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**CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE BODY THROUGH THE
GOTHIC IDIOM IN THREE “RADICAL NATURALIST”
NOVELS OF ALEJANDRO SAWA**

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ABSTRACT

CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE BODY THROUGH THE GOTHIC IDIOM IN THREE “RADICAL NATURALIST” NOVELS OF ALEJANDRO SAWA

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This thesis considers instances of corporeality in three novels (*Crimen legal*, *Criadero de curas* and *Noche*) by Spanish novelist Alejandro Sawa (1862-1909) from the point of view of anti-clerical Gothic aesthetics. Despite the presence of many a literary Gothic element in these novels, these works had traditionally been considered mere by-products of the influence of French naturalist author Emile Zola (1840-1902). This would be due to the “radical naturalist” sobriquet which Sawa himself chose to identify his novels with. However, this thesis contests such considerations of Sawa as a “naturalist” author and focuses instead on the Gothic influences received through French Romanticism, Spanish popular novels of the *fin-du-siècle* and anti-clerical propaganda, previously unexplored. The exploration of the works considered will be guided by theories such as Julia Kristeva’s concept of “abjection” or affect theory, at the core of which lies a concern with the body and/or the corporeal.

In reading Sawa’s oeuvre under a Gothic lens of corporeality, aspects of his work which had been previously unacknowledged come to the forefront. Such aspects are, for example, Sawa’s dependency on the middle-class representational idiom he allegedly so much despised, or the relationship of his novels with the anti-clerical, misogynistic nation-building project of Spain in the late nineteenth century. The image of the Spanish realist canon and the perception and understanding of Zola’s works within the Spanish letters in the last third of the nineteenth century, especially with regards to corporeality, are now more nuanced, as is Sawa’s literary standing.

Keywords: Alejandro Sawa; Naturalism; Radical Naturalism; Gothic; Anti-clericalism; Corporeality

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Carlos Podadera on 15 October 2018

1. Introduction

To most, Alejandro Sawa (1862-1909) is mainly remembered as the real-life inspiration behind Max Estrella, the protagonist character of the play *Luces de Bohemia* (definitive edition 1924) by Ramón María del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936). Yet Sawa has lately been rediscovered as a novelist after years of editorial neglect: in the last decade, all his narrative works – with the exception of his last novel *Noche* (1888) – have been re-edited at least once, in addition to a compilation of his journalistic pieces (Sawa 2008). There also has been, in parallel to such rediscovery, certain scholarly interest in his oeuvre – albeit very timid – in the form of, for example, introductions to these recently re-published novels and journalistic articles (see Chavarría 2008, Gutiérrez Carbajo 2009 and Correa Ramón 2011 and 2012) or biographical works (Correa Ramón 2008). Studies of Sawa (both old and new) and by extension of the so-called Spanish ‘Radical Naturalists’ with whom Sawa identified, Eduardo López Bago (1855-1931) and Remigio Vega Armentero (1852-1893) among others, have traditionally focused on the extent of the Radical Naturalists’ allegiance to the naturalistic credo of Emile Zola (1840-1902), of whom these authors claimed to be the Spanish avant-garde. More specifically in the case of Sawa, biographical works (such as Phillips, 1976 and Correa Ramón, 2008) have focused on firstly, ‘rescuing’ the real persona that is hidden under the popularity of the character he inspired, and secondly, on his literary relationships with the finisecular Spanish *bohemia*.

There are however, certain issues with these approaches. Firstly, the almost exclusive focus on naturalist aesthetics seems a priori a narrow and limiting approach. After all, it was the radical naturalist authors themselves who chose such a label for their works, almost as if “branding” their products/novels¹. The choice of such term would have been driven by a given political and/or ideological stance, rather than by an aesthetic one. The knowledge and understanding of the concept in Spain was at best nebulous (see González Herrán, 1989, p. 20 and Pattison, 1965, p. 11), in part because such knowledge would not even come from

¹ See in Sawa, 1996 [1885] probable first use of the term “Radical Naturalism”

primary sources (see Pattisson, 1965, Chapter 1) and because it was limited and restricted to Zola's theoretical elaborations – practically the only ones available or known at that time in Spain. Thus, in the eyes of the Spanish intelligentsia of the fin-du-siècle, both the term “Naturalism” and French literary culture at large became intimately associated. Naturalism became then a byword for French imported obscenity among conservative authors (see for example Alarcón, 1900 [1883], p.78 who refers to it as “la mano sucia de la literatura²”). Whereas the Radical Naturalists (allegedly at the other end of the ideological spectrum) were happy to embrace the term as a stance of their furious anti-bourgeoisie feelings, and not so much as symptomatic of a given aesthetic orientation. Studies on Sawa and Radical Naturalism are, necessarily to adopt a new perspective once the actual naturalistic content of their works is questioned.

It is worth considering whether, in adopting such a sobriquet for their works, Radical Naturalists might have been misleading their contemporaries and generations of scholars to come – as much as they were misleading themselves. Such “naturalism” cannot then be taken for granted. It should not be assumed that Radical Naturalists were operating under the guidance of Zola's theories just because that was the image they built and projected of themselves. Such stances are to be approached critically in order to understand whether Zola was in fact such a strong influence and what was understood by zolaesque naturalism in Spain in the 1880s. As is to be inferred from Pardo Bazán and Zola's exchanges on the issue (see Pardo Bazán 1989 [1883]) there is a possibility that Spanish understanding of naturalism differed from Zola's theories and/or intentions.

Secondly, typecasting Sawa as a *bohemian* is problematic – as problematic, in fact, as referring to him as a “naturalist” author. The so-called bohemians constituted a largely heterogeneous group of artists and writers (poets, novelists, journalists...) gathered together within a generic term which emphasized not so much a writing school or tendency, but rather

² Trans: “literature's dirty hand”

a decidedly anti-bourgeois stance and the challenging of bourgeoisie conventional values of sobriety and contention. In that sense, Sawa who had already concluded his narrative enterprise and was making a meagre living writing for the papers, would have been more of a symbol of certain carefree lifestyle for the younger generations. In referring to Sawa as a “bohemian” it is such lifestyle, and not so much his literary production, that is evoked – just the same case as “(radical) naturalist”. Despite efforts towards the opposite direction, such labels paradoxically contribute to further identify Sawa with Max Estrella, the anti-bourgeois bohemian *par excellence*.

Hence, my research will firstly, question the extent of Zola’s influence on Sawa, traditionally taken for granted. Secondly, it will also consider other sources of influence. For example, the influence of Victor Hugo and French popular Romantic romance has been acknowledged in passing in some scholarly works about Sawa³, however, it has not been explored in depth. Likewise, and despite the Gothicism characteristic of many of the Radical Naturalist novels, the relationship between Gothicism and Radical Naturalist aesthetics has only been mentioned briefly once in 2014 in the prologue to (as of today) the most recent edition of Sawa’s nouvelle from 1888, *Criadero de curas*: “Estéticamente hablando, *Criadero de curas* está más cerca de Horace Walpole que de doña Emilia Pardo Bazán⁴” (Navarra Ordoño, 2014, p.xii).

In this thesis then, I present an analysis of three works by Sawa through the lens of Gothic corporeality (akin also to Victor Hugo and French popular Romantic romance, see above). Corporeality in general is capital in the articulation of Gothic discourses, old and modern alike, but more specifically during the period covered by my research. In fact, the importance of corporeality in the late nineteenth century is not restricted to Gothic narratives and it is common to almost all literature produced at the time. The aim of the thesis is then to position

³ For example: Zavala, 1982; Pedraza Jiménez y Rodríguez Cáceres, 1983; Fernández 1995, 1998a and 1998b; Esteban, 1998 and Puebla Isla, 2006.

⁴ Trans: “Aesthetically speaking, *Criadero de curas* is closer to Horace Walpole than to Emilia Pardo Bazán”.

Sawa's works within coetaneous literary discourses, and in doing so, illuminate points of intersection and divergence among those discourses. Specifically, the thesis is organised around the following three questions:

- What are the characteristics of the “Gothic corporeality” in Sawa's novels?
- How does this corporeality relate to other literary discourses of the 19th century?
- What are the continuities and discontinuities as regards other “literary bodies” to be found in literary movements and/or genres contemporary to Sawa?

Throughout this thesis I will use the term “discourse” to refer to the specific language use which is characteristic of a given context, social practice or field of knowledge or activity. Instances of its usage therefore will be duly qualified (i.e. “literary discourse”; “Gothic discourse” etc).

The three novels by Sawa considered in my research are: *Crimen legal* from 1886, *Criadero de curas* from 1888 and *Noche* also from 1888. *Crimen legal* and *Noche* bookend chronologically the whole of the novelistic production of Sawa, thus enabling a panoramic view of his Radical Naturalist fiction⁵. Besides, all three novels are extremely rich in what – in the 1880s and 1890s in Spain – were understood to be literary Naturalism elements⁶. There is yet one more reason why these three novels have been chosen to the detriment of Sawa's other novelistic production. In sharing some motifs, they could be said to trace a narrative arch. In *Crimen legal*, the earliest of the three, Sawa focuses on the aborted birth of the child of Ricardo and Rafaela and its consequences for the couple. Thus, it is tempting to read the next novel studied, *Criadero de curas*, as to what could have potentially happened to that child had his birth been successful. Finally, in *Noche*, it is but a whole family of six members (parents and four siblings) that are the protagonists of the novel – as if Sawa had been attempting to create

⁵ Sawa published his first novel in 1885: *La mujer de todo el mundo*. However, neither himself nor López Bago regarded it as a “Radical Naturalist” novel.

⁶ On the reception of French Literary Naturalism in Spain see for example Pattison (1965), González Herrán (1989) and Davis (1954, 1969 and 1975).

a family with his first “naturalistic” novel, tackling deeper and more complex issues and narrative techniques as he proceeded in his narrative enterprise. A deeper understanding of the materials with which Sawa weaved his narratives must forcefully shed new light on the novels themselves and bring new perspectives which will necessarily alter previous interpretations of Sawa’s novels.

Specifically, in *Crimen legal* I would like to explore the crudest instances of corporeality in the novel; that is, the minute detail with which a difficult birth which has to be resolved into an abortion is described. The description is so explicit⁷ that immediately brings to mind even the most modern instances of Gothic corporeality. I want to explore the further implications of such a violent prose description and the reasons behind such verbal violence. I have drawn in particular on the Kristevan concept of the abject (Kristeva, 1982). This is not only one of the earliest formulations of a theory of the body in literature, but it also integrates approaches from other disciplines such as psychoanalysis and feminist criticism. It is also flexible and inclusive enough as to make it compatible with other discourse-based approaches based on Foucault (1973, 1991, 1998) or Sontag (1989) and it can even incorporate historiographical approaches after the neo-historicists such as Gallagher and Laqueur’s (1987). Kristeva’s theory accounts specially for the relationships between mother and child in the pre-linguistic stages of the toddler, which makes it a most suitable theoretical tool in the analysis of *Crimen legal*, where the leitmotif is an extremely difficult labour that has to be resolved in an abortion in order to save the life of the mother.

In the second novel studied (*Criadero de curas*) I will explore the nature of the child specifically within the Gothic context. As with women, children pose a source of anxiety in that their bodies are extremely dynamic and mutable – a very dear trope in Gothic narratives. Children are, within the internal logic of the Gothic mode, beings in an early stage of

⁷ The doctor who practises the abortion casually shoves the aborted foetus into a bucket; a foetus which is described as a “una masa informe de carne y huesos, una especie de monstruoso coágulo de sangre”. Trans: “shapeless lump of flesh and bones, a monstrous clot of blood” (Sawa, 1997, [1886], p. 119)

development: they have not been concluded or finalised as human beings, and as such they are not cognoscible. The still-to-be-formed child and their equally still-to-be-formed body both play a significant symbolic role within this logic. Hence, this chapter aims at looking into any continuities between the Gothic perception of the infant body and Sawa's treatment of childhood. Despite the wealth of secondary literature that the Gothic has generated in later years, the child is still a figure that (with some exceptions such as Georgieva, 2013) is still framed within the wider context of the family. I am interested in isolating the figure of the child from such context. This is because Sawa's protagonist has precisely been orphaned of a traditional patriarchal family, the standard model at the time. Because this is thematically and contextually one of the most explicitly anticlerical creations of Sawa I will relate to contemporary anticlerical literature and investigate its relationships and continuities with other relevant expressions such as Gothicism.

Finally, in the last of the three novels studied in this thesis, *Noche*, I will focus my investigation on the concept of family within the wider framework of Gothic and corporeality. The patriarchal familial unit was a concept very dear to the cultural Spanish imaginary of the late nineteenth century. It was often the case in other contemporary canonical authors to use it as the context within which wider socio-political issues could be addressed. I intend to make use of affect theory as applied to literature in order to investigate how Sawa makes use of the Gothic corporeality lens in order to investigate firstly, whether he in fact address such issues; and secondly, and if that is the case, to contrast his approach with that of his contemporaries. Affect theory has proved indeed very fruitful in the analysis of contemporary canonical realists (Jameson, 2015) whose concerns would have run parallel to Sawa's. Besides, Gothic is, due to its double-pronged articulation of emotion with corporeality and embodiment an intrinsically "affective" mode.

Whereas there is a considerable research gap with regards to Gothicism and Sawa, there have been previous attempts to bring the body to the forefront of research into his works.

Consuelo Puebla Isla's *La representación de la mujer en la narrativa de Alejandro Sawa*⁸ (2006) or Gilbert Paolini's articles (1979, 1984a, 1984b, 1986) on the different deviant criminal types in Sawa's novels are the most salient examples. Whereas Puebla Isla and Paolini's works rely occasionally on cultural history by reading Sawa's narratives alongside, for example, Lombroso's physiognomics or Max Nordau's theories of degeneration they still lack in a strong theoretical input. These works present a heavily biased empirical approach which eschews the important theoretical advances of the last decades. I thus intend to address this vacuum by incorporating into the research those theories which stemming from the different schools or practices which, under the generic umbrella of post-structuralism, have attempted to pin down the relationships between power, ideology and textual practice.

⁸ Trans: "Representation of women in the fiction of Alejandro Sawa".

2. Gothic Aesthetics, Europe and Spain

The consolidation of Gothic aesthetics is inescapably linked to the rather convoluted changes that, starting in the late eighteenth century, left their mark on the last 250 years of history. As a mode that feeds back on social anxieties, the last two and a half centuries and their brusque transitions into a new material and ideological landscape were fertile ground for the development of Gothicism. See, for example, Clery and Miles' remark on the impact of the French Revolution (arguably the most dramatic indicator of the apparition of a new social order at the time) with regards to Gothic romance: "The romance-writers' obsessive return to the scene of aristocratic crime on the one hand, and urgent repetitions of the restitution of social hierarchy on the other, could not be free of *revolutionary resonances*." (Clery, E.J. and Miles, R., 2009, p. 2; emphasis added)

Naturally, Gothic aesthetics evolved and developed with the times, and thus, at the end of the nineteenth century, when new forms of capitalism were appearing, the Gothic went through a revival which presented its own differential characteristics with regards to the first wave of classic Gothic, which starting in the 1760s, extended until the early 1820s. Specifically in the British Isles, with the settlement of the middle classes and the proliferation of their material culture, numerous Gothic tropes changed or evolved in order to adapt to the new social circumstances. The settings of the Gothic romance moved from foreign lands and the obscure middle-ages to present-day Britain, as in the Brontës and Dickens' novels. The supernatural component is also attenuated, whereas the pervading sense of threat and discomfort characteristic of the Gothic remains. In an era of material prosperity, it is not so much the revolutionary processes that are a source of anxiety, but rather the potential consequences of such wealth for the social fabric. Anxieties do not turn outwards as it was the case in the first wave of Gothic romance, but inwards, towards the evil within. In Spain on the other hand, the adaptation of the Gothic to new material developments is more timid, since the changes experienced in Spain are felt less drastically than in other European nations. Industrialisation was much slower in Spain than for example in Britain, and liberal revolutions impact was very limited also. Consequently, when Spanish canonical authors such as Galdós

or Pardo Bazán employ the Gothic in their works, they do so through distancing strategies, such as parody or irony, as it will be seen below.

A renewed interest in the corporeal and its close connection with the apparition of new gender roles would be one of the most important characteristic of what is now known as the “Gothic Revival”. Despite its quasi insular status within other European nations, Spain would not have been completely alien to these politico-economic, aesthetic and/or social changes. Alejandro Sawa, as a Spaniard, would not have been a stranger to these developments either, and not by coincidence, his novels constitute a wealth of Gothic motifs. Not only was he one of those children of the bourgeoisie who found himself in a rather dynamic social milieu – and would subsequently experience the brisk changes of fortune the middle classes were subjugated to. In his contact with Spanish bohemians he would also have embraced some of the traits of the radical political republican idiom and this idiom’s anxiety with the reorganisation of gender roles. The political situation in Spain at the time was so corrupted that journalists could not but embrace radical politics – journalism being one of the few outlets for society’s discontent (see with regards to the political activity of Spanish bohemian journalists during the turn of the century the “Introduction” in Arco, 2017). These politics together with the influence of French Romanticism would inform the sources for most of Sawa’s narrative works.

Arguably the social, economic, political, ideological and cultural changes⁹ which were characteristic of most Western European countries during the last thirty years of the long 19th century¹⁰– when, in rapid succession, Alejandro Sawa was producing his novelistic corpus – can be said to be the apex and culmination of an earlier process that can be traced back to the second half the eighteenth century, when both the Industrial and French Revolutions took place. Colin Heywood refers to these changes as both “exhilarating and disturbing”, in that

⁹ The word “changes” will be amongst the most constantly invoked ones in describing the period. Other terms which constantly crop up and construct the discourse of the era are “materialism” – to the extent that two of the most authoritative volumes on the period bear it on their titles, Hayes and Hinsley’s volumes respectively, see the bibliography; and “truth” and its semantic derivations, such as “real” or “verity” – this last one especially in literature (see Becker, 1967).

¹⁰ As coined by Eric Hobsbawm: between the beginning of the French Revolution (1789) and the beginning of the First World War in 1914 (see Hobsbawm, 2010 [1987]).

“developments associated with the Industrial and French revolutions encouraged hopes of conquering some of the age-old scourges of humanity, such as food shortages” but “disturbing” also because “these same revolutionary sources appeared to threaten the whole fabric of society” (Heywood, 2000, p.47). Urbanisation is a most graphic example of this tension between “exhilarating” and “disturbing” changes, in that the promise of better economic prospects in the city alienated many a labourer from their rural identity. Consequently, the city became a typically threatening Gothic trope (as in for example Hugo’s *Les Misérables* or Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*).

