

## HEGEL IN GALDÓS' *EL AMIGO MANSO*

Doña Javiera's interruption of Máximo Manso's work on a prologue to a translation of Hegel's *Sistema de bellas artes* relieves his mind of the confusion caused by reading "en ausencia de la realidad" the philosopher's thought on the beautiful. Doña Javiera becomes Máximo's "autoridad estética."<sup>1</sup> However, nothing in Hegel suggests that a widow in brightly colored attire and belonging to the commercial classes merits such appreciation.<sup>2</sup> In the following paragraph Máximo finds the beautiful outside Hegel's norms for sculpture.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he gives short shrift to Hegel's dislike of irony (pp. 19-20), creating the impression that Hegel is tedious and his thought perhaps irrelevant to the reader of this "realist novel." Máximo's narration and interpretation of fact in the chapter are largely ironic and mislead readers precisely in the manner that Hegel considered perverse:

To these perversities which are opposed to unity and firmness of character we may annex the more modern principle of irony. This false theory has seduced poets into bringing into characters a variety which does not come together into unity, so that every character destroys itself as character, [On this theory] if an individual comes forward at first in a determinate way, this determinacy is at once to pass over to its opposite, and this character is at once to display nothing but the nullity of its determinacy and itself.<sup>4</sup>

Although Galdós in this instance deals playfully with Hegelian ideas, the preponderance of evidence strongly suggests that in *El amigo Manso* as a whole he draws heavily upon, and applies quite systematically, views expressed in the *Aesthetics* and *Phenomenology of Mind* in characterization and in the structure of his characters'—especially his protagonist's—experience.

We may best understand Máximo's initial denial that he exists (Chapter I) in its relationship to the text that he writes under duress (beginning with Chapter II) proving his lack of existence. Máximo's ill-humored insistence on

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<sup>1</sup> Benito Pérez-Galdós, *El amigo Manso*, Buenos Aires, Espasa-Calpe, 1954; p. 19. All further references to this edition of novel indicated by page number(s) in parentheses. Galdós' orientation in this novel owes much to G.W.F. Hegel's *Aesthetics*, especially in the first parts. This work has carried various titles and was published in French (Paris, 1840) with the title *Cours d'Esthétique*; and an edition of the last third appeared as *Système des Beaux Arts* (Paris: Librairie de Ladrange, 1860).

<sup>2</sup> Modern clothing such as that described fails to meet with Hegel's taste for the classical in sculpture or his preference that it be "treated as a work of architectonic design" (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of the Fine Arts*, 4 vols., trans. and notes F.P.B. Osmaston, London, G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1929, III; p. 166).

<sup>3</sup> In Hegel's view, youthful figures are to be preferred over matronly ones, *Ibid.*, 177-81.

<sup>4</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, 2 vols., trans. T.M. Knox, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1975; I, 243.

his non-existence, his determination to prove his case by all possible means, contrasts with his controlled management of the narrative in general. His petulant, childish display, while making a serious argument, must reflect a very specific intentionality. Since the first chapter develops in "estos espacios de la idea" (p.10), we assume the situation is bookish and are amused at the childish and picaresque behavior of "spirits." Nevertheless, the chapter prefigures the principal action. Máximo's incorporeal existence is essentially not different from that which he leads in Madrid, beginning in Chapter II. Aside from allusion to the world of disembodied spirits, the description could be applied equally well to Máximo before he is drawn out of his home and quiet orderly life and made to lose his patience when his brother José María returns from Cuba and they both fall in love with Irene: "Quimera soy, sueño de un sueño, . . . sospecha de una posibilidad, recreándome en mi no ser, viendo transcurrir tontamente el tiempo . . . llega a convertirse en entretenimiento, me pregunto si el no ser equivale a ser todos, y si mi falta de atributos personales equivale a la posesión de los atributos del ser" (pp. 9-10). When Máximo participates in the principal action, it would seem that his relationship with Manuel and Irene should force him to display the movements and characteristics of a man. But he ends that "life" withdrawing into the non-existence he wants us to believe he cherishes at the beginning. In the penultimate paragraph of Chapter I Máximo offers a festive version of his dealings with his author. Just as when Doña Javiera's flattery begins to get him to surrender his solitude in the principal action, the sale of his *asunto* to the author reveals his vanity and his need of others. Yet he would have us believe him cheated, that the author did him in, bound him to servitude. And this servitude gives him his novelistic life: "Poco después salí de una llamarada, convertido en carne mortal. El dolor me dijo que era hombre" (p. 11).

