado el aspecto de las calles de Madrid, donde a una con verdaderos pobres, tullidos, cojos, ciegos y mancos demandando el pan lastimeramente, se verán muchos holgazanes

y mocetonas que alquilaban hijos y contaban lástimas para conmover los pechos de los transeúntes” (231).

Another aspect of the new government’s policy was the establishment in Madrid of the *Colegio Nacional de Sordo-Mudos y de Ciegos*, which was praised in the magazine *La Ilustración Española y Americana* (“Orquesta” 691). This institution offered training for the blind not only with the *guitarra*, but also with several other instruments. Additionally the *Colegio* had an orchestra. Its forty-five young *ciegos* not only played for their own graduation exercises, but also lent their services to other public events, including the *Exposición Nacional* held in Madrid in 1873. The purpose of this orchestra was “proporcionar a aquellos desgraciados, a su salida del establecimiento un modo decoroso de ganar la vida” (691). One of its students, Martín de Martín Ruiz was so talented and well-trained that he “causó extraordinaria sensación en la Exposición en Viena en 1873, donde obtuvo uno de los primeros premios, entre todos sus compañeros de desgracia de las demás naciones” (Becerro de Bengoa 291). Galdós also acknowledged the *Colegio* and depicts the students out for exercise with their supervisor in *Tristana* (VII, 1553-54).

In the post-*Revolución Gloriosa* period *El Museo Universal*’s 1869 declaration that the street conditions had improved would turn out to be short sighted. People from all parts of the country continued to consider the capital as the best location for alms beseeching. Attempts to control conditions on the streets became complicated, erratic, and even seasonal.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, some Spaniards came to realize that the prized English model had been over idealized, as for example Galdós, when he visited London in 1887 and was horrified by its poverty and multitude of street beggars (qtd. in Shoemaker 287). Conditions in Madrid became so bad that numerous newspapers and journals addressed the problem and considerable attention was given to the question of whether or not alms giving should be discontinued as a solution to street conditions.

An echo of this fact may be seen in the short story “Siglo XIII” by Pardo Bazán, who enjoyed listening and giving compensatory alms to blind musicians. Doña Emilia laments that such individuals as the blind musician and his *lazarillo*, who are the focus of her story, are diminishing in number and one day will become extinct. Because of so many imposters now, she says, “La limosna está desacreditada. [. . .] El altruismo científico desdeña la caridad” (1313).

These sentiments are also a major component of Leopoldo Alas’s story “Para Vicios” (565-68). Thus we see that the post-*Gloriosa* outlook and changes were having an effect even on the blind street singer and his *lazarillo*—as Spain attempted to transition away from a Church-and-monarchy-dominated society, which emphasized alms-giving. Also important for the present study is the fact that soon the political situation in Spain became ever more tumultuous: a foreigner (Amadeo de Saboya) became king, but survived in office little more than two years; his principal supporter, General Prim (the hero of Spain’s *Guerra de África*), was assassinated on the streets of Madrid on the day of the king’s arrival to the capital. *La Primera República Española* survived only eleven months, and a military *pronunciamiento* restored a (now modified) monarchy, with Catholicism remaining the official state religion. Certainly the post-*Gloriosa* years were a difficult

period, replete with uncertainties and tensions for various strata of Spanish society, including those entrusted with governmental authority.

Let us now turn our attention to the blind-musician-protagonist of “El Pájaro en la nieve,” who tries to earn a living in post-revolutionary Madrid.<sup>10</sup> Juan (no surname) receives the best of the newly emphasized type of vocational training, but must ultimately regress to the hardships of street singing (and without a *lazarillo* or any fraternal association with other *ciegos*).<sup>11</sup> Afflicted with both congenital blindness and the loss of his mother at an early age, Juan received solicitous care first from his older brother, until the sibling went off to America, and then from his father, until the latter died at an early age. Thus “El Pájaro en la nieve” becomes the tender, intimate story of a lone, blind musician’s unsuccessful attempt to survive in nineteenth-century Madrid.

The narrator reports at the beginning of the story that “Le habían enseñado lo único que los ciegos suelen aprender, la música; y fue en este arte muy aventajado” (39). Although all the action takes place in the Spanish capital, there is no mention of Madrid’s esteemed *Colegio Nacional de Sordo-Mudos y de Ciegos*, whose musical goal was (as already noted) to prepare its students “para ganar su subsistencia de una manea cómoda y digna” (“Colegio” 691). Juan was a second generation musical talent. Because his father was a musician in the Spanish army, he may well have been the person who made certain that Juan received the thorough, classical music education, which becomes apparent as the story unfolds. Moreover, before his death, the father secured for his son a position as organist in a Madrid church.