Both Industrial and French Revolutions would have an enduring effect in the making of the European middle classes, the main protagonists of the developments of the century; a heterogeneous group which in its variety managed to craft a series of symbols and identity traits of their own. Petit bourgeois tastes, ethos and systems of values would be intrinsically linked to both revolutions. The influence of, not just the two revolutions, but also of the set of changes they generated, would be felt until the beginning of the First World War (if not thereafter) upon not merely the middle classes but other social strata. These changes were a considerable source of anxiety, and not so much due to the nature of the changes themselves, which on many an occasion proved to be rather beneficial improvements in the material living conditions of large segments of the European peoples, but to the violence with which they were taking place.

Concepts already touched upon above, such as “middle-classes”, “material culture”, “roles”, and above all “society” (and all of its related concepts such as “social fabric” or “social changes”) necessarily bring to this discussion the idea of identity. In fact, and as it will be seen below, it could be argued that “All human identities are *in some sense* – and usually a stronger rather than a weaker sense – social identities” (Jenkins, R., 2002, p. 4, my own emphasis).

By the turn of the twentieth century the concept of identity was beginning to change, and in changing, it was becoming a topic towards which writers such as Sawa were paying a

renewed attention to. In fact, identity, or rather *social identity*, is in fact one of the main themes in Sawa's novels.

Two of the main factors which explain this shift in approaches to identity were firstly, the birth of the social sciences; and secondly, early formulations of what would eventually become fully-fledged existential philosophies. Thus, the Cartesian idea of an immanent *cogito*, beyond-contingency – what Elias refers to as *homo philosophicus*, “a man who was never a child and came into the world an adult” (Elias, 2003 [1968], p. 288) – was beginning to exhaust its possibilities. For example, Ortega y Gasset's famous aphorism from 1914: “Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia (...)”¹¹ (Ortega y Gasset, 2014 [1914], p.77) was as much a reaction against nineteenth-century positivism as it was a dictum against idealism in the Cartesian vein, and as such a rebuttal of Descartes implicit theory of identity¹². I will argue that Ortega's is a philosophical synthesis of the approaches to identity problems which could be found in the literature of the period, and more specifically in Sawa's novels. Sawa did not formalise a given conception of identity in his writings; however, his novels are, to a large extent, explorations of their protagonists' torn identities when unable to reconcile their “me” and their “circumstance”, in Ortega's terms.

Despite its sententiousness, Ortega's aphorism cannot but show the problematic inherent to the modern concept of identity: “[what ‘identity’ refers to] is regarded in some sense as being more contingent, fragile and incomplete and thus more amenable to reconstitution than was previously thought possible” (Du Gay, P., Evans, J. and Redman, P., 2003, p. 2). There is not a single unified “I” for Ortega, but an “I” which partakes precisely in what is contingent (“the circumstance”) and is dependent on it, to the same extent that such contingent

¹¹Trans: “I am me and my circumstances” – my own translation. There are alternative translations: “I am I and my circumstances”, from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Holmes, Oliver, 2017). See also the translation by Evelyn Rugg and Diego Marin in Ortega y Gasset, 2000, [1914]: “I am myself plus my circumstance”

¹² In fact Ortega makes his critique of Cartesian rationalism explicit in the second section of *Historia como sistema* (2007 [1935], p. 69-71).

circumstance is also integral part of the individual identity: “if I do not save it [the circumstance] I cannot save myself”, the aphorism continues.

Ortega’s dictum thus points towards at least two of “the three distinct and influential responses to how identity should be conceptualised in the wake of the various anti-foundational critiques to which it has been subject” (Du Gay, P., Evans, J. and Redman, P., 2003, p. 2). On the one hand, the accusative form of the first-person singular pronoun (“me”) in Ortega’s aphorism (“I am me and my circumstances”) suggests a conception of ‘the self’ rooted within the psychoanalytical tradition (see Holmes, 2017 on the influence of Freud on Ortega). According to this conception, identity could be defined as the “content of one’s personally important self-beliefs [as generated by human intellect in combination with reflexive consciousness]” (Gregg, A., Sedikides, C. and Hart, C., 2008, p. 23). On the other hand, it is possible to interpret the Orteguian “circumstance” along schools which place the formation of identity in relation to socio-historical developments which see “individual personhood (...) as historically and culturally contingent; as socially determined (...)” (Jenkins, R., 2002, p.15). In fact Ortega, in a later work, will make this dichotomy even more explicit and will develop further the concepts which sustain his idea of identity:

Es por lo tanto el ensimismamiento la primera muestra de adquisición de identidad personal, acerca de lo cual cabe tener en cuenta dos cosas: por una parte, que ‘vivir significa tener que ser fuera de mí, en el absoluto fuera que es la circunstancia’ (*ibid.*, p. 106) y por otra parte, que el meterse *dentro de sí* es el poder que tiene el hombre de sustraerse al mundo para volver a él ‘con un sí mismo que antes no tenía’ (*ibid.*, p. 86, v. pp. 83-95)¹³. (Paredes Martín, 2000, p. 150).

There is yet a third school of thought with regards to identity suggested by Du Gay, Evans and Redman (in 2003, p. 9-15) which Ortega could arguably be said to have touched

¹³ Trans: “Consequently, self-absorption is the first evidence that a personal identity has been acquired. There are two things to be taken into account: firstly, ‘to exist means to compulsorily be outside of myself, in that absolute outside which is the circumstance’; and secondly, that withdrawing *within* is the power of man to distance himself from the world in order to return with ‘a new self which was not there before’”.

upon in his dictum, albeit veiledly: identity as the subject of language. Felicitous as its formulation is, (to the point that it has become a catchphrase in modern colloquial Spanish), Ortega's aphorism confronts its reader with an uncomfortable grammatical construction, a reminder that the tension between self and experience which conforms identity can only be mediated, articulated and/or bound by and through language.

Ortega's formulation, despite being brief and succinct, lays down the terms of the modern debates on identity as soon as 1914, less than five years after Sawa's death. Firstly, it reconciles (and acknowledges) two of the approaches to identity formation through a synthesis of phenomenology and Hegelian dialectics (see Paredes Martin, 2000, p. 148). Secondly, in doing so, Ortega also acknowledges the contingency and circumstantiality which is characteristic of modern identity. There is yet another reason why my definition of identity relies on Ortega. Ortega's theory is by his own admission, "circumstantial"; it is itself dependant on a circumstance, and the circumstance par excellence in Ortega is Spain (2014 [1914], p.77, footnote 6).

The relationship of nineteenth-century Spaniards with regards to their own identity can be defined, as Ortega implicitly does, as a dialectical process, in contrast to, for example, *late* modern conceptions of identity as Giddens' or Bauman's, based on "fluidity, mobility and choice" (Kehily, 2009, p. 1-2). As it will be seen below, Sawa's characters often succumb to their inability to synthesize a (social) identity (or to "save their circumstance" in Ortega's words) when placed within the identity-shaping dialectic between the self and the Orteguian Spanish circumstance. This situation is, within the internal logic of the novels, a considerable source of anxiety for the suffering characters, an anxiety which is literarily mediated through Gothic corporeality.

2.2 The Birth of Gothic Aesthetics and the Gothic Revival

Like many of the protagonists of the different prose narratives existing at the time¹⁴, the first Gothic romance (or Gothic novel¹⁵) – is the hybrid of two different and – arguably – opposed prose narrative forms: on the one hand, the novel¹⁶ and, on the other hand, the romance¹⁷. Horace Walpole, author of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) first coined the term Gothic¹⁸ – if not started the whole mode¹⁹ – in order to designate the aesthetic of horror, terror²⁰, fear and anxiety which is recognised as such nowadays. In the “Preface to the Second Edition” of precisely *The Castle of Otranto* he wrote the following:

¹⁴ “Imagined as a social event, we might say the novel, like its hero or heroine began life as a foundling, was identified as a bastard, became an adopted outsider, then a parvenu, and then eventually in our own time displaced all other literary genres” (Probyn, 1987, p.1).

¹⁵ “(...) even in England the novel did not immediately appear as an independent genre in contradistinction to the romance. As late as 1785, in *The Progress of Romance*, Clara Reeve has Euphrasia say: ‘No writings are more different than the ancient Romance and the modern Novel, yet they are frequently confounded together and mistaken for each other’” (Showalter, 1972, p. 24).

¹⁶ “The novel tends to be believable, to deal with ordinary people in familiar settings, to be contemporary or nearly so, to show how things really are” (Showalter, 1972, p. 3). Other distinctions on this regard are Hunter’s who mentions the following feature characteristics of novel (as opposed to romance): “Contemporaneity; credibility and probability; familiarity; everyday existence and common personages; rejection of traditional plots; tradition-free language; individualism, subjectivity; empathy and vicariousness; coherence and unity of design; inclusivity, digressiveness, fragmentation: the ability to parenthesize; self-consciousness about innovation and novelty” (Hunter, 1990, p. 23).

¹⁷ “The romance tends to appeal to the imagination, to deal with archetypal or allegorical or idealized characters, to show them in remote settings, to show how things might be” (Showalter, 1972, p. 4).

¹⁸ The second edition of the novel carries the sobriquet “a Gothic Romance” in its title. This was later imitated by other “Gothic” authors such as Clara Reeve who also categorized her own *The Old English Baron* (1777) as a “Gothic Story”.

¹⁹ If *The Castle of Otranto* is widely acknowledged to be the very first Gothic narrative David Punter, for example does not fail to mention that this work lacks in the “heaviness” and “darkness” which Lewis and Radcliffe would make characteristic of their novels whilst earlier works such as Smollett’s *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* from 1755 advances some of the characteristics of the idiom (Punter, 1996 p.43).

²⁰ The distinction between terror and horror was first made – according to David Stevens, author of an introductory contextual guide to the Gothic, by Anne Radcliffe in her essay ‘On the supernatural in poetry’ (Stevens, 2013, p. 53; for Radcliffe’s essay see Radcliffe, 2000 [1826], p.163-171). As Fred Botting explains both terms “are often used simultaneously, distinctions can be made between them as countervailing aspects of Gothic emotional ambivalence. If terror leads to an imaginative expansion of one’s sense of self, horror describes the movement of contraction and recoil. (...) terror marks the uplifting thrill where horror distinguishes a contraction at the imminence and unavoidability of the threat” (Botting, 2006, p.10). In the *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* the editor Jerrold E. Hogle also insists on the difference between both terms: “The first of these [Terror Gothic] holds characters and readers mostly in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety and sanity kept largely out of sight or in shadows or suggestions from a hidden past, while the latter [Horror Gothic] confronts the principal characters with the gross violence of physical or psychological dissolution explicitly shattering the assumed norms (including the repressions) of everyday life with wildly shocking and even revolting consequences” (Hogle, 2010, p.3).

[The Castle of Otranto] was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been copied with success. (...) The author of the following pages thought it possible to reconcile the two kinds (Walpole, 1978 [1765], p.43).

Already in this preface Walpole was advancing a manifesto of sorts for the Gothic novel to-come by addressing a particular source of anxiety: the strained relationship of respectively novel and romance with the mimetic representation of a fast-changing reality in which social classes were becoming more dynamic and permeable. Gothic narratives articulate fear(s) and anxieties: class mobility, inadequacy and permeability; the threat of political violence; sexual and gender ambiguity at personal, familial, social and even (trans)national levels thus creating an idiom which can control these anxieties by constraining them within the boundaries of normative language while simultaneously probing subversive and defiant.

Whether prose narratives could account for a faithful representation of reality was not merely an academic issue and its implications reached far beyond the aesthetic consideration of the suitability of one form or the other to provide a satisfactory mimetic theory. With its close relationship to other forms of popular culture²¹; its popularity among a new generation of readers²²; and, most importantly, the way this new form seemed to be closely linked to the emerging new middle classes ethos as opposed to the aristocratically oriented romance²³, the novel was rendering the loss of power of the aristocracy – a loss which would reach its climax with the French revolution, itself a source of Gothic motifs.

Although the earliest theorisations of the mode were precisely written within a British context, the Gothic was not an exclusively domestic phenomenon of the British Islands. It

²¹ See Hunter, 1990, p.4.

²² See Probyn, 1987, p.7 and Hunter, 1996, p. 19.

²³ "In reacting against the escapist fantasies of the romance, of course, the new novel was offering a mirror of a different kind, a reflection and a social analysis of low life (Defoe), of feminine social mobility (Richardson), of the social hierarchy itself (Fielding), and individual anatomies of feeling (Mackenzie and Sterne), in a form which was intellectually more accessible than any previous literary genre" (Probyn, 1987, p. 9).

could be said that, to the same extent that Horace Walpole derived strong influences from French culture, later Gothic works such as *The Monk* (by Matthew Lewis, 1796) borrowed elements from continental narratives – specifically from the German *Sturm und Drang*. The Gothic was in fact a pan-European phenomenon, becoming extremely popular not only in the British Isles but also in France with the *roman frénétique*, as coined by Charles Nodier in 1821, or in Germany, thanks to the *schauerroman* (or terror novel). For example, Regnault-Warin's *Le Cimetière de la Madeleine* (i.e. *The Graveyard of the Magdalene*, 1800) was popular enough to be reprinted several times during the first half of the nineteenth century in French, while Spanish editions were published in 1811, 1817 (this one described as “corrected and expurgated”); 1829, 1833 (in which the expurgated passages are said to have been restored); 1878 and 1920 (“con censura eclesiástica”-i.e. With the approval of ecclesiastical authorities)” (Hale, 2010, p. 73). As for the German *schauerroman*, its influence would extend well into the mid nineteenth century: “The leading exponent [of the genre] was Joseph Alois Gleich (1772-1841), who wrote under the pseudonym “Dellarosa” and penned such unspeakable horrors as *Die Totenfackel; Oder, Die Höhle der Siebenschläfer* (*The Torch of Death; or, The cave of the Seven Sleepers*) and *Udo der Stählerne, oder die Ruinen von Drudenstein* (*Udo the Man of Steel; or, The Ruins of Drudenstein*)” (Mulvey-Roberts, 2009 p. 283).

In fact, foreign influences were as important in the configuration of the (Gothic) novel as domestic British ones: “This new ‘shift in sensibility’ in England was only a *part of a complex European phenomenon*” (Probyn, 1987, p. 150; emphasis added). By “shift in sensibility” Probyn refers to firstly, the exploration of new topics (those linked to the bourgeoisie experience) and secondly, to the display of new literary techniques – in order precisely to adapt to the new issues to be dealt with within the novel. Whereas Probyn might not be specifically alluding to Gothic narratives, but to the wider field of eighteenth century narrative in general, he is however referring to a wider phenomenon of which the birth of the Gothic is an essential part. Issues of representativity were also being addressed in the French tradition through the medium of the novel, which, if not *new* in the eighteenth century as it was in Britain,

it certainly was going through considerable changes. The novel of post-revolutionary France – around the same time the Gothic was reaching its popularity peak – became definitely bourgeois in that it produced new representations of the bourgeoisie²⁴ and in doing so changed the mode of representation itself²⁵ (i.e. the novel). At the core of this transformative process were the tensions which fed into Gothic ambivalences: “(...) the novel could not have reflected exclusively bourgeois concerns. At most it could reflect *the dialectical tension informing the historical emergence of a new class and the accompanying political strain*” (DiPiero, 1992, p.14; emphasis added). The birth, establishment/settlement and definition²⁶ of the bourgeoisie as a new emerging social group together with both the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution form a triad of mutual influences which are arguably the most important historic factors in the birth of Gothic aesthetics. The material and economic growth associated to the Industrial Revolution in England enabled subsequent improvements such as transport revolution and urbanisation which would in turn pave the road – literally and metaphorically – to a Second Industrial Revolution characterised by a new emphasis on the application of technology to new means of production²⁷ – a defining aspect of economy during the second half of the century. Geographical mobility (exclusive to a few in yesteryear²⁸) became the main impulse to social mobility. Rural labourers would thus emigrate to industrialised (or soon to be industrialised) cities which would in turn grow exponentially²⁹ due

²⁴ “No longer did the bourgeoisie define itself in terms of the aristocracy, but instead defined society on its own terms and after its own image. This reorientation of society, the consequent reconstitution of elites is what made the nineteenth century “bourgeois”: the economic functions associated with the bourgeoisie once limited in scope and rewards proliferated, spread and reaped rewards” (Ferguson, 1973, p.21).

²⁵ “One could neither turn to traditional genres, now tainted by their association with a decadent ancient regime, nor find literary models in a revolutionary era that provided far more political than literary discourse” (Matlock, 1997, p.24).

²⁶ As in public visibility and codes of public behaviour and identity.

²⁷ Which would be duly echoed in the second wave of the Gothic romances, known as *Gothic Revival*.

²⁸ Most importantly, the railway would eventually democratise the travelling experience: “In 1800 the wealthy travelled by horse-drawn carriage and the poor walked; in 1900 the wealthy travelled first class on the railway or were driven in their own automobiles, while the poor travelled third class on the railway and by omnibus, tram, or underground railway” (Blanning, 2000, p. 1).

²⁹ Between 1800 and 1890 the number of cities of population 10000 or above increased in more than a 300% (from 113 to 404) in the Mediterranean countries (France, Italy and Spain) (see Hobsbawm, 2010, p. 343).

to the (relative) ease with which goods and bodies could be transported³⁰. This increase took place namely among working and lower middle classes and in that sense massive programmes of renovation of the slums in combination with urban social policies had to be undertaken.

Some of these tensions arising from the sudden overpopulation of the urban nuclei are equally evident in the Spanish novelistic production of the period. One of the ways such tensions were addressed in fiction was by idealising the rural environment (as in the novels of Juan Valera and the conspicuous absence of abusive *caciques*³¹). Sawa himself addressed such tensions by idealising rural Galicia (in *Crimen Legal*) and a smaller city as Avila (in *Noche*) in order to enhance the Gothic motif of the city as locus of perdition.

The Gothic-Romantic image of the modern city – that of a Dantesque underworld populated by animal hordes – was developed throughout the nineteenth century and representationally would culminate at the end of the century with the city becoming the paradigmatic symbol of modernity³². If the Industrial Revolution provided the material means by which a new social class came to be – and a considerable amount of the imagery that would feature prominently in Gothic works of the nineteenth century – the French Revolution was the amalgamation of a series of ideas which actively pointed towards the abolition of privileges of the aristocracy and the subsequent ascendancy of the middle classes. Davenport-Hines, for example, mentions in his treaty on the Gothic, two French philosophers, closely linked to the French revolution, who would have decisively contributed to the construction of the middle class ethos. Rousseau's *Social Contract* was key in that it proposed that "sovereignty was located in the general will of the people". Conversely, Count Volney's

³⁰ By the end of the eighteenth century journeys which would have taken between ten and eleven days could be completed in less than three thanks to the railway: "Within a few years the new rapid mail coaches might get him [a 1750 traveller] from London to Portsmouth between morning and nightfall from London to Edinburgh in sixty-two hours, but in 1750 he would still have to reckon on ten to twelve days for the latter journey" (Hobsbawm, 1975, p. 23).