Hegel's *Phenomenology* provides a key to Máximo's initial statement and to his relationship with his author. At the imperfect level of personality development in which each being only recognizes fully his own conscious being in the mirror provided by another's consciousness, there is a disposition to negate and belittle the other's claim to self-consciousness. According to Findlay, Freud referred to this state as natural narcissism in infants.<sup>5</sup> From the start Galdós develops for Máximo a childish personality. Hegel provides further insight into the uncertainties and reactions for which he overcompensates: "Each is indeed certain of his own self [consciousness] but not that of the other, and hence its own certainty of itself is without truth."<sup>6</sup> For such a self-

<sup>5</sup> J.N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Reexamination*, New York, Oxford Press, 1976; p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie, New York, Colophon Books, 1967; p. 232. Interest in the role of Hegel in Galdós' creative processes has focussed either on the work as a whole or on *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Sherman Eoff dealt with the place of Hegel in Galdós' thought (*The Novels of Pérez-Galdós: The Concept of Life as Dynamic Process*, Saint Louis, Washington

consciousness to develop fully it has to enter into life and death struggle with another consciousness: "for they must bring their certainty of themselves, to the level of objective truth, and make this a fact both in the case of the other and in their own case as well".<sup>7</sup> Máximo's insistence on avoiding such struggle would seem to make him a "case study": "the presentation of itself [self-consciousness], however, as pure abstraction of self-consciousness consists in showing itself as pure negation of its objective form, or in showing that it is fettered to no determinate existence, that it is not bound at all by the particularity everywhere characteristic of existence . . . not tied up with life".<sup>8</sup> Máximo's psychologically true presentation of himself as self-consciousness preferring non-existence to particularity and determinacy shows him in danger of vanishing should he refuse to struggle with the author: "The individual, who has not staked his life . . . may be recognized as a Person; but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness."<sup>9</sup>

However, Máximo's relationship with his author allows further development, for as narrator compelled to write, he is the author's "slave" and so enters a higher level of consciousness, that possible in the master-slave relationship. In this instance, the master takes for himself self-consciousness and denies it to his slave, who in fear becomes thing-like and degraded as he is forced to procure enjoyment for the master through his toil. The slave can gain a mind of his own through what is procured under duress: "where there seemed to be merely an outsider's mind and ideas, the bondsman becomes aware, through this rediscovery of himself by himself of having and being a 'mind of his own.'"<sup>10</sup> Were Máximo to understand his writing in accordance with the above, he would more closely approach full being. However, he only claims having been taken advantage of and the element of fear seems to be lacking. In such an instance having a mind of one's own is seen by Hegel as "simply stubbornness, a type of freedom which does not get beyond the attitude of bondage."<sup>11</sup> This form of consciousness is "rather a piece of cleverness which

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University Press, 1954; Ch. VII). Stephen Gilman provided useful observations on the possible importance of Hegel in *Galdós and the Art of the European Novel*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982; especially pp. 342-44). Peter Goldman (*Conflicting Realities: Four Readings of a Chapter by Pérez-Galdós: "Fortunata y Jacinta," Part III, Chapter IV*, ed. Peter Goldman, London, Tamesis Books Limited, 1984; pp 95-145) states that Galdós "had no intentional plan to write novels based on a Hegelian conception of society" (p. 121). On the other hand, he points out that Galdós as a likely reader of Hegel "understood that each person who exists must perforce maintain social relationships, however elementary the level of interchange may be" (pp. 119-20). His view, demonstrated through neo-Hegelian dialectical analysis, that Fortunata's downfall comes about through her failure to understand her relationship to her world is, in many ways, a restatement of Máximo's delineation of his "non-existence" treated here.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 232-33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

has mastery within a certain range, but not over the universal, nor over the entire objective reality."<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, were Máximo's statements about his author seen merely as a camouflage for his fear, it would be possible to consider him a fully developed consciousness born of the master-slave relationship; and both initial "Yo no existo" and the concluding "era un hombre" could be true. Máximo has proved that he exists as a writer, the one the author made him be; but this suggests that he may never have left the master-slave relationship. Chapter I is a preparation for the main problem of the narrative to follow, in which Máximo as character does not exist. Máximo has every reason not to want to tell the story of how the character he is in the novel failed to surpass limited personhood.<sup>13</sup>

Galdós' reliance on the *Phenomenology* appears to extend to other stages of consciousness which Charles Taylor called "strategies of retreat: stoicism-skepticism, the "virtuous soul" and the "beautiful soul."<sup>14</sup> Máximo resembles the stoic in his capacity for abstraction and his impotence in connecting the external world to his inner thought. In releasing itself from particularity of impulse and existence the stoical consciousness releases these from itself and only produces tautologies and platitudes in attempts to test virtue and truth.