This position lasted until there was a change of government. The narrator is uncertain

[S]i entraron los radicales, o los conservadores, o los constitucionales; pero entraron algunos nuevos. [. . .] El nuevo Gabinete, pasados algunos días, juzgó que Juan era un organista peligroso para el orden público.  
[. . .]

Como el Ministerio entrante no estaba dispuesto, según había afirmado en el Congreso por boca de uno de sus miembros más autorizados ‘a tolerar imposiciones de nadie,’ procedió inmediatamente y con saludable energía a dejar cesante a Juan, buscándole un sustituto que en sus maniobras musicales ofreciese más garantías o fuese más adicto a las instituciones.  
(41-42)

Juan is completely surprised at his dismissal, because he had received no indication that his playing might be too exuberant, and thus constitute for the government “una oposición verdaderamente escandalosa” (42).

After an interval in which he sells his few possessions, and “sin amigos, sin ropa, sin dinero” (43), Juan’s next employment becomes that of a “pianista en un café” (43). We know that such employment could be successful, because in *Fortunata y Jacinta* there is a blind pianist, who by day tunes pianos and by night pleases the patrons in a café on Fuencarral street by complying with their musical requests (III, i, 6: 41). Juan, in contrast,



spends his spare time composing a Mass for the repose of his father's soul, and at night in a lower-class neighborhood, fails to comprehend and adapt to popular, working-class musical tastes:

[E]ra necesario despedirle a los pocos días. La música no agradaba a los parroquianos del Café de la Cebada. No tocaba jotas, polos, ni sevillanas, ni cosa ninguna flamenca, ni siquiera polcas; pasaba la noche interpretando sonatas de Beethoven y conciertos de Chopin. Los concurrentes se desesperaban al no poder llevar el compás con las cuchillas. (43-44)

Subsequently, although Juan “se estremecía con la idea de pedir limosnas” (44), that necessity does arrive: “Arrojado de todas partes, sin tener un pedazo de pan que llevarse a la boca ni ropa con que preservarse del frío, comprendió el cuitado con terror que se acercaba el instante de pedir limosna” (45). Ashamed to be seen in daylight, Juan decides to try his luck at night, with “una guitarra vieja y (algo) rota” (45). Beset with fear and embarrassment, Juan makes his street debut in central Madrid on a December night. With a racing heart, trembling legs, and a knot in his throat, Juan is at first unable to sing:

Arrimóse a la pared de una casa, descansó algunos instantes y, repuesto un tanto empezó a cantar la romanza de tenor del primer acto de *La favorita*. Llamó, desde luego, la atención de los transeúntes un ciego que no cantaba peteneras o malagueñas, y muchos hicieron círculo en torno suyo, y no pocos, al observar la maestría con que iba venciendo las dificultades de la obra, se comunicaron en voz baja su sorpresa y dejaron algunos cuartos en el sombrero, que había colgado del brazo. Terminada la romanza, empezó el aria del cuarto acto de *La Africana*. Pero se había reunido demasiada gente a su alrededor, y la autoridad temió que esto fuese causa de algún desorden, pues era cosa averiguada para los agentes del orden público que las personas que se reúnen en la calle a escuchar a un ciego demuestran por este hecho instintos peligrosos de rebelión, hostilidad contra las instituciones, una actitud, en fin, incompatible con el orden social y la seguridad del Estado. (46-47)

Using the excuse that Juan is blocking pedestrian traffic, the police give him the choice of jail or cessation of singing. He chooses the latter, occasioning the narrator to comment with sarcasm: “Es realmente consolador el ver con qué esmero procura la autoridad gubernativa que las vías públicas se hallen siempre limpias de ciegos que canten. Y yo creo, por más que hay quien sostenga lo contrario, que si pudiese igualmente tenerlas limpias de ladrones y asesinos no dejaría de hacerlo con gusto” (47).

The fact that the concluding sentence of the above quotation is the second time that the narrator has employed irony occasions one to remember Linda Egan's belief that humor facilitates persuasion, as irony serves to relax the reader as it “figuratively loops an arm around our shoulder, offers a joke to break the ice and then recruits us to help the author take apart and reassemble the world we both inhabit” (96).