³¹ "Cacique" was the term with which the agents in charge of manipulating the elections were known. They would do so on the grounds of their economic power, which enabled them to force their labourers to vote whoever candidate the cacique deemed suitable.

³² See Bradbury, 1991, pp. 96-104

Ruin of Empires “was admired by English radicals for hailing atheistic humanism as the future’s great hope” (Davenport-Hines, 1998, p. 152). One of the single aspects which had a major bearing on the criticism levelled at practitioners of the Gothic was, precisely, the suspicion with which France was considered when it came to the Gothic. This suspicion was linked to the awareness of the importance the French Revolution had in the birth of the mode. Anxieties surrounding identarian issues within a very broad and heterogeneous middle classes characteristic of the period, contributed to harden this criticism, especially if the practitioners in question were women. Sophia Lee and Charlotte Smith for example, two of the most important early Gothic female novelists were also translators of note and in doing so they were under the suspicion of reactionary critics, who “connected the use of literary sensibility (...) with the import of dangerously democratic ideals from France” (Wright, 2008, p.69).

Besides, the French revolution provided multiple real-life examples of body defilement, a “persistent Gothic obsession” (Davenport-Hines, 1998, p.155, caption) which, as Joseph Crawford suggests created a feedback dynamic within Gothic narratives. According thus to Crawford “the Revolution created Gothic” to the same extent that “the tropes of Gothic fiction allowed many British writers to articulate what they believed the [Revolutionary] crowds to have done” (Crawford, 2013, p. x). The visual artist who most vividly conveyed corporeal violence was actually a Spaniard. Goya’s *Los desastres de la guerra* is a disturbing collection of engravings set in the Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, just a few years later after the revolution. This Gothic articulation of revolutionary violence upon the body/bodies, comes precisely at a time when French revolutionary middle classes aimed at providing an image of the body which would firstly fill the void created by the deposition of the king and aristocratic bodies and secondly legitimate such deposition: “Solemn demeanour, courageous words, and reserve, were (...) the signs of the successful ability to play out a role which compelled attention, created an audience and validated the authority of the player” (Outram, 1989, p. 78). It will be possible to see below how Sawa did indeed abound on class and

national representation issues by engaging with corporal representations through a Gothic lens. In his works, social identity issues, the way his characters fail or succeed to engage with their circumstance which can save them (in Orteguian terms), are inextricably linked to physical travails, where details (body fluids, monstrous transformations) are not spared to the reader.

France, however, was not the only active participant (apart from Britain) in the convoluted creation of the Gothic. Given the international reach of both revolutions, the Gothic has come to be regarded in recent years not just as an Anglo-American phenomenon but as a genuinely pan-European one by academia³³. In fact, Halls' comparative book on French and German Gothic conceptualises the whole mode as "a hotbed of literary interchange, almost *dependent on it*" (Hall, 2005, p.21; emphasis added). Gothic aesthetics spread through mainly translation³⁴ and adaptation of Gothic works. Specifically, in Spain, most English, French, German or even Anglo-American Gothic novels started their journey as mere translations. However, the modifications introduced by the translators in order to adapt them to the local tastes and moral standards were so considerable and numerous, that according to Miriam López Santos these translations practically became originals in their own right (López Santos, 2010, p.145-149). Marti-López also commented on the relations between Spanish and French novel in the middle of the nineteenth century: "I propose to replace the irreconcilable opposition between original and imitative writing with the notion of appropriation. The term, following Bakhtin's notion of 'persuasive discourses', acknowledges the processes of literary borrowings, and analyses cultural ascendancy as a deep and productive influence able to

³³ One of the first efforts in this direction is Avril Horner's edition of *European Gothic. A spirited exchange 1760-1960* which dates from 2002. In her introduction she writes: "All too often academic accounts of the Gothic repeat, almost mantra-like, the names at the core of the Anglo-American tradition: Walpole, Radcliffe Lewis, Shelley, Brockden Brown, Hawthorne, Poe. Where are the comprehensive histories of French and Italian Gothic, for example?" (Horner, 2002, p. 1).

³⁴ "(...) all the essays [as contained in Horner, 2002] recognize that translation has been vital to the survival of the Gothic novel and that the cultural transfusions and 'misappropriations' effected by the act of translation should not be dismissed simply as derivations or deviations" (Horner, 2002, p.3). In this sense see for examples of English Gothic works translated into French and Spanish the bibliographies of respectively Lévy (1974, pp. 156-170) and López Santos (López Santos, 2010, pp. 282-292) and also the bibliography included in Hall (2005, p.255-280)

generate a further creative development of another's discourse in a new context and under new conditions" (Marti-López, 2002. p. 10-11).

To a lesser extent, inter-continental influences from other discourses³⁵ and visual media³⁶ were reworked into a Gothic pattern. The different channels of exchange were in many a case the by-product of the convoluted circumstances of the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century. All these, together with that 'new shift in sensibility'³⁷ mentioned above, were elements at the core of the birth of the Gothic.

Popularity of the Gothic was widespread until approximately the early 1820s³⁸ when on the one hand, a new generation of romantic writers incorporated many of the Gothic motifs into their narratives (such as Walter Scott, the Bronte sisters and Dickens in the British isles; or Victor Hugo and Eugene Sue in France) and, on the other, "the Gothic novel declines, or undergoes transformation into such genres as ghost stories, vampire tales, sensation novels, historical romances, and detective fiction" (Carson, 1996, p. 257).

Towards the last third of the nineteenth century the Gothic underwent "an exceptional fertile resurgence" (Monsman, 2014, p. vii) which reached its peak in the 1890s in Britain and which manifested itself also in other European countries such as France or Germany – just as the first wave of Gothic had. The fears and anxieties which had first come to the forefront of the genre between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century had now become assimilated to the rapid economic, technological and colonial expansion, and the developments which had been characteristic of the century accentuated considerably during these last 30 years.

³⁵ For example, the influence of Rousseau's philosophy documented by Wright (in respectively 2008, p. 67-82; and in 2013) and Davenport-Hines, above.

³⁶ For the influence of Goya's paintings in the Gothic see for example Roas, 2006, pp. 72-76.

³⁷ As Wright suggests, echoing David Richter in his own *The Progress of Romance: Literary Historiography and the Gothic Novel*: "the Gothic novel, or 'modern romance', was able to develop as a genre because of the ready-made presence of an audience already prepared by authors such as Prevost d'Exiles to read for imaginative play and escape" (Wright, 2013, p. 149).

³⁸ *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* by Hogg from 1824 and *The Albigenses* by Charles Maturin from that same year are widely regarded to be the last novels from the classic Gothic period written in English.

Whereas in Spain the resurgence of the Gothic might not have been as “exceptional” or “fertile” there certainly was an awareness of the mode. Galdós in 1870 lists some of the most recognizable elements of the Gothic in an essay on contemporary Spanish novel: “El público ha dicho: ‘Quiero traidores pálidos y de mirada siniestra, modistas angelicales, meretrices con aureola, duquesas averiadas, jorobados románticos, adulterios, extremos de amor y odio...’³⁹” (as quoted in Bravo-Villasante, 1988, p. 39). Just a few years earlier, in 1864, Valera was already referring to the literary Gothic in his essay on Romanticism and Espronceda: “... muchos poetas góticos huelen a cementerio...”⁴⁰ (Valera, 1928, p. 16). Sawa was certainly familiar with the Gothic, as any other author of his generation would have been. This has in fact been documented by Correa Ramón: during Sawa’s first years in Madrid he was close to the circle of, precisely, those Romantic authors Valera could possibly be referring to “as graveyard smelling Gothic poet”: Alarcón, Campoamor and Zorrilla (Correa Ramón, 2008, p. 56-57).

One of the most significant aspects of this Gothic resurgence in the Western literary tradition was the way it affected and construed new forms of perception and representation of the human body. The human body thus became one of the most important idioms with which to articulate the new socio-political panorama. The stock motifs of the Gothic (imprisonment, madness, guilt, deception and the haunting of the past) together with a renewed interest in the human body resulted in a rich source of features with which the anxieties caused by technological material progress and the re-definition of social, sexual and national roles could be addressed:

(...) accepted gender and class relationships, belief in progress and perfectibility, and faith in the unchanging nature of Nature itself were replaced by widespread insecurity, disillusionment and fear of the future – the hallmarks of the twentieth century. *Horror fiction and real terror coincided*, and the same audience read and reacted to both

³⁹ Trans: “Readers said: ‘We want pale, sinister looking traitors, angelic seamstresses, saintly whores, treacherous duchesses, romantic hunchbacks, adultery, extreme love and hate...’”.

⁴⁰ Trans: ‘... many a Gothic poet smells of graveyard...’.

(Tropp, 1990, p. 2; emphasis added).

While Tropp makes specific reference above to the – often dramatic- changes which took place in Great Britain between the Industrial Revolution and the First World War, the disruption of “gender and class relationships” was not an exclusively British phenomenon as it was not the loss of “belief in progress and perfectibility” or the lack of “faith in the unchanging nature of Nature itself” either. Specifically, in Spanish letters, this “widespread insecurity” could be said to attest for the importance with which the concept of “truth” was regarded in literary theory. Truth became in the context of literary works an aesthetic asset. Truth was often summoned both as a standard of literary quality and as a moral touchstone as part of the Realism/Idealism debate which characterised literary criticism in Spain during the decades between 1870 and 1890, precisely when Sawa was writing his novels. Against the anxieties produced by progress, truth was invoked as a point of reference against which to measure the fast-changing environment of the nineteenth century in Spain: the progressive loss of international presence, the lack of a nation building project, the endemic political instability; the still timid presence of the middle classes engine of changes in other nations and, closely linked to this, the international influence of France.

The body provided then, the idiom with which to articulate a rather complex (and as seen above, at times threatening) reality. In the age of holistic, integrating philosophical systems the body constituted a readily available repository of inter-linked constructions which could be systematized through a multitude of discourses (medical, legal, pictorial to mention just a few). Artists did avidly exploit the body in its capacity to organise itself into units which could integrate themselves within wider signifiers (like families, for example). In Spain, the body became the locus where all these discourses on truth come to fruition. For example, in *Viaje de Novios* (1881) by Emilia Pardo Bazán, the father of the protagonist looks for advice about his daughter’s marriage in both priest and doctor. This makes the body a validator and guarantor precisely of truth. At a time of marked materialism, the body is conceptualised as opposed to the intangibility of mind or certain spirituality. This opposition is staged in novels in the form of science vs. religion debates which take place in the *tertulias* between priests and

doctors: in *Pepita Jiménez* from 1874 by Valera, for example. This same conflict is also portrayed in *Crimen legal* by Sawa himself in which two doctors, one religious and the other not, confront each other implicitly through the differing treatments of the same patient.

The proliferation of body discourses which feature ill, maimed bodies, bodies reduced to their organic components, bodies beyond the skin, in the Spanish narrative is symptomatic of the sudden concern with the body which is characteristic of the 19th century. Sawa's works are in fact a catalogue of sorts of all possible maladies that can assail a body: a difficult pregnancy and labour; starvation, consumption... There are precedents in Spanish literature of the preponderance of the corporeal in narratives, as in the scatological approaches of Cervantes and Quevedo, where excrement is used for comic and satirical purposes closer in spirit to the Bakhtinian carnivalesque; however, the medicalization enabled by the idiom which permeates literature at the end of the nineteenth century widens the expressive possibilities of the body.

Obviously, the body was – taking Tropp's enumeration of radical changes as a master guide – at the core of the disruption of gender and class relationships. It was also instrumental in the loss of belief in progress and perfectibility, at a time when technological advances could not cope with certain medical epidemics such as tuberculosis. Closely linked to the ravages of economic disadvantage was also the lack of faith in the unchanging nature of Nature itself, and its visible effects on the body.

The body could be represented as the keeper of racial purity and national identity; could also be portrayed soiled by illnesses which had strong moral connotations – such as syphilis or tuberculosis; or even just as a mere body, an organic circumstance for its own sake, dispossessed of the soul it may once have had⁴¹ and as such a mere object of knowledge or a commodity to showcase the new wealth, that of the entrepreneurs and self-made men. The obsessive concern with the (mainly but not exclusively female) human body was a phenomenon – significantly enough, as the Gothic itself – closely linked to the apparition and settlement of industrialised or post-industrialised societies and with those, the apparition and

⁴¹ Especially after Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859).

settlement of a new urban middle class – as seen above – and the changing societal roles of women. Due to the increasing incorporation of women into the working force in these decades⁴² and the first articulations of feminism, by which women became aware of the possibility of finding fulfilments outside the normative family marriages would increasingly take place later in women's life. Consequently, spouses would start their families later in life – and that if a family was started at all. These 'New Women' were thus a characteristic "novel species" of the 1880s according to Eric Hobsbawm (see Hobsbawm, 2010 [1987], pp.192-218): urban, middle class, less fertile than previous generations, somehow constructed through literary models⁴³ and, to a considerable degree, a textual creation:

On the one hand she [the New Woman] was regarded as sexually transgressive, as heavily implicated in socialist politics, and as a force for change; on the other hand New Woman writers of the fin-de-siècle were usually (*although not always*) stalwart supporters of heterosexual marriage, they had little or no conception of sexual desire (let alone lesbian sexual desire) and often had a considerable investment in eugenic and other imperialistic discourses (Ledger, 1997, p. 6; emphasis added).

There was however a sense of empowerment among these proto-feminists whose aspirations ran parallel to those of the middle classes: to the same extent that the New Woman wanted suffrage (i.e. access to public spheres of power) the middle classes wanted to take those spheres of power away from the upper middle classes and the aristocracy through the exercise of parliamentary democracy. The New Woman was as much a product of the socio-economic situation that gave rise to the urban petite bourgeoisie as the new urban middle classes ethos was shaped by this New Woman. Among other things, the New Woman challenged precedent cultural and social images of femininity which inevitably triggered anxieties among the most conservative and reactionary social strata (see Hobsbawm, 2010,

⁴² The second industrial revolution enabled an expansion of the European imperial project which demanded a wide range of administrative positions with the subsequent professionalization of the liberal occupations, and certain mobility – social, economic and geographical – among classes.

⁴³ Ibsen's Nora in *A Doll's House* being the example par excellence (Hobsbawm, 2010, p. 192).

chapter 8). The violence of the attacks received by these unmarried women is but evidence of how singleness among women was progressively becoming an issue that deserved attention and control: “One authority [the author refers to Victorian England] viewed menstruation as ‘nature’s warning to the mannish maiden that any effort to avoid her biological responsibilities was a crime against womanhood and the community’” (Bernau, 2007, p. 148). The ideological constructions by which women’s position in society was articulated– that of the mother and wife as keeper and guardian of the social fabric family by nature of physiological differences – can be found as early as the French Revolutionary era, precisely at the time when the representation of the public body was being redefined – see Outram, above – and Gothicism was addressing these concerns:

One rationale, echoing Rousseau, termed women’s roles in the domestic sphere “natural” for their sex and thus branded their activities in the public or political sphere unnatural. Medical and scientific authorities provided a second rationale: the idea that biological differences between the sexes “naturally” led to different societal roles (Clark, 2008, p. 22).

Thus, and regardless of whether or not the New Women were in fact “supporters of heterosexual marriage, had little or no conception of sexual desire and had a considerable investment in eugenesic and other imperialistic discourses” as Ledger claims above, there was a sense of them posing a threat. This would explain the presence of New Women in finisecular narratives which in turn would reinforce or attack the stereotype. This figure of the New Woman is even more problematic in Spain where the double-pronged action of the Catholic church on the one hand and the discourse(s) of the republican anticlericalism on the other in combination with very specific material circumstances (i.e. a combination of political instability and slow industrialisation) limited considerably the impact of these early proto-feminist figures. In subsequent chapters I will explore these issues specifically in the works of Sawa, relating the social context to the physicality of the female protagonists as mediated by the Gothic.

Leisure of the middle classes was also carefully linked to a satisfactory management (and control) of the body – at the time the locus of capitalist production and consequently a reflection on the ideological ethos which motivates all entrepreneurial endeavour: a sort of *citius, altius, fortius*⁴⁴ of economic production. New forms of entertainment such as travelling, and the practise of organised sports are closely linked to a sort of management of the body which idealises the bourgeois body of contention. French Decadentism – extremely rich in Gothic motifs – with its interest on the sensual indulgence and lack of self-discipline of the body is but the dark side of bourgeois discourses of control to the same extent that the evil scientists of the Gothic fictions of the late nineteenth century revival are the disturbing reverse of the scientific optimism which at the time came hand in hand with economic wealth articulated the narratives of the fin-de-siècle revival: pseudo-scientific explanations of modern degeneration, the centrality of the body, the dissolution of its natural boundaries and fear of otherness.

Specifically, in the British tradition, the wealth and the optimism of progress brought on by scientific developments was questioned by Robert Louis Stevenson and HG Wells' stories of scientists falling prey to their own experiments. This new type of character – which arguably has its origins in Victor Frankenstein – takes the place the evil conniving aristocrat of yesteryear would have occupied in the classic Gothic romance. At the same time, the imperial expansion brought on fears of cultural contagion by the oriental other, incarnated in exotic monsters such as Dracula or the Beetle. The focus of the narration would thus shift from Catholic Italy and/or Spain to Eastern Europe, Egypt or the overseas colonies. The fast overpopulated city became in this new form of Gothic as much a land of opportunity as the locus of moral perdition for the young Dorian Gray. Finally, and whereas the site of entrapment had been the crypt, catacomb or dungeon of a demi-ruinous castle the locus of imprisonment would become now the human body itself. Examples of this can be found in several novels from the Gothic Revival in English. Take for example *The Invisible Man*, where the body of the

⁴⁴ The Olympic motto was proposed by Coubertin precisely around the turn of the century in 1896 (see "[Opening Ceremony](https://stillmed.olympic.org/Documents/Reports/EN/en_report_268.pdf)" (pdf). https://stillmed.olympic.org/Documents/Reports/EN/en_report_268.pdf International Olympics Committee. 2002. p. 3. Retrieved 23 August 2012) and it is but a sublimation of the bourgeois discourses around the body: discipline, self-control, individualism and "moral beauty".

protagonist vanishes from the *Foucauldian* gaze. Another example is to be found in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* which presents a body deformed and regressed to an earlier state of evolution. Examples are also to be found in *Dracula* or *The Beetle*, where the bodies of these mythic creatures turn out to be changing and shapeless, almost liquid in its flowing qualities. Specific instance from these two works are characterised as bodies which can transform themselves into certain animals at will. Finally, it is possible to find bodies bedridden by illness as in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, whose pictorial representation are strikingly reminiscent of images of syphilitic men in the late nineteenth century.