When determinate living reality makes a claim on the stoic, skepticism arises. Taylor describes this phase as an "oscillation between a sense of our own identity and an equally acute sense of dependence on changing, shifting external reality." As soon as we believe ourselves immutable "our own emptiness forces us to accept that we are embodied in the mutable and the self-external."<sup>15</sup> While camouflaging his emptiness, Máximo expresses his dedication to rigid principles, noting that "en materia de principios mi severidad llega hasta el punto de excitar la risa de algunos de mis convecinos..." (p.15). The following boast proves untrue repeatedly: "Constantemente me congratulo de este mi carácter templado, de la condición subalterna de mi imaginaria, de mi espíritu observador y práctico que me permite tomar las cosas como son realmente. . ." (p. 15). He applies reason to all aspects of life, even to "moral menuda" (p.16). This retreat into pure subjectivism ends with José María's arrival from America and his being forced into an "objetivismo mil veces funesto que nos arranca a las delicias de la reflexión, el goce del puro yo . . ." (p. 43). The new life places him in a relationship with Federico Cimarra that reveals cracks in the stoical façade: "Solíamos echar unos párrafos: él mostrándome su escepticismo . . . yo, poniendo a las cosas políticas algún

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Studies that deal with *El amigo Manso* as "metanovel," such as that by John W. Kronik, "El amigo Manso and the Game of Autonomy," *Anales Galdosianos*, XIII (1977), 71-94), mirror many of the considerations linking Galdós to Hegel here.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978; 140-50, 166 and 180.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

comentario que concordaba . . . con los suyos" (p. 58). This juxtaposition of stoic and sceptic and their sharing opinions underscores wavering in Máximo's position. Furthermore, the concept of *transacción*, 'reconciliation of irreconcilable opposing principles,' that Máximo scornfully considers an expression of José María's skepticism,<sup>16</sup> could be applied equally to Máximo when he himself falls in love with the real Irene, not his Romantic idealized *mujer del norte*. It is possible to take the measure of Máximo's lack of confidence in his initial position in this transition from stoicism to skepticism.

The concept of the "virtuous soul" may also be seen to play a role in characterization. This narcissistic soul believes that everything is good and that good will triumph, so he works to correct perversions that result from the misapplication of talent, in order to restore the world to its natural perfection. Convinced of the excellence of his adversary, he is concerned with coming out of fights with an unbloodied sword. His victory is verbal and leaves the world untouched, except for edifying words. In this light we may consider Máximo's triumph in resolving the José María-Irene-Manuel love triangle. His battles are shams: Irene and Manuel would have gotten on quite well without his intervention, his moralizing or his pedantry. Even Máximo's lecture on the role of philosophy in society embodies the narcissistic, *fenéant* posture of the philosopher-knight, who believes his role that of a modern Christ destined to create conscience.

The "beautiful soul," derived from Kantian thought, bulks larger in the characterization, perhaps because Hegel commented at length in the *Aesthetics* on its place in the works of Goethe and Jacobi.<sup>17</sup> In moral decisions conscientious consciousness seeks consistency which rests not on personal authority but requires that what one considers right also be acknowledged as right by other conscientious persons. Hegel sees the contradictions in this position represented in the figure of the "beautiful soul." Proof of its devotion to duty rests only in its own words; and, in consequence, that duty may be perceived by others as self-serving and hypocritical. A wholly negative conscientiousness is one that fears to commit itself to a decision. The following passage provides almost an outline for the story of Máximo's refusal to externalize himself, his growing awareness of emptiness and his evaporation as shapeless vapor:

It [conscientious consciousness] lacks the force to externalize itself, the power to make itself a thing, to endure existence. It lives in dread of staining the radiance of its inner being by action and existence. And . . . it flees from actuality, and steadfastly

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<sup>16</sup> Diego Núñez Ruiz traces the term *transacción* to an article by Manuel de la Revilla in the "Revista crítica" section of *La revista contemporánea*; I (1875-76), in which the critic dealt with the question of Krausism losing ground to positivist thought (*La mentalidad positiva en España*, Madrid, Túcar Ediciones, 1975; p. 46). The presence of the word in Galdós' text may have been intended to remind the reader of the 1880's of this change in philosophical directions that may also weigh on Máximo's mind.

<sup>17</sup> See below, pp. 18-19.

perseveres in a state of self-willed impotence to renounce a self which is pared away to the last point of abstraction, and to give itself substantial existence, . . . to transform its thought into being, and commit itself to absolute distinction. The hollow object which it produces now fills it, therefore, with the feeling of emptiness. Its activity consists of yearning, which merely loses itself in becoming an unsubstantial shadowy object, and arising above this loss and falling back on itself, finds itself merely lost. In this transparent purity of its movements it becomes a sorrow laden "beautiful soul" as it is called; its light dims and dies within it and vanishes as a shapeless vapor into thin air.<sup>18</sup>

A further similarity between Máximo and the "beautiful soul" is to be found in his willingness to emit judgments without taking into account the fact that judgments about others lay the "beautiful soul" open to the same accusations of self-will and hypocrisy to which men of action are subject.<sup>19</sup> Galdós availed himself of a large portion of Hegel's analysis of the development of consciousness in the portrayal of the teacher of philosophy who would have us believe that Hegel is tedious. For Máximo the *Phenomenology* appears to serve a purpose analogous to that of a medical manual for a hypochondriac: he can find in it multiple ways to diagnose his state as that of one unable to escape non-being.