As his street debut ends, Juan realizes that he has earned enough to eat decently the next day and to pay for miserable lodgings. Consequently, in spite of regretting sincerely that he is a threat to the established order, this “alma simple” continues to come out at night. However, the harassment by the police progressively reduces his audience and his earnings. Finally, he becomes so impoverished that he has to sell his guitar. Hunger, cold, and now the thought that his long-lost, separated brother might come and recognize his voice, keep Juan out on the street, even when the falling snow discourages anyone from stopping to listen to his singing. Then finally one night in the “Plaza de las Cortes,” while imploring the aid of the Virgin Mary and singing Gounod’s *Ave Maria*, he becomes unable to continue:

[L]a voz expiraba en la garganta; las piernas se le doblaban; iba perdiendo la sensibilidad en las manos. Dio algunos pasos y se sentó en la acera al pie de la verja que rodeaba el jardín. Apoyó los codos en las rodillas y metió la cabeza entre las manos. Y pensó vagamente en que había llegado el último instante de su vida; y volvió a rezar fervorosamente implorando la misericordia divina. (51)

He is aroused, not by the police, but by his long-lost brother and taken to a wonderful domicile for an evening with his brother and his family. At the end of the evening, he falls asleep—“y despertó en el Cielo” (58). The denouement reveals that the extended evening with his brother was a hallucinatory rapture during expiration. His body is found the next day in the snow and the cause of death is listed as freezing.

The mention of the Radical Party in the story as being one of those coming to power in Spain’s very unstable political situation, suggests that the fictional time of “El Pájaro en la nieve” is between 1868 and 1873 (Carr 322-23, 758). The story, initially labeled a “novella,” is first known to have appeared in Barcelona’s *Ilustración Artística* on 24 and 31 September 1887. This story was a time when Palacio Valdés was still liberal and a great admirer of Galdós and the latter’s employment of literature to effect social change.<sup>12</sup>

Certainly Palacio Valdés created a well-crafted, interest-holding short story—with successful characterization, plot development, climax, and denouement. The narrator is not only extradiagetic, but also omniscient as he continually shares the protagonist’s most intimate thoughts and feelings. When appropriate these can reflect an historical referent. For example, Bahamonde has affirmed that the repression of alms seekers on the streets had a component of “consideraciones de orden público” (181). Although Juan is not a pretend handicapped, nor an aggressive in-your-face unfortunate as is the *cojo* in *Fortunata y Jacinta* encountered by Moreno Isla (IV, ii, 344), he does sincerely regret that he has violated “los mandatos de la autoridad [. . .] y aunque fuese momentáneamente, el orden de su país” (47).

Notable also are the climax and denouement in that they have elements in common with Hans Cristian Andersen’s well-known story “The Little Match Girl” (1846).<sup>13</sup> Both stories have a denouement in which a poverty-stricken-street person, who is trying to eke out a living, freezes to death in the winter snow. In Andersen’s story, during the climactic expiring rapture a beloved grandmother appears to the girl and takes her away. In “El

pajaro en la nieve” it is a brother. Unlike Andersen, Palacio Valdés has prepared the reader to suspend his or her disbelief and accept the fact that this really seems to be happening. This is achieved by mentioning the brother early in the story, telling how he once looked after Juan, and how Juan comes to hope that the brother may return and solve his survival dilemma. Such preparation permits an interesting, well-executed, turn of events in that it raises the reader’s hopes that Juan, after all, might survive in a happy ending.