2.3 Gothic Aesthetics: Spain

There are two consequences deriving directly from the fact that the impact of the Industrial Revolution in Spain did not have the scope it had in other European countries⁴⁵. On the one hand, the apparition and development of the middle classes was a late combined process (in comparison to other Western nations such as Great Britain and France) which was largely restricted to but a few urban areas⁴⁶ and which eventually materialised in a weak petty bourgeoisie with scarce levels of influence or social representativity (see below) – albeit with a certain visibility. On the other hand, Spain was not such an active participant in the whole nineteenth century imperial project either, lacking the material means and ethos provided by the industrial revolution and the middle classes respectively⁴⁷. The Industrial Revolution not being such in Spain, but more of an escalating process than the radical change the term “revolution” might suggest, the urban middle classes did not define themselves with the same clarity as their European counterparts. There was however an incipient sense of identity among these Spanish middle classes:

⁴⁵ To the extent that one of the modern classics of Spanish historiography is actually entitled *The failure of the Industrial Revolution in Spain*: Nadal, Jordi (1975) *El fracaso de la Revolución Industrial en España, 1814-1913* Barcelona: Ariel.

⁴⁶ Apart from the 1820 revolution in Spain whose effects were to last a meagre 3 years known as the “Liberal Triennium” there were no uprisings until 1868’s revolution (popularly known as *La Gloriosa* – “the Glorious one”) of limited effects.

⁴⁷ Note that by 1898 the whole of the Spanish overseas colonies had gained independence from the metropolis.

Regardless of their small numbers and structural weaknesses, the bourgeoisie began to assemble a *modus vivendi* that appealed to the masses. This way of life, this culture that at the beginning of the nineteenth century was in a process of gestation became the hegemonic culture by the end of the century (Cruz, 2011, p. 13).

Consequently, and due to the process described by Hobsbawm above, by which the redefinition of women's societal role is closely linked to the liberal and economic revolutions, it is possible to find parallelisms in Spain. Thus, a weak petite bourgeoisie did almost necessarily generate a weak female emancipation movement, but a movement, nonetheless:

Entre 1830 y finales de los años sesenta la burguesía española toma conciencia de la inferioridad demográfica en la que se encuentra frente al crecimiento acelerado de las clases trabajadoras. La emigración masiva de la población rural a los centros industriales originó lo que se definió como un Malthusianismo de clase y a la formación de una conciencia de cuerpo burguesa que exigía como afirma Andrés Moreno una *redefinición del papel social que debía jugar la mujer de los sectores acomodados en la lucha demográfica de clases*⁴⁸ (Folguera Crespo, 1997, p.424; emphasis added).

In certain areas like Catalonia, some feminist movements were linked to the new urban lower middle classes: "El feminismo fue un movimiento de clase media y la pequeña burguesía era un grupo social económicamente débil⁴⁹" (Cabrera Bosch, 1988, p.32) and consequently, fertility also decreased in these areas, following the pattern common to the rest of Europe. Sawa's novels show evidence of how widespread and deeply rooted these concerns about female representativity and visibility were, specifically among the budding middle classes of the Spanish late nineteenth century. However, Sawa adopted a slightly different tone than what is found in continental narratives. Women in Sawa's novels are often

⁴⁸ Trans: "Between 1830 and the end of the 1860s Spanish bourgeoisie becomes aware of its demographic inferiority when compared to the working classes. Massive emigration from rural areas into industrial hubs originated firstly, what was known as class Malthusianism, and secondly, an awareness of a bourgeoisie social body that needed, as Andrés Moreno claims, *a redefinition of the social role that woman was to play amongst the affluent sectors in the demographic social warfare*".

⁴⁹ Trans: "Feminism was a middle class movement and the petite bourgeoisie was an economically weak social group".

to be found assailed by physical limitations and/or bound to bed, a circumstance that symbolically echoes their ambiguous stance within Spanish society. By extension, this was characteristic of the other Radical Naturalists also, and more specifically of López Bago. López Bago's novels, often organised in trilogies, used to revolve around female characters from the Spanish nineteenth century stock of female clichés: the prostitute, the (adulterous) wife and the nun. As a mentor and leader of the whole group of Radical Naturalists, his importance and his relationship with Sawa will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Despite the differences between both Great Britain and Spain mentioned above, some characteristics of the New Woman were also shared by her Spanish contemporaries⁵⁰. The apparition of an urban petty bourgeoisie during the second third of the nineteenth century in Spain, timid as it was, went hand in hand with a redefinition of female roles within that specific stratum of society in the domestic and public arenas (albeit in a substantially different way from this same process in Britain). The decrease in fertility which Hobsbawm highlights as one of the characteristics of the New Woman could also be felt in Spain: according to Romero de Solís, there is a subtle tendency towards a decrease in births already noticeable in 1883, which he explicitly links to similar processes in the rest of Europe (Romero de Solís, 1973, pp.270-271).

The apparition of a new economic class – that of shopkeepers and lower clerks – was characteristically an urban phenomenon, rural societies being considerably more stable⁵¹ and the literary representation of this phenomenon would revolve around the human body. For instance, the deformed son of Torquemada, the social climber of Galdós tetralogy⁵², to take an example from canonical literature, is a superb example of this. Torquemada is an astute

⁵⁰ Also, and on how certain material circumstances conditioned and shaped proto-feminist thought in Western nations throughout the nineteenth century see Sotelo, 2005. Although her article focuses on feminist movements in USA, Germany or Spain the conclusions reached invites, once again to take the whole issue of Spanish difference with certain caution.

⁵¹ "Over much of Europe – in Spain, in Hungary or in the eastern provinces of Prussia – the power of the old landowning class was unchallenged in the countryside; and even those landlords who introduced scientific farming methods and equipment did little to alter the social organisation on their states" (Joll, 1990, p. 33).

⁵² The tetralogy comprises *Torquemada en la hoguera* (1889); *Torquemada en la Cruz* (1893); *Torquemada en el Purgatorio* (1894) and *Torquemada y San Pedro* (1895).

pawn broker who rises to the high echelons of society through his cunning commercial instincts and – most importantly – a convenience marriage which opens the doors to better commercial opportunities than his social milieu would have afforded. His second son however, is in social terms the bastard child of “old money” and “new money”, of, a priori, incongruous and incompatible social classes, and as such is born with hydrocephaly, deformed, monstrous.

It is now known that despite traditional belief to the contrary there was – just as in English, French or German to name a few continental traditions⁵³ – an autochthonous Gothic novel in Spanish produced towards the 1820s built upon translations and recreations of European originals. As with other European traditions, certain motifs of the Gothic reappeared towards the fin-de-siècle, in order to address either new sets of anxieties or a series of old ones which were going through transformations. The changes experienced in Europe were not completely alien to Spanish society. In fact, following Nigel Townson it could be said that, with the raise of the comparative method in history, it is safe now to say that Spain's path to modernisation was different from other European nations' *only* to the extent that all nations are different among themselves (Townson, 2010). By his own admission, Townson is exploring an aspect of Spanish historiography already touched upon by Fusi and Palafox (1998): “Este libro (...) *no admite la excepcionalidad española*. En otras palabras, consideramos a España como un ‘país normal’” (Fusi and Palafox, 1997, p. 11; emphasis added). In that sense, theories on the historical exceptionality of Spain are to be taken with caution. Jacobson and Moreno Luzón suggest that there might have been more common elements between Spain and its European counterparts than a priori apparent: “Canovas was a conservative statesman in a Europe of conservative statesmen, whose contemporaries included Bismarck, Disraeli and Cavour” and at the time of the Spanish Restoration⁵⁴ Spain could have stood its ground in a comparative with other liberal European regimes, integrating several radical groups at both ends of the political spectrum in a liberal system after having left behind years of political instability, thanks

⁵³ On this regard see above on the *roman frénétique* and the *schauerroman*.

⁵⁴ From 1875, when the Bourbon monarchy was restored, until 1931 with the instauration of the Second Republic.

to a rather advanced judiciary (Jacobson and Moreno Luzón, 2000, p. 94). Whether the mechanisms to sustain this stability⁵⁵ were in the long run a blessing or a curse is still the central topic of Spanish historiography of the period but the general agreement is that “abulia” (lack of will) that was typical of the Spanish intelligentsia of the 1898 generation was rooted in the limited democratic participation and the staging of free elections which in fact were not free at all. This lack of democratic participation would then feature heavily on many a novel of the previous (Restoration) generation⁵⁶. This phenomenon started also to draft the profile of a rather timid middle class who above the ranks of the proletariat had limited or no access to political participation and was not sociologically large enough to impose its demands. The urban middle classes were, first of all, in a precarious economic situation – which Sawa for example echoes in *Declaración de un vencido* (1887) and in *Noche* (1888) – whereas they had to balance the act of keeping appearances of wealth⁵⁷ without compromising an actually rather limited economic income⁵⁸; and secondly, far from the decision-making process of the rural and provincial town clientelism (as a result of *caciquismo*).

Examples of Gothicism in Spanish canonical narratives during the last third of the century were thus characterised for the distancing strategies that – precisely middle class – authors employed for example by removing the supernatural element or by approaching it ironically, humorously, as an entertainment aside of more respectable literary endeavours, as it will be seen below. The Gothic sits uncomfortably in the midst of the middle classes realist and naturalist aesthetic programme, just as the nation’s middle classes are an odd, uncomfortable occurrence in the social panorama of late nineteenth century Spain. Compare to the British

⁵⁵ Namely ‘caciquismo’, the tacit agreement of electoral manipulation between parties in order to take turns in power.

⁵⁶ For example, in Juan Valera’s *Pepita Jiménez* (1874), which portrays a rather benevolent figure of the *cacique* Don Pedro or Pardo Bazán’s *Los pazos de Ulloa* (1886) far more critic with *caciquismo*.

⁵⁷ See for example how in this sense a good share of these anxieties crystallises in the ‘middle class home’: “As an idea the nineteenth century home was represented as a space embodying all beneficial outcomes from the culture of domesticity and consumer culture, as well as an essential instrument for the acquisition of social distinction. As a reality, the home is always the result of compromise between social aspirations, daily requirements and economic possibility” (Cruz, 2011, p. 67; emphasis added).

⁵⁸ In this sense see Vincent, 2007, p. 54: “Testimony to the underemployment of middle classes and to the lack of expansion and dynamism in the national economy, the *cesante* survived into the Restoration, his name serving as the title of a satirical magazine as late as the 1880’s”.

tradition where works as *Dracula* (1899), with its unbridled display of Gothic bodily transgressions, run parallel in boldness with the self-assurance of British middle classes. The Radical Naturalists (Sawa himself, and López Bago, for example) articulate their anti-bourgeoisie novels through the description of ill decaying bodies, in combination with other more blatant Gothic motifs (such as imprisonment or the haunting of the past) while retaining a considerable amount of the bourgeois idiom itself. However, none of them achieved the commercial success that *Dracula* achieved in the British Isles. Spanish middle class insecurities prevented this same middle classes from embracing overly transgressive codes (those of the overly Gothic or the Radical naturalists) opting instead for a prudish approach to these codes.

As with the continental Gothic novel, some Gothic motifs go through a revival during the last third of the century in Spain. In fact, canonical narratives provide ample evidence of the proliferation of the Gothic in Spanish letters, which was not restricted to popular culture or Radical Naturalism. Some traits characteristic of the canonical Spanish Gothic such as the use of the mode to abound on gender or familial conflicts can relate to the radical naturalists and more specifically to Sawa. At the same time and by analysing the Gothic in canonical narratives it will be possible also to contrast it with Sawa's own use of the same tropes and establish in which aspects Sawa's Gothicism distances itself from his contemporaries'.

La sombra by Galdós, published in 1870 although probably written during the second half of the 1860s (see Pérez Galdós, 2003, p. 185), is according to Sylvia López a fine example of what she terms Spanish Gothic "primarily for its great emphasis on the questions of 'el que dirán' and honour" (López, 1998, p. 517). With this expression, López refers to a very particular sense of honour within Spanish culture that is more concerned with keeping appearances of honour and with what is rumoured about oneself, than with actual honour. Such conception of honour is one of the *bêtes-noires* of Sawa (and the other Radical Naturalists). Radical Naturalists' sense of honour and virtue was in fact fairly conservative and their attacks to the middle classes seemed to be motivated not so much for the values these classes (allegedly) held dear, but for the hypocrisy derived from the fact that an appearance of honour seemed

to be more coveted than actual honour and virtue. Sawa's novels present multiple examples of this situation, which will be explored in further detail below.

Going back to Galdós and *La sombra*, this nouvelle is the story of a man who having married an attractive, far younger woman than himself becomes obsessed with the threatening figure of mythological hero Paris who at some point steps out of a painting, challenges the protagonist to a duel and even incarnates himself in a real being: that of a local Don Juan of whom it is said is courting the protagonist's attractive wife. López points out at the strong parodic treatment of the Gothic topic of the "double": "This description of Paris [López refers to one of the images of terror in the nouvelle, that of mythological Paris stepping alive from a painting when depicted at some point wearing a robe and slippers] not only suggest that the novel treats the notion of doubles in a serious-comic manner, but also deflates the terror Paris ostensibly caused" (López, 1998, p.513). The light-hearted (often mocking) tone of Galdós' narrative has been also noted by Lee Six, also when dealing with the idea of "duplication": (...) Galdós showcases his familiarity with Gothic conventions by *parodying a comprehensive range of them to clearly humorous effect* in the first instance, and with a note of pathos gradually developing as the plot moves forward" (Lee Six, 2010, p. 71; emphasis added). Galdós makes use of a series of Gothic devices which by the 1870s were passé (or whose treatment was about to change) having already been exploited in the mid-century by European novelists with a powerful influence on Spanish letters, such as the Brontës, Dickens or Victor Hugo. These (by then) old fashioned conventions⁵⁹ were even more susceptible to parody by the time *La sombra* was written than when the classic Gothic period novels were being produced⁶⁰. There are however multiple instances of Gothic bodies in the works of Galdós – in his spiritualist epoch, most novels feature some sort of monstrous and/or maimed body: Lere's brother in *Ángel Guerra* (1890); Tristana, whose leg is to be amputated in the novel of

⁵⁹ Referred to by López as "classical British Gothic novel" (López, 1998, p. 510), the "original Gothic (1760s-1820s)" (López, 1998, p. 511) or the "early British Gothic" (López, 1998, p. 517). Emphasis added in all three cases.

⁶⁰ Even at their heyday, Gothic romances were not entirely safe from parody, as evidenced by Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) or Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1820).

the same name (*Tristana*, 1892); Torquemada's second son – see above; or Ujo, the dwarf who falls in love with Ándara in *Nazarín* (1895).

Other works from Spanish canonical authors of the late nineteenth century which have benefited from a Gothic reading are for example, Emilia Pardo Bazan's *Los pazos de Ulloa* (published in 1886 – the same year as Sawa's *Crimen legal*) and followed up by a continuation called *La madre naturaleza* (1887) and the short story 'Un destripador de antaño' (1890).

Los pazos de Ulloa is the story of the progressive degeneration of the house of Ulloa (understood both as the actual edification and facilities and the household and family who bears the name). Pardo Bazán locates the action in rural Galicia: "Se puede empezar la lista de elementos góticos en *Los pazos* [sic] con el título mismo que le pone la autora, el nombre del habitáculo (castillo, caserón o abadía, por lo general) que va a centrar una serie de hechos incitantes al miedo o al horror⁶¹" (Colahan, C. and Rodríguez, A., 1986, p. 399). One of the anxieties which transpires from the Gothic revival is the New Woman, and as such, Pardo Bazán keeps portraying feminine characters under male subjugation: "Elemento no menos prominente es el tipo de personaje, ajeno al lugar, que el autor de la novela gótica suele hacer llegar hasta la siniestra vivienda fijada en el título: figura femenina, llorona en demasía, de imaginación histérica y nervios invariablemente a punto de dispararse⁶²" (Colahan, C. and Rodríguez, A., 1986, p. 399). Colahan and Rodríguez go on mentioning some more elements characteristic of the Gothic used by Pardo Bazán: "una naturaleza sentida como salvaje y hostil⁶³"; "un hombre misterioso, brutal y capaz de todo⁶⁴"; "represión sexual⁶⁵"; and "horrorizantes descubrimientos de ocultas relaciones de sangre⁶⁶" to conclude: (...) la Pardo Bazán construye la novela dentro de esta pauta típicamente gótica con actitud serio-cómica

⁶¹ Trans: 'the list of Gothic elements in *The house of Ulloa* starts with its very title, the name of the dwellings where the scary events will take place'.

⁶² Trans: "An equally prominent element is the kind of outsider character, that authors of Gothic novels send towards the sinister lodgings with which they title their works: a female figure, constantly weeping, with a hyperactive imagination, on the verge of a breakdown".

⁶³ Trans: "hostile nature".

⁶⁴ Trans: "a brutal, mysterious, unrestrained man".

⁶⁵ Trans: "sexual repression".

⁶⁶ Trans: "shocking revelation of hidden kinship".

e intencionadamente paródica⁶⁷ (Colahan, C. and Rodríguez, A., 1986, pps. 399-401). Compare now with Janet Pérez conclusion from her article “Naturalism and Gothic: Pardo Bazán's Transmogrifications of the Genre in *Los Pazos de Ulloa* [sic]”:

Los Pazos [sic] may be profitably read as a (partial) parody of conventional Gothic motifs, settings, characters, and plot. The descriptions cited amply attest to the abundant Gothic spaces in the novel and include some typical auditory motifs such as the moaning in the wind, the howling dogs, thunder, creaking stairs and ghostly cackles (Pérez, 1995, p. 154).

There is one more feature which is specifically characteristic of Spain in the period though and can also be articulated through Gothic conventions: the raise of anticlericalism – which reached its zenith during the civil war of 1936. A generation of writers who were born in the 1850s and 1860s, children themselves of the emerging *petty bourgeoisie* would consistently incorporate elements of the Gothic idiom into their narratives with which to articulate these fears, anxieties and sense of disillusionment and to *épater* their contemporaries.