The *Aesthetics* provides numerous insights into those aspects of the elaboration of Máximo's novel meant to prove his non-existence. His lack of effectiveness as teacher, would-be lover and go-between make it easy to imagine that the young lovers Manuel and Irene could have met, married and lived happily afterwards without his intervention. The first pages prepare for a "Calderonian comedy," in which young people play the lead roles and in which Máximo is forever catching up with events after they have reached points from which only a single dramatic solution may flow.

In Hegel's view spirit in a work of art must "spread itself out in particularizations, it abandons repose vis-à-vis itself and enters the oppositions of a chaotic universe, where in this rift it can no longer escape the misfortune and calamity of the finite real."<sup>20</sup> Specific problems must be considered with respect to how the spirit enters determinacy, including the general *state of the world* and the character of *situations* that lead to *collision*.

The general state of the world centers primarily on spiritual reality considered from the point of view of will: "for it is through the will that the spirit ... enters existence, and the immediate substantial bonds of reality are displayed in a specific manner in which the will's guides are activated."<sup>21</sup> Propensity to

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<sup>18</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, pp. 666-67.

<sup>19</sup> Máximo is the object of such an accusation when he confronts José María about the latter's relationship with Irene (p. 165).

<sup>20</sup> Hegel, *Aesthetics* (Oxford), I, 178.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

thought over action makes Máximo a less suitable subject for art: "The universal element in thinking does not belong to the beauty of art ... ." <sup>22</sup> Hegel would have spiritual matters made one with character: "For if the universal and subjective in human life is present only as their subjective feeling, mentality, state of character, and it would gain no other form of existence... it remains only the peculiar characteristic of precisely those individuals and their mental attitude... [and] it lacks the power and necessity of asserting itself... ." <sup>23</sup> After having made his protagonist express knowledge of the *Aesthetics*, Galdós highlights Máximo's awareness that he is the least suitable embodiment of spirit, as his thought, ever turning on itself, maintains the appearance of separation from action.

Máximo must be present in *a specific world*. By placing him in one that restricts his independence, Galdós is best able to develop his comic aspects. In Hegel's view, since the days of ancient Rome the relationship of spiritual subjectivity to action has been largely subsumed into the organization of the state: "the external existence of the people is secured . . . and it is only their subjective disposition and judgment that they really have on their own account and by their own resources." <sup>24</sup> This view of Roman virtue plays a role in Máximo's way of doing justice which requires the sacrifice of his personality, for the Romans "already had their city and legal institutions, and . . . to the state as the universal end, personality had to be sacrificed." <sup>25</sup> Although Máximo fancies himself in a dramatic role and titles one of his chapters "Mi venganza," the action in which he gains assurances from Manuel that he will marry the woman that Máximo would have for himself, highlights his "Roman," non-heroic, non-tragic nature as subject. Similarly, the scene in which Máximo saves Irene from José María finds meaning as non-heroic action in the context of social structure: "Legal punishment makes the universal and established law prevail against crime, and it operates according to universal norms through the organs of public authority... ." <sup>26</sup> Máximo's renunciation of revenge and his recourse to the threat of legal prosecution remove from him the possibility of heroic role such as Hegel saw in Orestes' revenge. <sup>27</sup> Hegel's view of the general state of the world as expressed in latter day art better accords with realism. The greater interdependency of the characters and their relationships on moral grounds are removed from acceptance of total responsibility for one's actions: "Our view is more *moral*, in that in the moral sphere the subjective aspect, i.e., knowledge of the circumstance, conviction of the good and

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184-85.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

the inner intention constitute a chief element of the action."<sup>28</sup> The question of a character's independence, related to questions of decorum, dictates that figures drawn from the lower classes be "in every way dependent, straitened, and with their passions and interests, fall continuously under the pressure and compulsion of necessity outside them."<sup>29</sup> Such characters are appropriate to comedy, for "in their willing and fancying and in their ideas of themselves, they may claim an independence which is immediately annihilated by themselves and by their inner and total dependence."<sup>30</sup> Any self-reliance they assume in confronting external conditions is undone because of distorted personal attitudes.

Máximo is drawn out of repose as a philosopher and drawn into focus as a creature of diminished independence as is appropriate in the restricted world allowed the modern by Hegel. The state of his world as bourgeois pedant, family member, would-be lover is such that the reader cannot fail to notice that "the really most important thing remains only the subjective side, the disposition."<sup>31</sup> In a society with diverse values the manner in which individuals embody values and their subjective lives become the object of interest.<sup>32</sup> Cervantes perceived this dilemma. Although the Middle Ages provided the setting for independence of character, now law structures a prosaic world. If the individual means to maintain himself "as the sole legitimacy and as righter of wrong and helper of the oppressed, then he falls into the ridiculousness of which Cervantes gave us such a spectacle... ." <sup>33</sup> If there is to be action, a suitable state of the world and situation are required, so that there will be a collision of opposing forces. Máximo employs the terminology of dramatic literature as used by Hegel in order to avoid and reveal simultaneously the painful truth about his own role.