However, “El Pájaro en la nieve” is much more than a fine *cuento*. It is also a serious commentary on the poor judgment and impotence of the (post-1868) Madrilinean municipal government—well illustrated by the great disconnect between political oratory and the follow-through deed. Specifically, the new government minister announces that he will not tolerate any threat to the stability of the social order. However, all he can do to fulfill his boast is to have an innocent organist deprived of his livelihood. Subsequently, when the protagonist, in final desperation, must become a street singer in the depth of winter, his ability to attract a crowd causes him once again to be judged (along with his audience) a threat to the social order. Consequently, at the crossroads of history, the protagonist’s fate becomes that of an innocent expiatory sacrificial victim, as “El Pájaro en la nieve” rises above the level of social criticism to that of a parable with a strong moral lesson. The full power of the lesson depends on the reader’s ability to see that the government’s proscription of blind musicians in public places thoughtlessly upends a centuries-old accommodation to the economic problems of the blind.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A multinational census of 1877 revealed that Spain had the highest ratio of blind per capita of any country in Europe. Spain's incidence of blindness was 14.8 per 1000, followed by Hungary 11.9; Austria 9.1; United Kingdom 9.1; Prussia 8.4; Switzerland 7.2; Holland 3.5; and Norway 1.2. See Jimeno Agius 382.
- <sup>2</sup> Chamberlin (1-26).
- <sup>3</sup> Valera considers "¡Solo!" and "El Pájaro en la nieve" to be Palacio Valdés's best short stories, but he does not distinguish between the two in his generalized evaluation (qtd. in Gutiérrez Díaz-Bernardo 227-28).
- <sup>4</sup> For seventeenth and eighteenth-century literature, see Caro Baroja (45-70). Goya first painted *El ciego de la guitarra* in 1778 (Guidol 109), and then some forty years later again included a similar figure in his *Romería de San Isidro* (Muller 188-89). Additionally, Goya painted the well-known contemporary street balladeer "Tío Paquete" (Muller 188). Ramón de la Cruz has some blind characters earning their Christmas *aguinaldos* with new ballads in the "sainete" *La plaza mayor por Navidad* (ctd. in Kany 89). Antonio Ferrer del Río and Juan Pérez Calvo coauthored *El Ciego* for *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* (ctd. in Ucelay-Da Cal 216). The magazine *El Museo Universal* presented a pencil sketch of the well-known Madrid street singer "Perico el Ciego" ("Tipos" 165); and *La Ilustración Española* called attention to "el popular ciego de Binéfar, que situado indefectiblemente en la estación de dicho pueblo a la llegada de todos los trenes, echa al aire con voz enronquecida graciosas coplas aragonesas" (*El Ciego* 645; sketch 652).
- <sup>5</sup> The common designation of the blind man's accompanying guide as his *lazarillo* comes, as is well known, from the eponymous protagonist of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, (whose mother entrusted him to a *ciego*). Lazarillo's blind master is not a street singer, but has "otras mil formas y maneras de sacar el dinero. [. . .] Ganaba más en un mes que cien ciegos en un año. (*La Vida* 77).
- <sup>6</sup> Sainz de Robles (1955) affirms that Perico was a "famoso pordiosero madrileño que cantaba coplas políticas con mucha gracia y ronca voz (1860-75)."
- <sup>7</sup> Teresa Fuentes Peris states that the earlier law specified "that people, of any sex or age, found begging *in the streets* were to be rounded up by the authorities" (160). However, that law had a loophole which concerned the term "parado" (unemployed). The 1868 amendment of article 258 of the Penal Code clarified this term as being synonymous with "vago," and, therefore, any such an individual was now also definitely subject to law enforcement (160, n. 55).
- <sup>8</sup> Galdós depicts in *Misericordia* how the transfer from street begging to residence at the asylum could take place. Benina and the blind (non-musician) Almudena are arrested along with others and are forcibly transported to El Pardo. Benina was begging on San Justo street and Almudena "en la calle de Sacramento," when she was apprehended by a plainclothes policeman, who justifies his action: "No le dije ayer que el Gobernador no quiere que se pida en esta calle" (XXI, 254). A sweep of nearby streets was also made, which enabled Benina and Almudena to be together at El Pardo until their release by family and friends.
- <sup>9</sup> As noted in the *Misericordia* citation immediately above, restrictions could be given on very brief notice. Also, before the onset of winter, nonresidents of Madrid were often ordered by means of public postings to leave the capital, because the municipality

feared that it might have to assume responsibility for their maintenance when bad weather could keep them off the streets. Moreover, the local government had to consider the needs of resident construction workers, many of whom were often without work during the winter (Bahamonde 179, 177).

<sup>10</sup> It is a pleasure to thank Linda Willem (Butler University) for calling “El Pájaro en la nieve” to my attention.

<sup>11</sup> Although the fraternal brotherhood continued into the nineteenth century, Kany believes that it had dissolved before the *Gloriosa* (66).

<sup>12</sup> In a letter to Alas, 24 June 1885, Galdós speaks of earlier talks with Palacio concerning literature, and their thought that the leading novelists might found their own journal and discuss “todas las cuestiones que con la literatura se relacionan, y ocuparse de política, de enseñanza, discursos académicos, de Ateneos y sociedades, de Parlamentarismo y discursos políticos, toda clase de estadios científicos y hasta de salones con la debida guasa” (“Sesenta” 147).

Although Palacio initially hailed Galdós as the savior of the Spanish novel, he later regretted his exuberant praise of the Galdosian anticlericalism in *Doña Perfecta* and *Gloria*, and never allowed these opinions to be reprinted; he himself late in life “reconverted” to Catholicism. For details, see Valis (691-714).

<sup>13</sup> I am indebted to an anonymous member of *Decimónonica*’s editorial board for calling my attention to Andersen’s “The Little Match Girl” (1846). Also worth considering is a relationship between “El pajarero en la nieve” and the representation of *el poeta* in Ruben Dario’s *cuento* “El rey burgués.”

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