⁶⁷ Trans: “Pardo Bazán has written a typically Gothic novel with a serious-comic attitude and decidedly parodic”.

3. “Radical Naturalism” and *Biblioteca del renacimiento literario*

It is quite possible that the term “Naturalismo radical” (“Radical Naturalism”) was coined by Alejandro Sawa himself at the end of the appendix he wrote for Eduardo López Bago’s novel *El cura* (1885). In any case and if he did not coin it himself he must have been one of the first authors (if not the first) to put it to print⁶⁸. Radical naturalism was a sort of portmanteau term to refer to those authors who traditionally publishing in *Biblioteca del renacimiento literario* (the “Library of literary renaissance”) took some of Zola’s theoretical assumptions to obscene paroxysms of social and personal degradation in their novels. The library was in fact a collection whose titles heavily drew – among other influences – from the Spanish popular novel of the nineteenth century and, as I will demonstrate, to a lesser extent from Zolaesque Naturalism:

No es fortuito que López Bago [and Sawa, together with other Radical Naturalists] escogiera como editor a J. Muñoz Sánchez, sucesor del célebre Urbano Manini, quien acometió, junto con Gaspar y Roig, la publicación de las novelas del prolífico folletinista M. Fernández y González. En el establecimiento de Manini se conocían perfectamente los gustos y las tendencias del público de la novela popular, hasta el punto de que existen testimonios que aluden a que imponía temas y asuntos a sus escritores, y que estas obras constituían un asombroso éxito comercial⁶⁹ (Fernández 1995, p. 129).

In this chapter I will discuss how the term Radical Naturalism is to be taken with caution, in that the reference to “naturalism” is (and has been) misleading. I will define some of the characteristics of the movement, in order to argue that there are many other sources to

⁶⁸ “Cuando en los inicios de 1884 se edita el primer volumen de *La prostituta*, echa a andar el ‘Naturalismo radical’, o de ‘barricada’, como bautizó Alejandro Sawa a la modalidad extrema de la formula zolesca en España (...)”. Trans: “When at the beginning of 1884 the first volume of *The prostitute* is published, “Radical Naturalism” or “trenches” Naturalism as Alejandro Sawa referred to the most extreme elaboration of Zola’s style in Spain...” (Fernández, 2005 [1884], p. 31).

⁶⁹ Trans: “It is not by chance that López Bago chose J. Muñoz Sánchez as his editor, successor of well-known Urbano Manini, who together with Gaspar Roig published the works of prolific sensation author M. Fernández González. The tastes and preferences of readers were perfectly known to Manini, to the extent that it is said that he imposed certain topics and issues to his authors and that these works were immense commercial successes”.

consider apart from Zola, whose importance has possibly been overstated. My discussion will revolve around the dearest topics to the radical naturalists: anticlericalism, the middle classes and the concept of “family”. In discussing the characteristics of the works published under the radical naturalist rubric I will also consider some specific authors, their relationship with the publishing industry of the time and their relationship with Alejandro Sawa.

José Conde Salazar, for example, author of a “gastronomic-social novel” (*Tortilla al ron*, 1885) which was published as part of the aforementioned Biblioteca del renacimiento literario, was also a “folletinista”; an author of serials (novels in instalments): very low-quality creations that were meant to supply the heavy demand of the market⁷⁰. These serials abound in topics which are not altogether unknown to those which are characteristic of the “Radical Naturalists”: namely fascination with crime⁷¹ and anticlericalism⁷². The motifs and devices inherited from translations and versions of Gothic classics of the early nineteenth century⁷³ would be capital in the literary articulation of crime and anticlericalism, together with:

(...) Naturalismo difuso, un ideario sincrético donde se dan cita el humanismo sentimental de Victor Hugo y Eugene Sue, el tremendismo más violento, las técnicas folletinescas, la más acerva crítica al orden socio-moral imperante y un reiterado interés por la conducta fisiológica y sexual de los personajes, que da lugar, generalmente, al relato de una crónica escandalosa. El anticlericalismo violento encuentra pábulo también en esta heterodoxa colección, con títulos tales como el del librepensador Ardieta *El excomulgado o las bodas de un presbítero* [1886?]⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See Ferreras, 1972, p.227.

⁷¹ See Ferreras, 1972, pp.293-304.

⁷² See Ferreras, 1972, pp.272-280.

⁷³ See on the origins of the Spanish “crime” serial: “Existe una novela de terror de origen inglés, *ghothic* [sic] *tale*, que produjo en su momento verdaderas obras maestras; esta literatura fue importada en España en los primeros años del XIX: traducida y adaptada, a veces imitada con más o menos fortuna. El Romanticismo, con sus imbricaciones inglesas sobre todo, favoreció hasta cierto punto este culto al terror”. Trans: “There is a terror novel of English origins, the *ghothic* [sic] *tale*, that produced real masterpieces, this literature was imported into Spain at the beginning of the 19th century: translated and adapted, sometimes imitated with more or less success. Romanticism and its British ramifications enables to a certain degree this cult of terror” (Ferreras, 1972, p. 294). On Spanish Gothic imports see López Santos, 2010.

⁷⁴ Trans: “(...) vague Naturalism, a syncretic set of ideas where Victor Hugo and Eugène Sue’s sentimental humanism meet the most violent truculent deeds, the *feuilleton*, bitter criticism of the social/moral order and a constant interest for the physiological and sexual behaviour of the characters, that tends to lead to a rather

(Fernández, 1995, p. 36).

The influence of Hugo Pura Fernández mentions above was noticed by Pattisson as early as 1965⁷⁵ and Sawa himself would still refer to the French romantic patriarch as “father Hugo” as late as 1901 (Sawa, 2008, p. 119) – when Sawa’s novelistic career had already come to a halt⁷⁶. As David Owen Evans shows, the rapport established between early socialist movements (such as Saint-Simonism or Fourierism), which would constitute the seed for future liberal and anticlerical attitudes, and the first generation of French romantic writers was rather fruitful: “(...) the arguments of the early socialists might have been relatively futile without the appeal which the poet, the dramatist, and the novelist were able to make” (Evans, 1951, p.29). Sawa himself wrote in 1885 the post-scriptum to a now forgotten book of socialist poetry: *A los hijos del pueblo. Versos socialistas*. The pompous and dramatic rhetoric characteristic of the worst romantic prose (repetitions, dense use of epithets, calls to arms) is indelibly intertwined with the ideological and political vindications of the text:

Y que en la batalla soberbia del porvenir, esa batalla que ha de decidirlo todo, que ha de resolverlo y solucionarlo todo, esta legión, la nuestra, nuestra legión, más que un grupo, que una cohorte de hombres, inexorables y convencidos, parezca en las magníficas trasfiguraciones de la lucha, un pelotón de condenados escalando al cielo y gritando insaciables como el derecho: ‘ más, más todavía...; no quedamos satisfechos..., más, más todavía!’ y arrojar a Dios – el crimen latente-de cabeza al vacío, donde no vuelva a incorporarse nunca, vencido para siempre⁷⁷ (Sawa, 2008,

shocking chronicle of events. Violent anticlericalism finds also its place in this heterodox collection with novels such as free-thinking author Ardieta’s *The excommunicated or the presbyter’s wedding* [1886].

⁷⁵ “Esta tendencia [Pattisson refers to a non-spiritual orientation of Spanish Naturalism] se manifiesta en Eduardo López Bago y Alejandro Sawa, y puede caracterizarse como una rendición completa al Naturalismo de Zola mezclado con humanismo sentimental al estilo de *Los miserables* o *Los misterios de París*.” Trans: “This tendency appears in Eduardo López Bago and Alejandro Sawa and can be characterised as a complete submission to Zolaesque Naturalism mixed with a sentimental humanism after *Les Misérables* or *The Mysteries of Paris*” (Pattisson, 1965, p. 136).

⁷⁶ By 1901 and on his return from his European travels his literary output was limited to some minor theatrical pieces and press articles.

⁷⁷ Trans: “And in the glorious battle that is to come, the ultimate battle that will solve and decide everything, this legion, our legion, not a mere group of men, but a cohort, an inexorable and righteous cohort, will seem to be in the magnificent battle a battalion of convicts who climbing to the skies above and insatiably screaming for

p.45).

The influence of, specifically Eugene Sue on, for example, Eugenio Antonio Flores – another of the so called ‘Radical Naturalists’ – has also been noted by María Rosa Escudé (see Escudé, 2002, p. 36), whose interpretation of the movement – and more specifically of the works of Flores points towards these works as the forerunners of the erotic narratives of the 1920s: “La exaltación de las relaciones sexuales y la conducta íntima se convierten en campo de experimentación novelesca surgiendo un segundo Naturalismo de tipo popular que llegara a crear escuela y será el precursor de la novela erótica contemporánea⁷⁸” (Escudé, 2002, p. 45). Zubiaurre together with Luis Cuesta emphasizes like Escudé the popular character of these creations in the introductory essay of their edition of López Bago’s *El cura*: “(...) como ocurre con frecuencia en los estudios hispánicos, tradicionalmente alérgicos a la cultura de masas, se ignoran, del Realismo y del Naturalismo, sus vertientes más populares (y, todo hay que decirlo, ideológicamente más progresistas)⁷⁹” (Zubiaurre and Cuesta, 2013, p.vii). This eroticism however does not preclude Gothicism; if anything, it emphasizes its articulation: the ‘exaltation of sexual relationships and intimate behaviour’ together with the distinctively popular character/aesthetics of these works whereas sentimentality is melodramatically exploited coalesce with the detailed portrayal of medical procedures in a genuine form of Gothicism. See for example from *La Histórica* (1885) on childbirth: “las contracciones de la boca eran tales que sus dientes desaparecían en los labios, que se mordían hasta hacer brotar sangre⁸⁰” (as quoted in Escudé, 2002, p. 65). A parallel instance taken from Sawa can be raised here. In the following passage of *Crimen legal*, for example, erotism and repulsion (repulsion linked to the mechanism of conception, just as in *La Histórica*) coalesce together: “Fue acostada la doliente en el lecho de parir, en el decúbito dorsal,

their rights: More, even more! Never enough!’ will tear God down to the abyss from where will never raise again”.

⁷⁸ Trans: “The exaltation of sexual relationships and intimate behaviour become the field of fiction experimentation, giving way to a second Naturalism, popular, which will become a school and will preclude contemporary erotic novel”.

⁷⁹ Trans: As very often happens in Hispanic studies, traditionally allergic to mass culture, the most popular (and ideologically the most liberal) facets of Realism and Naturalism are ignored”.

⁸⁰ Trans: “Her mouth contractions were such that her own teeth sunk in their lips making the blood flow”.

abiertas las piernas hasta descubrir la monstruosidad de sus órganos genitales externos (...) [el médico] descubrióle por completo el cuerpo hasta la altura de los pechos⁸¹” (Sawa, 1999, p. 117-118).

Paradoxically both López Bago and Sawa chose to identify themselves with Zola's aesthetics despite the fact that their strongest influence, as noted above, is probably Eugene Sue and Victor Hugo's social Romanticism⁸², authors whose most famous works can be classified as Gothic⁸³. Despite the aura of Realism the Radical Naturalists claimed for themselves, referring to their works as “studies”⁸⁴, adding the “medico-social” or “social” sobriquet to the titles of their works⁸⁵ – emphasizing the supposedly scientific character of the composition – , and most importantly claiming to be Zola's avant-garde in Spain⁸⁶, their novels were far from faithful documents of contemporary life paradoxically closer in content to that of the Gothic novels and the sense of confessional self-characteristic of the Romanticism and the French *feuilleton*. The plots and stories are twisted, surreal and unrealistic. Another example of this, apart from the already mentioned *El Cura* is *La prostituta* also by López Bago, in which an aristocrat (Conde de Riosucio y Marques de Villaperdida⁸⁷) grieving with

⁸¹ Trans: “The patient was laid down on her back, legs open, so her monstrous genitalia could be seen (...) [the doctor] exposed her body up to her breasts”

⁸² On Victor Hugo and “social Romanticism” see Evans, 1951, p. 29.

⁸³ Or at least, incredibly rich in Gothic motifs: as in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* or *Les Misérables*: physical deformity, imprisonment or identity deception among many other Gothic motifs just as in *The Mysteries of Paris*.

⁸⁴ See Sawa writing about López Bago's first published volume (*Los amores. Obra entretenida* from 1876): “un estudio rudo e inexorable del corazón humano” (Sawa, (1996) [1885] p.254). Trans: “... a rough and inevitable study of the human heart” and a few pages on in p. 259: “López Bago remata su sombrío estudio de la prostitución con una gran aurora”. Trans: “López Bago culminates his gloomy study of prostitution with a new dawn...”. López Bago: “...escribimos unas cuartillas a las que titulamos novelas sin estar conformes con ese título. No lo estamos porque no tienen nuestras obras el carácter de la obra de amenidad, sino el de estudio”. Trans: “... we write pages to which we title novels without being entirely happy with such name. We are not because our works are not entertaining ones; they are studies” (López Bago, (1999) [1886], p. 209).

⁸⁵ While paradoxically Sawa himself would only add “novela social” to the title of his heavily autobiographical volume *Declaración de un vencido*, the aforementioned López Bago would organise his novels in mainly two groups: “novelas sociales” and “medico-sociales”. Among the “medico-sociales” the ones celebrated by Sawa in the epilogue mentioned above: the tetralogy on prostitution and the trilogy on Catholic priests' celibacy. Remigio Vega Armentero traditionally linked also to the Radical Naturalists would refer to his novels as “novelas sociales” (for example *Doble adulterio. El fango del boudoir. Novela social* (1887); *La Venus Granadina. Novela social* (1888)).

⁸⁶ “Zola en Francia, Verga y Capuana en Italia, y nosotros aquí, tenemos un sello peculiar” (López Bago, 1999 [1886], p.213). Trans: “Zola in France, Capuana in Italy, and us here [in Spain] have a distinctive style”.

⁸⁷ Note the not very subtle way with which the attributes of the protagonist are echoed in his aristocratic titles: he is the “Count of Dirtyriver” and “Marquis of Doomedville”.

repentance after having transmitted a lethal syphilis to his wife decides to run several brothels in Madrid in order to donate the profits to the Vatican (sic). *Crimen legal's* plot fares no better: in order to elate with his lover a man decides to kill his wife by getting her with child, knowing that after a very late abortion, labour will be necessarily lethal for her. One more example that can be brought up is Remigio Vega Armentero's *La ralea de la aristocracia* (c.1886): a novel where the protagonist is driven to crime by necessity; a necessity brought upon him by the forgery of documents which deprive him of an inheritance. After the commission of his crime, the mood of the protagonist is portrayed in crude Gothic overtones:

(...) en un solo instante se le presento el Saladero [‘el Saladero’ was the name of the prison in Madrid at the time] con toda su hediondez, luego el presidio, después, el oscuro y húmedo calabozo, el traje infamante, el grillete con su estridente chirrido al tobillo, la pesada cadena pendiente de la cintura, el trabajo penoso, el tratamiento brutal, la marca odiosa, la vara despiadada del cabo y la bofetada ignominiosa del capataz, la abyección, la ignominia...⁸⁸ (Vega Armentero, c. 1886, p. 53).

This is certainly not Realism as Zola understood it or advocated it. There is no detached impartial objective or scientific observation of reality, but rather a strongly politicized stance written from the self, truer to the romantic dictum of the beginnings of the nineteenth century than to the realist renovation: “It is a fundamental trait of the Romantic that he invariably apprehends the outer world through the mirror of his ego as against the objective approach of the Realist” (Furst, 1979, p. 58). After all, the Romanticism/Naturalism debate in Spain was never a literary one: choosing Zola as a mentor was not so much an aesthetic position but a political one. Ever since the beginning of the century France would represent the transgression and the threat to the Spanish motherland's traditional values: “España se enorgullecía tanto del aislamiento que implicaba el respeto a las tradiciones como de su persistente recelo ante todo aquello que se considerara extranjero⁸⁹” (López Santos, 2010, p.

⁸⁸ Trans: “Suddenly he had an image of the prison, with its stench; then the cell, dark and dank, the prison uniform, the handcuffs and chains, the hard work, the brutality of the guards”.

⁸⁹ Trans: “Spain was as proud of the isolation derived from its traditionalism as its mistrust of whatever was regarded foreign”.

23). These calls of arms to the national essences are also characteristic of the Restoration, when “afrancesamiento”⁹⁰ still retained the negative connotations of nearly hundred years earlier. Naturalism was but an umbrella term under which all sorts of what was regarded obscene by the older, conservative generation of (mainly, but not exclusively) old fashioned romantics considered filth. The real influences of these Radical Naturalists are to be found not only in Zola, but also in Victor Hugo, as mentioned above and in the popular literature of the nineteenth century to which, as López Santos has proved, Spain was not totally alien:

Es cierto que el volumen de obras fantásticas fue infinitamente menor al volumen de novelas racionalistas [López Santos is specifically referring to two different types of Gothic novels], no obstante, también se accedió a la vertiente más irracional del género a través de las obras francesas⁹¹ (López Santos, 2010, p. 46).

Due to the strict censorship upon novels in Spain at the beginning of the nineteenth century publishers, authors, translator and adapters had to considerably tone down the fantastic, supernatural component of Gothic works which came from abroad (namely Great Britain, France and Germany) emphasizing instead the sentimental aspects of the mode, which is the type of influence which eventually would be felt upon Radical naturalists' works.

Thus, and while there are no supernatural occurrences in Radical Naturalism, these plots pay servitude to a political agenda which needs of twisted occurrences which transcend late nineteenth century Realism and revert back to the popular novels (the French format of the *Feuilleton*) of the midst of the century. At the same time these sketches of bourgeois brutality⁹² and evil priesthood or degraded religious values need to be built in a metaphorical/symbolical level as much as in a realistic one. After all the object of Gothic literature is to explore the possibilities of fear through either ineffable horror and/or physical terror. But terror also is by definition the most difficult to articulate in a realistic manner (that would be better for the horror and its physicality).

⁹⁰ Trans: “Frenchification”.

⁹¹ Trans: “It is true that the amount of fantastic works was considerably lower than the number of rationalist novels, however readers could access the most irrational branch of the genre through French works”.

⁹² A brutality that is always a characterising feature of the *pater familias*.