The word *situación* appears twice. When Máximo is bested as an orator by Manuel, José María tells him: "tú no estás nunca en situación" (p. 125), that is, he is never ready to gain advantage through action from circumstances. Máximo later meets his brother at doña Cándida's house and, remembering this criticism, applies the term in a clearly literary manner: "Presentía la violencia, lo que en el mundo artificioso del teatro se llama la situación . . ." (p. 160). Although Máximo presents himself as aware that the elements of situation are present, when the scene ends he notes that he has not really participated in a dramatic action: "No hubo drama, cosa en extremo lisonjera para mí" (p. 160).

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

The potential for collision of opposing forces and action has been kept at a distance; without collision there can be only endless revelation of the state of the world and situation that usually precede collision and action.

The state of the world provides only the "ground on which living individuals of art can appear... ." <sup>34</sup> Disunion is necessary, if the state of the world is not to pass away without leaving a trace. <sup>35</sup> The state must enter determinacy, the particular, and gain appearance and existence. Art has to proceed "out of this vague idea to pictures of definite characters and actions." <sup>36</sup> The general situation offers a stage on which particular actions leading to collisions and complications allow individuals to show themselves possessors of a determinate shape. Merely being in a state, "holding within the potential for revelation of self, does not allow art to proceed towards deeper conflicts." <sup>37</sup>

Only some of the various *situations* analyzed by Hegel cannot lead to *dramatic collision*. In what he calls absence of situation, "the figure does not issue from himself into relationship with something else; it retains the inner and outer self-sufficiency of unity with itself." <sup>38</sup> Ancient sculpture illustrates absence of situation, as do busts and religious pictures such as those Máximo alludes to in Chapter III. <sup>39</sup> Next Hegel considers the "situation in its harmlessness" which almost places the individual in a conflictive situation; but, like the "absence of situation," it is without consequences: "To this sort of thing there belong those situations which on a whole are to be considered play, in so far as nothing is presented or done in them which has any real seriousness... ." <sup>40</sup> Finally, there are situations that could lead to collision, but instead become stimulus for lyrical expression. *Werther* is treated as a poetic *pièce d'occasion*: "Goethe has converted into a work of art his own inner distraction and torment of heart... as any lyric poet disburdens his heart . . . what at first is firmly retained only inwardly is released and becomes an extended object from which the man has freed himself." <sup>41</sup>

In the measure that Máximo embodies the above aspects of situation, he is always in situation. To move to collision requires a situation with "a base in transgression, which cannot remain as such but must be superseded; it is an alteration of a state of affairs which was otherwise." <sup>42</sup> However, since "it

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>39</sup> The picture of Saint Anthony Abbot, replaced by doña Javiera with that of Máximo seems intended to reflect a saintly role (p. 19-20) in the sense that he is removed from a situation which can lead to collision.

<sup>40</sup> Hegel, *Aesthetics* (Oxford), I, p. 201.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203-4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

contains only the beginnings of an action and presuppositions... by being only a stimulus to action, it retains the character of situation."<sup>43</sup> Galdós is consistent in his approach. Forced to leave his state of repose, Máximo does little that would bring him into conflict. Doña Javiera's perception of him as modern saint underscores the "absence of situation." His "playing at love" leads only to lyrical lucubrations. Whether because of timidity or because of a higher morality or out of fear of ridicule, he never enters the action. Collision is avoided and there is no drama, a significant fact, since Máximo, the reader of the *Aesthetics* who alludes repeatedly to action in dramatic terms, has to know that "a situation pregnant with collision is above all the subject matter of dramatic art, the privilege of which is to present beauty in its most complete and profound development."<sup>44</sup>

The "drama" in *El amigo Manso* lies in the comic action involving Manuel and Irene as the young lovers, José María as blocking figure, doña Javiera as go-between and Máximo as would-be rival to Manuel become peacemaker or "comedy king." The comedy is gradually revealed as Máximo becomes aware that he will end up a frustrated suitor. His taste in literature contrasts with that of others actively caught up in life, such as Lica and Chita: "Tenían pasión por los dramas y horror . . . a las comedias de costumbres, para ellas no había goce en ningún espectáculo si no veían brillar espadas y lanzas . . . y se dormían cuando los actores no declamaban cortando las frases con hipos y el sonajeo de las rimas" (pp. 70-71). In the novel as well it is evident that melodrama has a role to play in opposition to the *comedia de costumbres*.<sup>45</sup>

Manuel feels that drama is the imperative of youth, when he believes himself humiliated by Leopoldo Tellería and seeks satisfaction in a duel. He believes his appetite for action and violence is a "compensación de las tonterías y sosadas que informan nuestra vida habitual . . . Suprima usted de la vida el elemento dramático y adiós juventud" (p. 92). Máximo's negative reaction to dueling elicits from Manuel a reaction that underscores Máximo's unwillingness to enter determinacy. The following also echoes what Máximo writes of his relationship with his author: "—Usted no vive en el mundo. . . su sombra de usted se pasea por el salón Manso, pero usted permanece en la grandiosa Babia del pensamiento, donde todo es ontológico, donde el hombre es un ser incorpóreo, sin sangre ni nervios, más hijo de la Historia y de la Naturaleza, un ser que no tiene edad, ni patria, ni padres, ni novia" (p. 94). Later, on

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>45</sup> The allusion to a bust of Julián Romea (p. 20) may be intended to remind readers of this actor who lost his wife to a younger man when he risked his professional success in *comedias de costumbres* by attempting to play a melodramatic role in Zorrilla's *Traidor infiel y mártir* (José Zorrilla, *Obras completas*, 2 vols., Valladolid, 1943; II; 1816-23). See also: Antonio Espina. *Romea o el comediante*, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1935, 220-237). In a sense the presence of this bust prefigures Máximo's losing Irene to Manuel.

learning of his brother's attempt to seduce Irene, Máximo begins to think about behaving in a more "dramatic" manner. With a jealousy befitting a character in a Calderonian *comedia*, he tries to discover what he can about what has been going on *as if he were about to enter conflict*. Nevertheless, he is convinced that his book learning will help resolve the problem; and his language more closely resembles that of a treatise on drama than what one expects to hear spoken by characters in drama:

Hémos aquí en plena evolución de los sucesos, asistiendo a su natural desarrollo y con el fatal deber de figurar en ellos, bien como un simple testigo . . . bien como víctima . . . Ya tenemos que las energías morales, o llámense caracteres, actuando en la reducida escena de un círculo doméstico o de un grupo social, han concluido lo que podríamos llamar en términos dramáticos, su período de prótasis, y ahora, maduras y crecidas las tales energías, principian a estorbarse y se disputan el espacio, dando origen a rozamientos primero, y choques después y quizá a furiosas embestidas . . . Conservemos la serenidad en medio de la batalla, y si la suerte o las sugerencias de los demás o el propio interés nos lleva a desempeñar el papel de general en jefe, procuremos llevar al terreno toda la táctica aprendida en el estudio y todo el golpe de vista adquirido en la topología comparada del corazón humano. (p. 99).

As his love grows, Máximo better understands his predicament in light of his disciple's dramatic and historical metaphors. His feelings are in revolt; and he is aware that he sacrificed youth to self-control and discipline: "Acordándome de [Manuel] Peña y de sus ideas sobre la necesidad de lo dramático . . . me parecía que tenía razón. Era preciso ser joven una vez y permitir al espíritu algo de ese inevitable proceso reformador y educativo que en la Historia se llama revoluciones" (p. 110). And when he could rescue a "damsel in distress"—Irene held against her will by doña Cándida—and declare his love, the correct dramatic solution occurs to him: "cuando las más vulgares reglas del romanticismo pedían que me pusiera de rodillas y soltara uno de esos apasionados frenos . . . mi timidez tan sólo supo decir del modo más soso posible—Veremos . . ." (p. 153). We have already noted the lack of drama in the scene in which Máximo believed himself "en situación."<sup>46</sup> When Máximo comments on his next encounter with Manuel, he observes that he failed to be "dramatic" in his reaction: "debí decirlo sin duda acomodándome a las conveniencias dramáticas del caso . . ." (p. 172).

As the Calderonian plot is revealed in his dialogue with Manuel, Máximo's asides clarify the relationship of teacher to disciple, the non-existent to the existent, the thinker to the man of action. Máximo characterizes as youthful passion Manuel's going to Irene and desiring to commit a *barbaridad* (p. 175). When it is too late for Máximo to act, he understands the difference between them. Manuel is the Calderonian *galán*: "Volví a mirar a Manuel en cuyo

<sup>46</sup> See above, p. 11.

rostro vi la decisión juvenil, el brío y el amor y cuánto poético y romanesco puede encarnar el espíritu del hombre. Parecióme un caballero calderoniano, con su espada, chambergo y ropilla . . . ” (pp. 175-76). And Máximo is a don Quixote, as out of place and as ineffectual as the original: “Oh, genios de la ilusión, apartad la vista de mí, la figura más triste y desabrida del mundo” (p. 176).

Readers probably should not sympathize with Máximo, who attempts to put the best face on his plight, suggesting that defeat makes him a Christ-figure. It is impossible to take seriously his comparison of himself with Christ as frustrated and jealous suitor: “Sudé gotas enormes . . . como las del Monte Olivete, y en la oscuridad de mi alcoba . . . me apabullé con mis propias manos, y grité en silencio de agonía: ‘¡Aniquílate, alma, antes de descubrirte!’” (pp.176-77). He can try to make a more reasoned case in his farewell to his students; but the reader knows the context, that Máximo has been taught a harsh lesson by a man of action and that he knows that he has not at all suffered persecution. His speech thus becomes a veiled but public disclosure of his lack of existence:

El filósofo descubre la verdad, pero no goza de ella. El Cristo es la imagen augusta y eterna de la Filosofía, que sufre persecución y muere, aunque sólo por tres días, para resucitar luego y seguir consagrado al gobierno del mundo.