In its clear, frank depiction of the horror and the exploitation of the social fears which await their readers the narrative falls in the sort of obscenity which in turn becomes itself a threat to the *status quo*. It could be argued for example that the Gothic novels of the classical period populated by heroines who perpetuated the submissive female role were at the same time the object of rather acrid censorship by the dominant discourses. Radical naturalist novels, heavily indebted to the Gothic tradition that as López Santos proves was not altogether unknown in Spain can also provide significant examples of the processes by which Gothic aesthetics are characterised by ambiguity. Aesthetics and politics are heavily ideological in the period dealt with here: for Radical Naturalists their aesthetic creed was not so much a novelistic choice or a narrative poetic but an ideological stance: it is not difficult to see how aesthetically they were much closer to the reactionary romantics of the previous generation.

3.1 The Anticlerical Idiom in “Radical Naturalism”

Radical naturalists drew from a considerable decay in the public image of priests at the time which was spurring a very strong anticlerical feeling, especially (but not only) in big cities and among the urban lower classes (see Shubert, 1990, pp.165-166). More specifically in Madrid and due to the problems linked to the fact that the capital was subject to the authority of the diocese of Toledo⁹³ the image of both church and priesthood was left considerably compromised. Church authority could not be exercised with due rigour because of the lack of means to do so:

Madrid, como ciudad muy populosa, favorece ciertas licencias, encubre las faltas, y muchos que no pueden vivir según su índole en las poblaciones pequeñas, campan aquí por sus respetos, sin que nadie se meta con ellos. En Madrid hay muchos clérigos que apenas usan el traje eclesiástico; otros frecuentan los cafés y aun sitios peores; los hay que dicen dos o tres misas al día, en diferentes iglesias, y por fin, las prácticas rigurosas del celibato eclesiástico no suelen ser, en bastantes casos, más que una

⁹³ Paradoxically despite being the capital of the nation Madrid did not have its own consecrated cathedral until 1993.

vana fórmula⁹⁴ (Pérez Galdós, 2011 [1886], p.64).

Note, that atheism or plain anticlericalism are not an inherent characteristic of Zolaesque naturalist aesthetics: the polemic between Pardo Bazán – one of Spanish leading practitioner of the aesthetics and one of its most famous (if not notorious) disseminators also – and Zola himself shows this:

Zola (...) ve en mi a un disidente o heterodoxo (sic), y se da cuenta exacta del abismo que media entre mis ideas filosóficas y religiosas y las suyas, aunque no se detenga (ni era cosa de que se detuviese) a explicarse mi fórmula, que considero más ancha y larga, y por lo tanto más humana que la suya⁹⁵ (Pardo Bazán, 1989 [1883], p. 116).

Pardo Bazán alludes to the fact that Zola, in a letter to Albert Savine claimed that her Naturalism was “puramente formal, artístico y literario”⁹⁶ given that she was a “católica ferviente militante”⁹⁷ (Pardo Bazán, 1989 [1883], p. 122) as opposed, supposedly, to a committed working one, with real, concrete and specific applications to the study of humankind. For Pardo Bazán would “find the truth in the middle of the road” (Brown, 1957, p. 46). For her the naturalist method resulted in a serious representational limitation which paralleled that of the preceding idealism: “(...) by the same token the idealized heroes of the romantic school are even more objectionable to her than those of Zola, for at least he did not create any people of the proportions of Lamartine’s Raphael” (Brown, 1957, p. 53). Hence the influence not so much of Zola’s works but of what they represented in the Spanish mind frame of the Restoration period was considerable and not restricted only to the self-styled naturalists. Zola was in the eyes of his Spanish contemporaries, not so much a naturalist, but a foreign (and a Frenchman, for that) avant-garde novelist. This is what turned him into one of the most

⁹⁴ Trans: “Madrid, being a densely populated city, enables licentiousness, hides wrong-doing and many [priests] who would not be able to live as they would find themselves inclined to elsewhere, do as they please here. There is many a priest in Madrid who does not don the cassock; some others who are regulars of cafes and even worse places; others who will sing mass two or three times a day, in different parishes; and finally, there is many a case in which celibacy is but a mere formality”.

⁹⁵ Trans: “Zola sees in me a dissident, a heterodox, and realises that there is but an abyss between my philosophical and religious ideas and his; and he does not stop to consider my formulation [of Naturalism] which I find deeper (and more humane) than his”.

⁹⁶ Trans: “Purely formal: artistic and literary”.

⁹⁷ Trans: “fervent militant Catholic”.

despised authors among the reactionaries and one of the best loved ones among the revolutionaries, a fact which produced a few biased miss-readings of his literary corpus. France was not so much a real entity; not so much a nation, but a symbol; a symbol of what was not Spanish, as Blanco argues:

Haunted by the not-so-distant Napoleonic incursion as well as the memory of the “Frenchification” [sic] of Spain begun in the eighteenth-century, the copious amount of translated literature, and the growing presence of foreign capital and culture, Spain was imagined as a boundaryless nation subject to invasion and subjugation. For the literary criticism of the period, this sense of a lack of firm boundaries translated into an obsessive fear of cultural invasion which resulted in what ‘Clarín’ calls ‘intellectual patriotism’ (Beser 163) (Blanco, 1995, p. 123).

The anticlerical feeling was not new, as it certainly was not new either its articulation within a narrative framework⁹⁸ but certain (mis)interpretation of Zolaesque Naturalism in combination with all the precedent literary discursive modes of the nineteenth century (namely the Gothic) provided a new far more complex articulation of all these motifs. A Spanish lecherous priest is precisely the main character of one of the Gothic novels *par excellence*: Mathew Lewis’ *The Monk*. *The Monk* was in fact fairly well known in Spain during the nineteenth century, as López Santos proves in her work on the Gothic novel in Spain⁹⁹. The “evil priest” is in its own right one of the most enduring Gothic motifs¹⁰⁰. Religious fanaticism is another staple of both Gothic and Radical Naturalist novels, which is further explored through these liminal characters who belong to a church they defile with their behaviour. Such characters had already been articulated within a literary framework in Gothic works such as Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* – which was known in Spain at the time through the translation of

⁹⁸ *Cornelia Bororquia o la víctima de la Inquisición* by Luis Gutiérrez, widely regarded as one of the first (if not the first) Spanish anticlerical novel dates back from 1801.

⁹⁹ López Santos, 2010, p. 287.

¹⁰⁰ See for example, the character of Moncada, also a Spaniard, in Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*, who is the mouthpiece of the anti-Catholic rhetoric of Maturin’s novel; or the protagonist of James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* whose excesses constitute a denunciation of religious over-zeal.

Pigault-Maubaillarcq's French version – or the two examples cited above (López Santos, 2010, p.288). As per naturalist aesthetics, Sawa (and most certainly López Bago) must have had both Zola's *La Curée* (1871) and *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret* (1875) in mind: *La Curée* is the first of Zola's novels to introduce incest, a motif which would feature heavily in the whole of the Rougon-Macquart series and also was an important influence on José Zahonero (1853-1931) a Spanish naturalist who produced a Spanish version entitled *La carnaza* (1885) and the aforementioned *El cura*, by López Bago. As per *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret* is the story of how during a period of amnesia brought over by an obsessive cult of the Virgin Mary young priest Serge falls in love with the nurse who sees to him during his amnesia, subsequently breaking his vows. *La Curée* was first published in Spanish translation (*La ralea*) in 1882 and *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret* was published with the title *La caída del padre Mouret* in 1887¹⁰¹ – a year after *Crimen legal* was published, however “... los principales autores españoles no tenían que esperar hasta que se tradujesen las obras de los franceses: ya las conocían en su forma original”¹⁰² (Pattison, 1965, p. 50).

These two novels (or the whole of Zola's corpus, for that matter) were by no means the only source of the Radical Naturalists violent anticlerical diatribes, relevant as they are. Although the anticlerical tradition in Spanish literature can be traced back as far as the Middle Ages¹⁰³ the roots of modern Spanish anticlericalism are firmly grounded in the beginnings of the nineteenth century:

A commitment to Liberalism, which mandated that the individual be free in his spiritual, economic, ethical, and political life, necessitated significant changes in the relationship between the state and the Church, and between the state and the individual¹⁰⁴ (Sanabria, 2009, p.14).

Besides, it is not until the very beginnings of the nineteenth century that this tradition

¹⁰¹ For a bibliography of Zola's works Spanish versions see Pattison, 1965, chapter IV.

¹⁰² Trans: “main Spanish authors did not have to wait for French translations: they knew the French originals already”.

¹⁰³ See Caro Baroja, Julio 1980.

¹⁰⁴ See also Sanabria, 2009, p.21 on the relationship between the Napoleonic era and its aftermath in Spain and modern Spanish anticlericalism.

becomes relevant in terms of the literary works produced, their quality and their impact among the public opinion, definitely blooming into a solid corpus during the Restoration: “anticlericalism was also a prominent characteristic of the highest levels of Spanish literary art. Many of the greatest modern novelists and playwrights made this [anticlericalism] the theme of their work” (Schubert, 1990, p.166). *Cornelia Bororquia o la víctima de la Inquisición* (1801), now widely acknowledged to be one of the first modern articulations of anticlericalism in Spanish literature, if not the very first one, is rich in elements and motifs which will be replicated by the Radical Naturalists of the Restoration, elements such as imprisonment and unbridled lust which are articulated thanks to the Gothic idiom and its emphasis on the corporeal.

3.2 The Middle Classes Cultural Idiom in “Radical Naturalism”

If one of the main targets of Radical Naturalists rather bilious critic is the Spanish Roman Catholic Church, it is because among other reasons, its conservatism is one of the identity signs and represents the aspirations of what Shubert calls “the middling classes”: “a large, diverse and confusing agglomeration” stretching “between the working class and the elite” which represented approximately 2.7% of the population in 1865 (Shubert, 1990, p. 111); with very little influence in the socio-political arena¹⁰⁵ and lacking in initiative and push, a bit like Spain itself:

By the turn of the twentieth century, the machinery of the Spanish state pointed inexorably to its 'weak yet heavy' nature. The image of 'a pen-wielding army' directing others towards endless form-filling and meeting every enquiry with an instruction to come back tomorrow, still resonated thirty, fifty, even a hundred years later (Vincent, 2007, p. 54 and 55).

¹⁰⁵ Gonzalo Sobejano refers to it in very similar terms as Shubert above: “Entre la aristocracia antaño prepotente y el pueblo bajo, sumido en su servidumbre, se va interponiendo cada día con mayor evidencia la masa burguesa, endeble aún pero ya acuciada y acuciante” Sobejano, Gonzalo “ ‘Épater le bourgeois’ en la España literaria de 1900” (Alicante : Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2009) http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/pater-le-bourgeois-en-la-espaa-literaria-de-1900-0/html/0231ad36-82b2-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_9.html#l_0 (Accessed on 21/03/2014). Trans: “The bourgeoisie mass, weak still, but already emboldened, wedges itself between the arrogant aristocracy of yesteryear and the lowest classes”.

Naturally this army of pen-wielding office clerks (and most importantly, the symbols with which they constructed their identity) was composed by that petty bourgeoisie whom the Radical Naturalists and bohemians had as the object of their hate. In his article about the way the expression *épater le bourgeois* permeated Spanish literature since its inception, Gonzalo Sobejano establishes a dichotomy which illuminates considerably the Radical Naturalist idiom – although he identifies it with the later bohemian movements of which Sawa himself would become one of the most relevant representatives after his return from France: “Al profesionalismo de la burguesía contraponen estos hombres [the author refers to some members of the “98 Generation”] su aprofesionalismo, al ahorro el despilfarro, a la familia la tertulia, al matrimonio el contubernio¹⁰⁶” (Sobejano, 2009). There is a very important component of Gothicism in the whole idea of “épater le bourgeois”. Gothic is after all the exploitation of the aesthetic possibilities of fear and social anxieties, and that is precisely what the Radical Naturalists are exploiting in their novels. Obviously, these fears are to be exploited through a medium which is recognisable in order to be successful and the Gothic was not altogether unknown:

A la hora de valorar el éxito editorial de las novelas de López Bago es preciso hacer hincapié en las deudas literarias contraídas por el autor. Resulta evidente la existencia de un parentesco directo entre sus obras y las técnicas cultivadas en la novela popular, que tanto predicamento tuvo entre los lectores del siglo XIX¹⁰⁷ (Fernández, 1995 p. 129).

That is precisely the way that the Restoration mentality created its own discordant voices such as Sawa’s (and by extension, López Bago and the other Radical Naturalists’ or the bohemian journalists’, for example):

fear is both the root and the product of the attempt to bring all things under rational

¹⁰⁶ Trans: “To bourgeoisie’s professionalism these men respond with amateurism; against thrift they answer with squandering; against family, with social life at clubs and cafes; against marriage with promiscuity”.

¹⁰⁷ Trans: “It is important to highlight the literary debts of López Bago when analysing his commercial success. It is obvious that there was a link between his own techniques and those of the popular novels – successful as it was among nineteenth century readers”.

control, and rationalism will be a self-defeating system because that which cannot be thus assimilated will therefore become all the more taboo; *reason will create its own enemies* (Punter, 1969, p. 27; emphasis added).

Although Punter here is dealing with the very circumstances of the birth of Gothic in the late eighteenth century the value of his appreciations about the nature of fear in literature still holds true in this specific context. These authors were themselves the children of the generation which got lost in the physical, geographical, ideological and social transitions of the period: from country to city, from wealth to middle class, from conservatism to liberalism¹⁰⁸. Paradoxically, it was the very middle class ethos which contested the dominant viewpoint or perspective. However, this ethos was so imbued with the values which it was contesting, that it never posed an actual alternative to bourgeois culture. The problem was that these attempts at creating an alternative discourse to the dominant one were articulated around the same set of discourses which it attempted to challenge:

Es obvio que tanto el arte por el arte como el Naturalismo, incluso en los casos de antiburguesismo militante, no son alternativas a un arte ideológicamente burgués, sino, en los casos más radicales, manifestaciones discrepantes dentro de una ideología burguesa, floraciones de sus contradicciones internas que anuncian su crisis¹⁰⁹ (Oleza, 1976, p. 13).

This commodification of personal fears and social anxieties into a single body of work constitute the core values of the Gothic mode. The way in which human bodies become a source of concern in the period and the way this concern is articulated by the several different idioms and literary traditions available (anticlericalism, the prostitution novel, the romantic sensibilities of the historical novel and the popular instalments novel, the influence of Victor

¹⁰⁸ Sawa's grandfather was down in the census as "Hacendado" or "Propietario" (trans. "landowner") in the 1840s and 1850s; see Correa Ramón, 2008, p. 25. López Bago's father was a "gobernador civil" – the highest political authority in a given province in Spain at the time (see Fernández, 2005a [1885], p. 21).

¹⁰⁹ Trans: "It is obvious that both art for art's sake and Naturalism, even in those cases of militant anti-bourgeoisie stance, are not alternatives to an ideologically bourgeois art, but, in their most radical instances, dissenting opinions within the same bourgeois ideology, manifestations of its own internal contradictions which announce the crisis to come".

Hugo, contemporary Realism and Zola's Naturalism, and the peculiar blend of all these that Radical Naturalism itself represents) only attest to the dynamic characteristics of the Gothic as a mode and the reasons it has survived (rather healthily) well into the twenty-first century. At this early stage of capitalism manpower was still the source of economy: the bodies of the lower classes were the very source of income for those classes. Even in those cases when prostitutes, whose bodies it could be argued were even more commodified than their contemporaries, conquered the higher economic echelons of society, they were always regarded as just prostitutes. Their fortunes never seem to last long and even if they did their categorisation always is that of the *cocottes*; intruder in the parlours of the bourgeois with a very specific category of their own, regardless of income. Conversely, the bodies of the middle and upper classes were the media through which wealth was channelled and distributed. There is thus a very strong emphasis placed upon material culture, upon whatever is physical and tangible. Late nineteenth century culture is by taking the human body as a measure of its (economic) concerns far more concrete and tangible than imagined or expected at first sight. Aesthetically, the superation of romantic aesthetics (and their links to abstraction, spirituality and idealism) attest to this. Because it is in the very nature of Gothic culture to exploit the contemporary fears of its public and Radical Naturalists are so gladly participating of the expressive conventions and possibilities it opens up for them, their novels are to be loaded with strong references to the petit bourgeois (material) culture and the symbolic associations linked to those. The home is a good example:

Since homes constitute both ideal and material realities, efforts to understand what they mean benefit greatly from analysis that combines both ways of looking at them. As an idea the nineteenth century home was represented as a space embodying all beneficial outcomes from the culture of domesticity and consumer culture, as well as an essential instrument for the acquisition of social distinction. As a reality, the home is always the result of compromise between social aspirations, daily requirements and economic possibility (Cruz, 2011, p. 67).

Despite this supposed weakness, this complacent impotency of the middle classes, here

was a social group which enjoyed considerable symbolic visibility and (eventually) massive cultural influence, and not only in Spain. On this transnational influence, for example, historian Eric Hobsbawm quotes how women emancipation “was pioneered and still almost entirely confined to the middle and – in a different form- the statistically less significant upper strata of society”; that is “the history of half the human race in our period [between 1875 and 1914] in the context of that of the Western middle classes, a relatively small group even within the countries of 'developed' and developing capitalism” (Hobsbawm, 2010, p. 192). The cultural initiative of a minority group within a minority social class would set the standard for generations to come. Not for nothing visibility is precisely what they were craving, what they were after, if nothing else, given that this was all they could really aspire to: neither rich, nor poor, these bourgeois would place a considerable importance in material culture. Eventually this visibility would grant them the cultural influence they gained. Shubert for example brings up the “cuadros de costumbres” (vignettes) of the satirist Antonio Flores where Flores criticized that the rooms to entertain guests were far more sumptuous than those where the family had to actually dwell (Shubert, 1990, p. 111). No novelist of this generation – not only Radical Naturalists – was oblivious to this circumstance; hence they painstakingly catalogue the goods of, not so much the protagonists of their novels, but their houses. The belongings of the characters are only relevant if and only if they can be seen, as a mere symbol, a representation. Palacio Valdés, who at the time could have matched Galdós in critical reception and sales, carefully dissected the nature of inter-class romantic liaisons in his works¹¹⁰ through the visibility of consumer's goods. In works such as *La espuma* (1890) – where the dwellings of the protagonists are described in thorough detail only as far as they are relevant for other characters, as if there were no sense of privacy, as if it were not worth it to build and awareness of goods for their own sake or from a strictly personal point of view but only in relation to their theatricality. In *La hermana San Sulpicio* (1889) where the Seville hosts of the protagonist display their poverty in a game of mirrors: they are aware that all their friends

¹¹⁰ He himself married a working class woman in 1899.

and relatives know of their poverty and still they don an impoverished image of their middle class self rather than compromise with working class aesthetic (more affordable) values. Multiple other examples can be brought up from other novelist such as the way in which Isidora's fall into prostitution runs parallel to her change in dwellings in Galdós' *La desheredada* (1881). In any case, and if the novels are realistic despite this intricate network of symbols the characters become is because this was actually quite an accurate portrait of the society at the time (or certain strata of that society to be precise): appearances rule the lives of the bourgeois. Eventually their importance would be in this aspect vindicated since it would be their cultural legacy which would endure not that of the aristocracy (loss as a social class) or the working class (which in Spain was constricted to the rural areas and would lose their identity signs with the progressive urbanization).