El hombre del pensamiento descubre la verdad; pero quien goza de ella y utiliza sus celestiales dones es el hombre de acción, el hombre de mundo, que vive de particularidades, en las contingencias, y en el ajetreo de los hechos comunes. (p. 180).<sup>47</sup>

These strategies, intended to avoid admission of defeat, are no more effective than is the pretense of playing the role of king in the *comedia*: “Y vedme convertido en el hombre más bondadoso y paternal del mundo, como esos viejos componedores que salen en las añejas comedias y cuya misión es echar bendiciones y solucionar conflictos” (p.186). Such peacemakers do not, after arranging the wedding of a rival, take to bed in a jealous rage, in order to avoid attending the ceremony.

The truth about Máximo’s non-existence is recognized by Irene, the very person by whom he most wanted to be known as lover-husband; and Hegel’s interpretation of the love relationship provides the reason why Máximo next has to die. As a reader of the *Aesthetics*, he has to be aware that his love has an outcome opposite that of chivalric or romantic love because he chose to love on aesthetic and philosophical grounds, knowing that “love does not rest ... on

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<sup>47</sup> When Máximo makes his speech Hegelian philosophy is on the wane and interest has turned to positivism and Herbert Spencer. For the vicissitudes of Hegelianism in Spain, see Juan Francisco Casanova, *La filosofía hegeliana en la España del siglo XIX*, Madrid, Fundación Juan March, Serie Universitaria, 72, 1978.

intellectual reflections and casuistry; instead it has its origins in feeling... .”<sup>48</sup> After endless study of Irene he discovers that his romantic and Petrarchan projections do not correspond to reality. Then he is willing to surrender himself in order to find himself, to lose his self-consciousness in that of another: “What constitutes the infinity of love is this losing in the other one’s consciousness of self, this splendor of dis-interestedness and selflessness through which alone the person finds himself again... .”<sup>49</sup> If to love is to sacrifice independent consciousness, the sacrifice is made “because one feels compelled to have one’s knowledge of oneself solely in the consciousness of another.”<sup>50</sup> Máximo, convinced that Irene (whom he thought he loved) can read into his soul (p. 217), finds that his self-consciousness, filled with its awareness of non-existence, is mirrored in that of the other who does not love him. His childish will to die is the equivalent of his will to non-existence in Chapter I. Máximo’s situation is all the more ridiculous when seen in the light of Hegel’s view of excesses in love of this kind, that there is nothing of universal interest in the man who allows himself to be shattered by contingency and caprice, in his taking a fancy to “this girl alone.”<sup>51</sup> Such stubbornness is a mark of immaturity.<sup>52</sup> Loved by a well-to-do widow, doña Javiera, Máximo, who knows his Hegel thoroughly, cannot help but be fully aware of his own lack of maturity.

The treatment of questions of honor provides a further indication that Máximo never will exist. For Hegel, the central issue of honor is the affirmation of the individual personality: “in what is only some particular aspect of himself and despite the loss of which, he could subsist ... honor has placed the absolute validity of the whole subjective personality and in that possession has given him and others an idea of personality.”<sup>53</sup> Manuel lives for the outside world that is everything to him; and his duel with Tellería, caused by the latter’s derogatory allusions to Manuel’s plebeian origins, matches these requirements. But Máximo’s own thoughts on the possibility of his engaging in a duel lead rather to observations on Socrates and Saint Peter, who gave way to outside pressures (p.105). He can take no step outside his philosophical and ascetic world and so leaves not trace of himself as it is clear from doña Javiera’s observation that she cannot see the work he says he has completed and that is, in fact, once he is dead, forgotten.<sup>54</sup> In Hegel’s view, concern with honor allows the transition that cannot be found in Máximo: “This kind of

<sup>48</sup> Hegel, *Aesthetics* (Oxford), I, p. 562.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 563.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 562.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 568.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 567.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 558.

<sup>54</sup> To Máximo’s statement that “He dado mi fruto y estoy de más...,” doña Javiera replies, “Pues, el fruto de usted, no lo veo, amigo Manso” (p. 222).

honor . . . involves the presupposition that man has stepped out of purely religious ideas and the inner life and into living reality; and in the material of reality he now brings into existence only himself in his purely personal independence and absolute validity."<sup>55</sup> Just as Máximo cannot exist without "drama," that is, without entering into collision in the action of the *comedia*, it is likewise not possible to exist if one treats issues of honor as he does.