These class anxieties crystallize in the idea of family. Practically every single plot among the canonical novels of the period feature a family pre-eminently; such literary families are the means through which economic, political and social relations of the Spanish late nineteenth century Spaniards are analysed or discussed. The traditional, patriarchal family was not so much a real institution but an all-pervading concept, an ideal which provided the canon, standards and patterns with which reality is articulated: familial relations provide the idiom, the language with which not only class anxieties but the whole range of contemporary (i.e. Restoration) anxieties and fears are articulated through: concerns about the mental and physical health of both the individuals (individuals as citizens, members of families, workers), and the institutions (social, economic, religious and political) and the relationships between both. Take for example the way in which Galdós participates (and in that sense contributes to deepen and reinforce) this concept when describing Queen Isabel II:

El pudoroso Galdós, que se había sentido impresionado por la personalidad de la reina en la audiencia que le concedió en su exilio parisino, destaca en el artículo necrológico "La reina Isabel" (1904) la amabilidad "doméstica" de la soberana y su concepto de la

nación como “una familia grande”¹¹¹ (Fernández, 2008, p. 6).

The comment is to a certain extent a mere reinforcement, a reminder of a certain set of values which were imperative at the time. Galdós is just echoing what the purely female, womanly attributes of the queen (or any other woman for that matter) should be: within the familial context of the Spanish Restoration (and in the case of women that is the only context possible or available) women cannot grace “domestic kindness”.

Hence the allusions to the strong sense of “domesticity” of Isabel II are not casual either: the organisation of the state (or the way this organisation was conceptualised) would run parallel to that of the family and vice versa. Especially so in the Spanish political arena of the nineteenth century when whole cabinets followed each other sometimes within a few months. The idea of a strong leader (i.e. authoritarian, virile father – or occasionally brother and/or husband/fiancée, thus covering the whole wide spectrum of familial bonds) who could restore the faith and trust of the nation (i.e. his children, or rather female children, who are the ones to whom the qualities of submission and abnegation wanted to be attributed to for the sake of the family/nation) was rather appealing (and a rather easy to grasp allegory). This concept was so carefully and comprehensively articulated and delineated; so pervasive its presence – in literature, law, hygiene manuals, material culture, religious prescriptions... – that all nuances and possibilities related to the idea of family as state and state as family were explored. Sawa will in fact contribute to such proliferation in his works: each of the novels studied below explore different familial possibilities as mediated by the middle class ethos. Sawa explores the childless middle class marriage in *Crimen legal*; the fate of the orphaned middle class infant in *Criadero de curas*; and the perils of the middle class family which attempts to move above its station in *Noche*.

Emilia Pardo Bazán 's *Los pazos de Ulloa* (1886) and its continuation, *La madre naturaleza* (1887) – two of the finest examples of Literary Naturalism of the Restoration- are

¹¹¹ Trans: “Galdós, coy and impressed as he was by the queen’s personality, when he had an audience with her in her Parisian exile, highlights in his nechrological note about her the “domestic kindness” and her concept of nation as family”.

both explorations of familial legitimacy and socio-economic power in the light of Gothic conventions. Thus, the economic fortunes of the two half-siblings of the novels differ considerably, legitimacy being a decisive factor in this disparity. The novels Palacio Valdés produced in the 1880s (at the same time Sawa was writing his) are also a good example of how the economic and the familial share a common anxiety ground: his novels are all explorations of the socio-economic implications of courting and marriage. *El idilio de un enfermo* (1884), for example, is an exploration of the way class differences interfere in the courtship between the two protagonists. The terms however could be successfully inverted in order to interpret the novel which could also be read as the way courtship outside certain social boundaries can distort social harmony. However, the presence of the familial is not restricted to the canonical corpus and it is also capital in the articulation of the non-canonical literary production.

Radical Naturalist novels such as *La prostituta* (1884) by López Bago, Remigio Vega Armentero's novel from 1890 *¿Loco o delincuente?* and most importantly, all Sawa's novels studied in this thesis explore issues of legitimacy and its economic implications in one way or another. For example, the protagonist of *La prostituta*, the prostitute known as 'la pálida' is responsible for the demise of the house of Riosucio in that she transmits syphilis to its legitimate inheritor – wealth being passed on through family channels. Vega Armentero frames his autobiographical tale of madness and legal responsibility in a context of marital unfaithfulness. *Crimen legal* by Sawa is an exploitation of some of the most deeply rooted fears among Spanish society of the late nineteenth century, which is after all what Gothic has been doing since its inception, namely the corroding effects of illegitimacy in the socio-economic fabric, embodied by prostitutes; insecurity about social mobility and visibility among the new emerging classes and the re-organisation of the popular ethos in the light of industrialization.

Prostitution was a topic which was especially attractive to the late nineteenth century realist authors and even more so to the (so called and self-called) naturalists since in the prostitute's body they could develop complex metaphors and symbols of illness and

decadence. Prostitutes were the (main) transmitters of syphilis which was the malady par excellence of the second half of the century and which was full of complex connotations. Syphilis was much more than just an illness: it was a social illness which could corrupt families. In a way that has been exemplified by Susan Sontag in *Illness as Metaphor* the prostitute became feared because she could transmit syphilis with its horrible connotations of familial disintegration and degeneration. Eventually the prostitute itself will become this symbol as the agent of corruption of the familial life. Prostitution does not necessarily pose a threat to the family: it is the construction of the prostitute as a social malady (with all connotations of transmission, contagion, long term sufferings and death which characterises syphilis) that does. In that sense, and going back to Sawa, it is symbolically significant that the chapter in *Noche* with which the demise of the whole family is foretold, ends precisely on the eldest daughter becoming a prostitute.

4. Sawa's Scholarship Reviewed

A considerable amount of scholarship about Sawa has traditionally been linked to the many ramifications and implications of his avowed allegiance to the (radical) naturalist movement and to the definition of such movement (see Lozano Marco, 1983; Lissorgues, 1988; Gutiérrez Carbajo, 1991 and 2009; Correa Ramón, 1993 and 2012 and Puebla Isla, 2006). Lozano Marco for example, characterised *La Prostituta* and *La Pálida* (both from 1884 by Eduardo López Bago) as paradigmatic examples of Radical Naturalist aesthetics:

Todo es sombrío; se potencia lo repugnante; los seres encanallados triunfan, mientras que los pocos personajes bondadosos son unas víctimas destinadas a perecer; *el determinismo fisiológico y del medio es implacable*; y, sobre todo ello, en los argumentos predomina lo efectista y desmesurado¹¹² (Lozano Marco, 1983, p. 348; emphasis added).

Similarly, Correa's introduction to the most recent edition of *Crimen legal* (2012) insists on a comparative approach between Zola's theoretical principles and Sawa's oeuvre by listing the key aspects of Naturalism alongside episodes of the novel where these feature prominently. Thus, she mentions the force of genetic inheritance (Correa Ramón, 2012 [1886], p.20), the animalisation of certain characters (Correa Ramón, 2012 [1886]. p. 21), experimental science as the driving force behind the plot (Correa, 2012 [1886]. p. 23) and anticlericalism (Correa, 2012 [1886]. p. 24). Likewise Gutiérrez Carbajo mentions "la crítica social, el recurso a la ciencia experimental, el determinismo de la herencia y del medio, el erotismo, el pesimismo extremado, el anticlericalismo"¹¹³ (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2009, p. 40).

¹¹² Trans: "Everything is sombre; repulsiveness is emphasized; evil characters triumph whereas benign characters perish; physiological and environmental determinism is unavoidable and above all this, excesses are used to reinforce all arguments".

¹¹³ "Social criticism, resorting to experimental science, environmental and genetic determinism, erotism, deep rooted pessimism, anticlericalism".

I will argue in this thesis however, that these features of Sawa's novels can be explained by the strong influence of, on the one hand, French social Romanticism¹¹⁴ and, on the other, different manifestations of the popular novel. This popular novel was rich in Gothic leitmotifs, including imprisonment, distorted bodies and abusive or strained familial relations, which went through a revival at the end of the nineteenth century. Whereas the influence of French Romanticism and popular novel have been acknowledged in passing by the scholars listed below my research pioneers the deep connection between Gothic aesthetics and Sawa's novels.

The influences of popular narratives in instalments had been noted by Zavala and Pattison (in Zavala, 1971, p. 121 and 175; and Pattison, 1965, p. 136) as Lozano Marco points out in his article (1983, p. 348). There are also references in general histories of literature to Sawa and the other Radical Naturalists where the strong influence of Victor Hugo, which ties in with the Radical Naturalists dependence on Gothicism and sentimentality of Romanticism (see Zavala 1982; Pedraza Jimenez and Rodríguez Caceres 1983; Fernández 1998a and 1998b) is reviewed. However, they still have not been explored in depth. Thus, my research looks into the Gothic elements that Sawa's narratives borrowed from this popular fiction of the nineteenth century. I intend this line of research to be supported by the theoretical developments of the last decades and their application to body theory and body discourse. With the exceptions of Andrea Villa, whose article is pioneering in adopting Kristeva's concept of the abject in her approach to Sawa's *Noche* (Villa, 2013) and Travis Landry, who devotes a chapter of his book on Spanish literature and Darwinism to Sawa's *Noche*, Sawa scholars have traditionally been reluctant to rely on post-structuralist approaches. Villa's conception of the abject is applied to nineteenth century Spanish society by conceiving the "fallen woman" as the social abject which questions societal limits. Thus, she establishes a parallel with Kristeva's theories by which the abject – on an individual level – is the extreme physical reaction to a threat posed

¹¹⁴ Works by French Romantics (Hugo, George Sand) who framed socialist ideals within appealing theatre plays or fiction narratives for the masses (Evans, 1951, p. 29).

to a given subject's identity limits. Villa's work merges numerous relevant concepts to Sawa's criticism in a coherent and cohesive reading which embodies societal perceptions of femininity with body theory and perfectly illustrates the need for a major theoretical input in the study of Sawa of which hers is so far the only available example. Furthermore, Travis Landry focuses his research on, not so much the influence of Darwinism on Sawa's *Noche*, but rather on how the Darwinist idiom permeates the literary discourse of the Spanish writers of the period. Landry's approach is, in that sense, rather subtle. Instead of opting for tracing examples in the novel of alleged instances of social Darwinism, he focuses on the consequences of the paradigm shift that Darwinism meant¹¹⁵.

The pioneering work in contemporary Sawa's studies is that of Allen W. Phillips (*Alejandro Sawa, Mito y realidad* from 1976): this is not only the first work to be written within an academic environment, but also the first book-length monography devoted entirely to Sawa. Its main aim was to rescue the real author hidden underneath Max Estrella, the old bohemian protagonist of Valle Inclán's play *Luces de bohemia* (1920)¹¹⁶. As such, half of the volume is devoted to the biography and background of Sawa: "He intentado en este libro ofrecer a los lectores de hoy una semblanza literaria de Alejandro Sawa (1862-1909), escritor español poco menos que olvidado ahora¹¹⁷" (Phillips, 1976, p.9). In that same line of recuperation and restoration, Iris Zavala edited in 1977 the first modern edition – and second only after its original publication in 1910 – of posthumous Sawa's work *Iluminaciones en la sombra*, arguably a masterpiece of modernist literature, a difficult work with partakes in different genres: "La obra se compone de impresiones, recuerdos, iconografías o museos interiores de amigos parisinos, de políticos;

¹¹⁵ For the concept of paradigm shift see Kuhn (2012) [1962].

¹¹⁶ Whereas the most popular character Sawa inspired is arguably Max Estrella, Sawa – as the bohemian par excellence – also inspired several characters in different works by Baroja and others: "La crítica ha rastreado la literaturización de Sawa, entre otras obras, en las siguientes: *Alborada*, de Ernesto Bark, *Aurora Roja* (1904), *Los últimos románticos* (1906), *El árbol de la ciencia* (1911), de Pío Baroja, y *Luces de bohemia* (1920) de Valle-Inclán (Mbarga, 2001, p. 23).

¹¹⁷ Trans: "In this book I have attempted to offer readers a literary sketch of Alejandro Sawa (1862-1909) a practically unknown author these days".

divagaciones sentimentales, paisajes (...) El libro – o los apuntes –son a menudo poemas vastos y profundos de los miserables¹¹⁸ (Zavala, 2008, p. XLII).

Zavala's prologue is a contextualization of those aspects of the second half of the European nineteenth century which had a direct bearing on Sawa's life and work. Ambitious in scope, it details the origins of the bohemian movements and traces the genealogy of the decadents of the beginning of the twentieth century back to the first bohemians featured by Murguer (1822-1861, author of *Scènes de la vie de bohème* – "Scenes of Bohemian Life") and who were characterised by "originalidad, cosmopolitismo, esteticismo¹¹⁹" (Zavala, 2008, p. VII). The evolution undergone by the ideas associated to Bohemian life would explain the disparity not only among Bohemians themselves, but also among their respective ideological and aesthetical creeds and works, and the personal contradictions they would occasionally sustain:

Bohemia, 'proletariado intelectual' la definió Bark, explotada por publicistas y editores, que se une a las voces de alerta, analizando el problema nacional y sus causas y proponiendo remedios. Pero algunos jóvenes apuntaban muy lejos y, en torno al 'desastre' se creó la polarización entre lo que llamaron Gente Vieja y Gente Nueva. Entre los últimos figuraban desde serios y circunspectos profesores universitarios hasta bohemios recalcitrantes¹²⁰ (Zavala, 2008, p. XV).

That same prologue would be reprinted again in 2009 – albeit corrected and augmented – in the edition of Sawa's journalistic articles that Emilio Chavarría did of Sawa's journalistic oeuvre (Chavarría, 2008). The context offered by Zavala has proved incredibly useful when

¹¹⁸ Trans: "The work is made up of impressions, memories, iconographies or interior museums of Parisian friends, of politicians, sentimental musings, landscapes (...) The book – or rather, the notes – are often deep and vast poems about the disowned".

¹¹⁹ Trans: "Originality, cosmopolitanism, aestheticism".

¹²⁰ Trans: "Bohemia, 'intellectual lumpen', as defined by Bark, exploited by publicists and publishers, which joins the warnings, analyses the national problem and its causes and suggest remedies. But some of the younger bohemians felt a higher call, and around the loss of the colonies two groups were formed, the Old People and the Young People. Among the latter a mixture and serious, solemn university professors and recalcitrant bohemians".

re-assessing the actual linkage of the Radical Naturalists to the Zolaesque realist school. Her nuanced description of the fin-de-siècle bohemians as a heterogeneous group loosely linked together by a more or less defined anti-bourgeois ethos¹²¹ implicitly explains the multitude of discourses within Sawa's work, and its relationship with other idioms. Based on this, my thesis will research some of these discourses in order to address the problems derived from framing Sawa's works within the tenets of Zolaesque naturalism, namely its limiting and constraining nature.

Finally, and if Phillips produced the first academic monography and Zavala gave to print the first modern edition of a work by Sawa, Gilbert Paolini would be the first academic to publish an article in a peer-reviewed journal two years later, in 1979. There, Paolini would start the line of research which has been characteristic of his approaches to Sawa's fiction: the relations between the humanities and scientific knowledge in the light of the psychopathologies which according to Paolini some of Sawa's characters suffer. He further explores these topics in "Alejandro Sawa, *Crimen legal* y la antropología criminal" from 1984; "*Noche*, novela de Alejandro Sawa en el ambiente científico de la década de 1880" (1984) and "Ambición, pasión y muerte en una novela de Alejandro Sawa: Análisis de patología femenil" from 1986. There is obviously at the core of these studies a concern with the body – a key aspect of my own research. However, and despite this common aspect, my thesis takes a different approach. Paolini bridges a research gap by bringing to the forefront of research the fluid relationship between different idioms in the late nineteenth century; however, and since the body itself became the source of a rather complex and nuanced idiom, there are multitude ways of articulating it – scientifism being just one among many other. My research will in fact implicitly question whether Paolini's use of scientifism is the most fruitful approach possible and will consider whether such approach might not have been actually mediated by a flawed preconception of Sawa's work as "naturalist".

¹²¹ On anti-bourgeoise reaction among Spanish bohemians see also Sobejano, 2009.

Scientifism was, in any case, not entirely at odds with Gothic aesthetics as some of the Gothic revival masterworks of the British tradition prove, such as *The Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde* (1886), *The Great God Pan* (1890) and *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), but this connection is not touched upon by Paolini's articles.

Traditionally and on top of the need to distance Sawa from Max Estrella, and the relations of his works with the scientific idiom, two of the other main areas of research have been the relationship between Sawa and his mentor, Eduardo López Bago, and their adscriptions (and their novels') to naturalist tendencies, movements and aesthetics. Sawa's biography has also received a considerable amount of attention within the contextual framework of the finisecular Spanish bohemian movements, as illustrated by Zavala's works.

The aesthetic relations between Alejandro Sawa, Eduardo López Bago and the other Radical Naturalists, were explored by Miguel Angel Lozano Marco in his 1983 article: "El Naturalismo radical: Eduardo López Bago. Un texto desconocido de Alejandro Sawa". The text mentioned in the article is a poetics produced by Sawa in 1885 (the epilogue that Sawa produced for López Bago's *El cura*). By comparing both authors Lozano Marco highlights some of the dearest topics of not of the authors themselves, but also of the scholarly criticism that was being (and was to be) written: a preference for whatever is sordid and ugly; the influence of the romantic idiom and Zolaesque poetics and the violent scorn of the middle classes (Lozano Marco, 1983, p.347, 348 and 351 respectively).