Such observations lead to reconsideration of the "beautiful soul," now taking into account material from the *Aesthetics*, in which is discussed its development in Goethe and in F.H. Jacobi's *Woldemar*. Hegel points out that the latter shares with Werther an "ever increasing deepening into the empty subjectivity of the character's own personality."<sup>56</sup> Jacobi portrays the narcissistic soul that becomes irritable because others are unable to understand and admire its superiority. When he sees himself unappreciated "all is up with the whole of mankind, all friendships, all love... it is just the most trifling matter that brings such a beautiful soul to the depths of despair."<sup>57</sup> In light of the following description, based on Jacobi's, one cannot fail to think of Máximo as he enters a final impotent rage after things have failed to come out his way: "mournfulness, bad temper, melancholy and misery have no end. Thence springs a torture of reflections on self and others, a convulsiveness and even a harshness and cruelty of soul, in which at last the whole miserableness and weakness of the inner life of this beautiful soul is exposed."<sup>58</sup> For Hegel such a soul is an oddity and an example of unstable character. Genuine character, on the other hand, has the force and the will to deal with reality. Beautiful souls provide "an empty interest, however much they hug to the notion that their nature is higher and purer, one that has engendered in itself the Divine... ."<sup>59</sup>

The beginning and concluding chapters of *El amigo Manso* develop the psychology of a childish, narcissistic soul whose non-existence is "proved" by his failure to act throughout the novel. Chapter I functions as a *mise-en-abîme* that reflects the patterns of behavior characteristic of Máximo's whole life through the presentation of his relationship with the author, who ironically proves able to make Máximo succeed in externalizing himself in the master-slave relation. This fact makes more understandable why the subject of irony is so important to Máximo, distracted by the charms of doña Javiera. After all, his relationship with her and Irene serve to highlight his non-existence. His

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<sup>55</sup> Hegel, *Aesthetics* (Oxford), I, p. 558.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241. Robert Pageard discusses the role of Werther in Galdós' works in *Goethe en España, Anejos de la Revista de Literatura*, 15 (1958); however, emphasis falls on Galdós' role as historian of contemporary historical phenomena (170-71).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241-42.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

knowledge of the *Aesthetics*, with its strong opposition to irony, and Hegel's thought in general weighs on Máximo's conscience, exacerbating awareness of his non-existence.

Máximo's is a story of shame, a confession that hurts and would like to avoid its own truth. In this sense it is similar to a *pícaro's* revealing his lack of being (honor) while simultaneously making claim to the kind of being that typifies heroes and respectable persons. The effect is to reveal that the *pícaro* does not share in the world of "existence" any more than does Máximo in that of other men, who lead the kind of life he feels ridiculous for not sharing, a life that may be termed the male version of the bourgeois romance of success, love marriage and living happily ever afterwards.<sup>60</sup> In Manso's case, painful timidity and intellectual astuteness combine to make the book itself appear the artifact of a unique mind in a vulgar situation, one that is, nevertheless, generalized enough to be understood intuitively, despite its half-truths and half-lies, as an attempt to put the best face on despondency of soul.

Furthermore, Máximo's author may be considered an outgrowth of his awareness of his non-being, a creature of fiction invented by the fictional protagonist, in the sense that Máximo's author represents the many eyes and thus the consciousness of others (Irene and other characters now become his readers) focussed on him and who share his secret. The knowledge that others know that "he is not," even as a viable character in art, is the principal aspect of the world outside himself of which Máximo is conscious. Like the *pícaro* whose awareness of non-being is reinforced with each unveiling of his false claims to being by his masters, Máximo has been shown his truth repeatedly. Máximo's escape from non-being by "becoming" a writer of a confessional work imposes the presence of the internalized other(s). Since nothing can be gained by lying to one who already knows, he tells the truth that fills his world. However, what he tells does not coincide with what people or books ordinarily have to say about men like him; and we may conclude that his rhetoric is the expression of a consciousness that is "a piece of cleverness which has mastery over a certain range, but not over the universal, nor over the entire range of objective reality,"<sup>61</sup> a consciousness squirming to avoid the very truth that the other would force him to reveal. In this sense, his author and reader are one; we are one with Máximo to the degree that we too fill his consciousness. In the measure that we believe that Máximo "loses" his battle with his author, he convinces us that he exists and the book is "real." But the

<sup>60</sup> Galdós deals with this matter at length in his treatment of characters in *Tormento*, *Lo prohibido*, and, especially *Fortunata y Jacinta*, in which he presents a catalogue of variations on the bourgeois male romance.

<sup>61</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 240.

book continues proving and proclaiming on its own and Hegel's terms that Máximo, as character, does not exist, cannot exist and will never exist.

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<sup>15</sup> *Journal of American Studies*, 1991.  
<sup>16</sup> *Journal of American Studies*, 1991.  
<sup>17</sup> *Journal of American Studies*, 1991.  
<sup>18</sup> *Journal of American Studies*, 1991.  
<sup>19</sup> *Journal of American Studies*, 1991.