There are almost 20 years between the publication of Phillips work and the second monographic work to be entirely and exclusively devoted to Alejandro Sawa and his novels: *Alejandro Sawa y el Naturalismo literario* by Amelina Correa Ramón from 1993. This work can be framed within a general resurgence in academic interest of non-canonical writers, at a time when studies in nineteenth century Spanish literature were saturated with works on Galdós, Clarín and Pardo Bazán: for example more than half of the articles on nineteenth century Spanish Realism/Naturalism published in the journal *Hispania* up to 1998 (over more than eight decades) had been about Galdós; and approximately a fifth of the total had been

devoted to Pardo Bazán (see Bly, 1998, p. 811). It is worth mentioning that as part of this renewed interest, Pura Fernández published her monograph on López Bago in 1995 which is extremely relevant to studies on Alejandro Sawa given the mentoring and friendship of Bago. Fernández's work deals mainly with the conditions of the literary market, which results very illuminating when unravelling the relation between the Radical Naturalists and popular literature. López Bago's novels were extremely profitable, which would explain for example the radical evolution of Sawa, from a self-styled naturalist with a penchant for the morbid (possibly in need of a quick and easy income) to the literary refined aesthete of his last years.

The emphasis of *Alejandro Sawa y el Naturalismo literario* is on rescuing the writer Sawa was once, shadowed until that moment by the quasi-fictional character he became through Valle-Inclán's treatment of his persona. Correa Ramón thus compiles a series of motifs – such as culturalism and a liberating proto-feminist erotism characteristic of the whole of Sawa's work. Despite its difficult relationship with the canon established by the realist authors –she concludes- his status as an author is “un interesante síntoma de la compleja problemática finisecular¹²²” (Correa Ramón, 1993, p. 173).

The other major book-long contribution to the criticism of the work of Alejandro Sawa, Consuelo Puebla Isla's *La representación de la mujer en la narrativa de Alejandro Sawa* from 2006, considers the influence of the scientific idiom (namely Cesare Lombroso's physiognomics) in the representation of the feminine in Sawa's works. Italian Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) was arguably the father of modern criminology. His contributions to the field can be roughly summarized as a conception of the criminal as someone inherently different from the human norm (physical and psychological). The implication of his studies is that the natural born criminal could be identified by certain physical traits and/or hereditary illnesses such as epilepsy – physiognomics is the (pseudo)science by which physical

¹²² Trans: “an interesting symptom of the complexity of the problems characteristic of the fin-de-siècle”.

appearance can be symptomatic of certain behaviours or aspects of the character (for all information on Lombroso see Maristany, 1973, p. 8-9 and 25-26).

This work considers in depth certain aspects that had already been touched upon by Paolini in his articles on criminal anthropology and the novels of Sawa. Puebla Isla deploys an overwhelming knowledge of the history of the discipline of physiognomics (and other “sister” disciplines, such as “phrenology” and “criminal anthropology”) and her conclusions when applying those to the representation of Ricardo, male protagonist of *Crimen legal* result in a fruitful observation on the criminal characterisation of the character through body discourse.

The work, however, considers only very superficially the – potentially – conflicting relationship with other representational idioms. For example, while well aware of the political and ideological conflicts at the core of *Crimen legal* (namely the furious anticlerical and anti-bourgeois discourses) Puebla does not tie those in with the representational idioms of those conflicts (see Puebla Isla, 2006, p. 60-61). Furthermore, and despite a very comprehensive analysis of the physiognomic idiom she does not consider the romantic idiom (despite the awareness of the influence of Victor Hugo and Eugene Sue, see pp. 64-66) in any substantial depth. Such consideration within the right theoretical frame would have put her findings in a new fresh perspective. The use (and abuse) of medicine and science – powerful population control idioms – sits a priori uncomfortably with the alleged revolutionary idea(l)s of Sawa (and by extension, of the other Radical Naturalists). My research addresses this dichotomy by showing evidence that despite the anticlerical and anti-bourgeois discourses of his novels Sawa can actually be a far sterner moralist than contemporary conservative authors such as Alarcón while at the same time challenging traditional morals with the Gothic obscenity of his passages.

In 1988 Yvan Lissorgues edited the conferences of the International Congress on Spanish Realism and Naturalism held in the university of Toulouse-le Mirail the year before and which were published with the title *Realismo y Naturalismo en España en la segunda mitad del siglo*

XIX. As part of this miscellaneous volume, Lissorgues himself contributed the article/conference: “El ‘Naturalismo Radical’: Eduardo López Bago (y Alejandro Sawa)”. The most interesting aspect of Lissorgues work is that in highlighting the fact that liberal forces do not constitute a homogeneous front against the monarchy of the Restoration he lists the multitude of discourses that can be found in the Radical Naturalists works: “reivindicación del libre examen, la difusión del ideal institucionista, la propagación del positivismo¹²³” (Lissorgues, 1988, p. 245). There is also in his words a vision of the fragmented reality which modernists, using revolutionary literary techniques such as the stream of consciousness and the collage, attempted to apprehend in their works and which the Radical Naturalists when partaking in different discourses were anticipating. My work aims to expand on some of these aspects in order to further contextualise Sawa’s work. Despite Lissorgues’ contributions, his is still an article which takes as departure point the assumption that López Bago and Sawa were both bona fide naturalists, without contesting the incongruences between the authors’ novels and the theories of Zola.

Despite the first bouts of academic interest during the 1980s only one of Sawa’s novels was re-edited during that decade: in 1988 a facsimile edition of *La mujer de todo el mundo* was published by Moreno Ávila editions with a prologue by journalist José Esteban. In his prologue Esteban alludes to the idea of the influence of social Romanticism: “[*La mujer de todo el mundo*] pertenece a ese género híbrido de Romanticismo con tendencia socialista que cultivaban por entonces Eugene Sue, Victor Hugo y Solie¹²⁴” (Esteban, 1988, p. IV). The other interesting aspect of his prologue is the mention of an erotism as inherent component of Sawa’s aesthetics, an aspect of Sawa’s narrative which would not be brought up again until much later, in the works of Correa Ramón (1993); Mbarga (1999) and Gutiérrez Carbajo (2009). *La mujer de todo el mundo* is a work that being closer aesthetically to the mannerisms

¹²³ Trans: “vindication of the [protestant concept] *liberum examen*; diffusion of the [laicist] project of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza and spread of positivism”.

¹²⁴ Trans: “[*La mujer de todo el mundo*] belongs to that hybrid of Romanticism and Socialism characteristic of Eugene Sue, Victor Hugo and Solie”.

of Romanticism has been neglected by academia (maybe echoing López Bago's feeling that *La mujer de todo el mundo* was not a naturalist novel – López Bago, 1999 [1886], p. 220). It would not be until 1999 that another edition of a novel by Sawa followed on the steps of *La mujer de todo el mundo*. Expert on Sawa's journalism, Jean Claude Mbarga gave to press a new edition of *Crimen legal* which reproduces the 1886 original one and that includes López Bago's original epilogue to the first edition of the novel¹²⁵. Mbarga would also be in charge of subsequent editions of *Noche* (in 2001) and *Declaración de un vencido* (in 2005). Mbarga himself is the author also of an introductory "semiotic" study of each of the novels. The feeling that there still was a need not just to rescue Sawa for the academic community is evident here: "El presente estudio se justifica por el hecho de que Alejandro Sawa sigue siendo casi desconocido por la crítica contemporánea¹²⁶" (Mbarga, 1999, p. 11). Jean Claude Mbarga for example aptly remarks on the multitude of discourses characteristic of Sawa's prose and the very close link of these and socio-political circumstances in his introduction to *Crimen legal*¹²⁷ (Mbarga, 1999, p.47). Other relevant contributions to Sawa's scholarship of Mbarga's introductory essay were his reference to the conflict between science and religion staged at the core of the novel¹²⁸ and his mention of the way eroticism articulates representations of societal corruption a rather original path very timidly explored so far¹²⁹.

The next contemporary edition to follow up on *Crimen legal*'s re-edition would be the joint publication in a single volume of *Declaración de un vencido* and *Criadero de curas* (both from 1888) in 1999 by Francisco Gutiérrez Carbajo. Gutiérrez Carbajo has devoted a considerable amount of his research to the Radical Naturalists and more specifically to Alejandro Sawa and

¹²⁵ See Sawa, Alejandro (1999) [1886].

¹²⁶ Trans: "This introduction is justified because Alejandro Sawa is still practically unknown to contemporary criticism".

¹²⁷ "[Sawa] utiliza rasgos procedentes del Naturalismo y del Romanticismo, y por su intensa radiografía crítica de la sociedad coincide con el pensamiento regeneracionista" Mbarga, 1999 [1886], p. 26. Trans: "[Sawa] uses features characteristic of Naturalism and Romanticism and his critic approach to society matches regenerationist thought".

¹²⁸ Correa Ramón reviews the secondary literature with regards to this issue in her own monograph (Correa Ramón, 1993, pp. 94-114).

¹²⁹ On eroticism and Radical Naturalism see also: Escudé Pont, 2002.

López Bago. His is also the critical edition of Sawa's *Declaración de un vencido* in 2009. In 1991 he produced an article where he reads the works of the Radical Naturalists under the light of Zola's theories (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 1991). While on the one hand this reading proves fruitful in a number of occasions, for example, the way he justifies the interest of the Radical Naturalists in physiology through the Zolaesque take on experimental science applied to fiction, (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 1991, p. 385), in others, he does not contextualise other aspects of these narratives which do not sit as comfortably with Zolaesque aesthetics, such as the rocambolesque plot of *Crimen legal* or López Bago's *La prostituta* (1884) in which dozens of brothels are run by a syphilitic marquis who sends the earnings to the Vatican (!) to atone for having transmitted a lethal syphilis to his wife.

Ten years later Gutiérrez Carbajo would write an article more specifically devoted to *Crimen legal* (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2001, p. 183-196) where he interestingly points out how resorting to the medical idiom was not exclusive of the medical naturalists and thus, he alludes to the canonical Pérez Galdós and Pardo Bazán contributing then to widen the context in which Radical Naturalists were producing their works. Specifically, Gutiérrez Carbajo mentions *La desheredada* and *La familia de Leon Roch* by Galdós, although interestingly enough, he does not mention *Tristana*. It is precisely in *Tristana* where the thorough description of an actual medical procedure by which the leg of the protagonist is removed, is included. *La tribuna*, by Pardo Bazán is the other canonical work mentioned within the context of the medical idiom by Gutiérrez Carbajo. He then proceeds to compare these canonical works to *Crimen legal*, considering *Crimen legal* as if it actually were a study – as Radical Naturalists themselves claimed their novels were¹³⁰. In doing so, Gutiérrez Carbajo

¹³⁰ Sawa writing about López Bago's first published volume (*Los amores. Obra entretenida* from 1876): “un estudio rudo e inexorable del corazón humano”. Trans: “... a rough and inevitable study of the human heart” (Sawa (1996) [1885] p.254) and a few pages on in p. 259: “López Bago remata su sombrío estudio de la prostitución con una gran aurora”. Trans: “López Bago culminates his gloomy study of prostitution with a new dawn...”. López Bago: “escribimos unas cuartillas a las que titulamos novelas sin estar conformes con ese título. No lo estamos porque no tienen nuestras obras el carácter de la obra de amenidad, sino el de estudio”. Trans: “... we write pages to which we title novels without being entirely happy with such name. We are not because our works are not entertaining ones; they are studies” in Sawa, [1886] (1999), p. 209.

establishes a clear dichotomy between Galdós and Pardo Bazán on the one hand, and the Radical Naturalists on the other. This comparison however, is clearly influenced by Radical Naturalists' own theory of the novel and in that sense does not contest the, at times flawed, basis upon which such theory rest. Thus, he concludes that characters are but the symptoms by which the illness of the wider societal body manifest: "La misión del novelista (...) es descubrir las lacras que han originado unos organismos y unos comportamientos patológicos¹³¹" (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2001, p. 194) without actually contesting the further implications (social, political) of such a narrative programme.

The most recent physical edition of a work by Sawa dates back to 2014¹³², when Andreu Navarra Ordoño, expert on Spanish anticlericalism of the late nineteenth century, gave to press *Criadero de curas*. His prologue, "Alejandro Sawa y los castillos interiores" is at the moment of writing these lines, the only work where the connexion between Gothic aesthetics and Sawa's work has been made. Although Navarra Ordoño is well-conversant with the work of the Radical Naturalists he confines this connexion to this specific novel whose aesthetics he refers to as "neoGothic" in comparing it with *The Castle of Otranto* (Navarra Ordoño, 2014, p.xii) and defines as characteristic of this "Gothicist" novel the "chiaroscuro, violence and suffering" (Navarra Ordoño, 2014, p.xiii). My thesis further develops this argument, whilst recontextualizing the relationships of three novels by Sawa with firstly, other literary works and secondly, their socio-political context. This brief study is also pioneering in, not so much distancing *Criadero de curas* from Zola's aesthetics, but in nuancing the nature of Zola's influence: "[El Naturalismo es] un festival de técnicas literarias (correlato objetivo, estilo indirecto libre, impresionismo paisajístico, hasta monologo interior (...) técnicas que no incorporaron ni Sawa ni López Bago en sus narraciones¹³³" (Navarra Ordoño, 2014, p.xiv).

¹³¹ Trans: "The mission of the novelist (...) is to unearth the disease that pathological organisms and behaviours have originated".

¹³² There is a recent new edition of *Declaración de un vencido* (2007) in electronic format only.

¹³³ Trans: "[Naturalism is] a feast of literary techniques (objective correlative, free indirect speech, landscape impressionism, interior monologue even (...) these techniques were not incorporated by Sawa or López Bago in their fictions".

Finally, it also is possible to find a considerable amount of journalistic sketches about Sawa throughout the late nineteenth century and the whole of the twentieth century in the press of the time, as well as circumstantial references in scholarly articles on other authors of the period (namely Rubén Darío, Baroja and Valle-Inclán but not exclusively). These however, gloss in most occasions over his novels and biography and their usefulness is limited for the researcher.

Sawa still has not got the level of academic attention of other writers of the period and is still largely marginalised by academic research despite recent re-editions of his works. However, more importantly, most academic studies take as departure point the framing of Sawa as a naturalist writer in Zola's tradition, an approach which my thesis questions. In particular, I examine the preponderance of Gothic tropes in his narratives, and consequently the absence of scientific, detached observation of reality which Zola advocated (Zola, 1967). In that sense, I have to disagree with that specific aspect of the work of Lozano Marco, Lissorgues, Gutiérrez Carbajo, Correa Ramón and Puebla Isla, who despite acknowledging the influence of French Social Romanticism on Radical Naturalist authors focus their research on the possible traces of Zola's aesthetics in the novels of Sawa. As I will demonstrate in my research, these traces are circumstantial. The work of Paolini – and in this content of Puebla Isla – needs to be critically interrogated, in that it brings to academic discussion what is a key element in Sawa's aesthetics: the body as an idiom. These works however lack the theoretical input that has been so enriching in the last decades of the last century and the first ones of the current one. Thus, and whereas Andrea Villa's article bridges that gap by incorporating the concept of the abject in her criticism of Radical Naturalists (Villa, 2013), it does not put enough emphasis on issues of body and corporeality which are in themselves central to the abject.

5. *Crimen legal*: Preliminary remarks

Crimen legal (1886) is a novel about the way in which Ricardo, the only child of a humble baker who gathers a small fortune, “legally murders” his wife Rafaela. Knowing that a second pregnancy will be fatal for her after a difficult labour which needs to be resolved into abortion, Ricardo seduces (sic) Rafaela in order to get her pregnant and elope with his prostitute lover, Noemi.

Urban middle class social life of the late nineteenth century and its conventions are, to a certain extent, the ones that ultimately trigger Ricardo’s crime, actualising thus his father’s worst fears: that Ricardo, having inherited the traces of an old ancestor, is actually a despicable being, a murderer. The novel itself starts precisely at the moment when Juan, Ricardo’s father, curses his own son for not having been invited to his wedding, ashamed as Ricardo is of the old baker’s rural, humble origins:

No lo dudes, Vicenta: nuestro hijo es un canalla. Se avergüenza de mí, de mis andrajos, como tú dices, porque no tiene entrañas, ni nervios, ni corazón, ni nada; porque es un monstruo y los monstruos no conocen otra ley que la de sus apetitos¹³⁴ (*Crimen legal*, p.77; all citations of *Crimen legal* refer to the 1999 edition by Jean-Claude Mbarga).

This is but one of the multiple examples of the close interrelation between social class continuities and the motivations and drives of Ricardo, his physiological appetites (greed, lust...) being intimately linked to the social conventions which articulate them. After the abortion, when he starts distancing himself from his wife he joins a gentlemen’s club (*la Academia de la lengua*) which is but an excuse to organise orgies, banquets and feasts. His infidelity with Noemi for example is hidden under the pretence of running for public office, a quintessential middle class aspiration in Spain at the time.

Juan’s decision when confronted with his own son’s perfidy (i.e. when realising that he

¹³⁴ Trans: “Have no doubt, Vicenta: our son is a swine. He is ashamed of me, of the rags I wear, as you call them, because he’s got no feelings, no emotions, no heart, nothing; because he is a monster and monsters are ruled by their desires only”.

has deliberately impregnated Rafaela in order to trigger her demise) is to return back to his rural birthplace and question his life in the city. Thus, Madrid is linked in his own personal experience to moral and existential vacuity. Rafaela, on the contrary, willing to stage her (quasi)religious immolation readily embraces her fate. At the end of the novel readers are told that Ricardo and Noemi got married shortly after Rafaela's death and were happy for some years.

Crimen legal was first published in 1886 in the notorious "Biblioteca del renacimiento literario"¹³⁵ and almost certainly sponsored by López Bago, who possibly was one of the Biblioteca's founders: in 1885 the administrative office of the Biblioteca Naturalista – a variation of Biblioteca del renacimiento literario, was precisely at López Bago's domicile (Fernández, 1995, p. 36-37). Both authors gave their own versions of their acquaintance in the appendices they wrote for each other's novels: by 1884 they already knew each other, since at the time López Bago was in charge of newspaper *La Reforma* where there was a vacancy Sawa had been interested in (the episode is detailed in Correa Ramón, 2008, p.82). It is the second novel that Sawa published, the first being *La mujer de todo el mundo* (1885). The leap that aesthetically *Crimen legal* represents in relation to *La mujer de todo el mundo*, is considerable:

Crimen legal es un libro mucho más fuerte que el anterior, con una actitud militante más decidida en su protesta social. Se acentúan, además, las notas deterministas, que resuenan casi como un *leit motif* [sic] a lo largo de la novela, según se ha hecho ya notar. Por otra parte, el lenguaje, todavía enfático, alcanza nuevos extremos de crudeza y recoge toda una serie de tecnicismos médicos, que revelan un claro interés por el detalle clínico. Sawa ha plegado un poco las velas de su fantasía, por lo que la novela se enriquece con una mayor precisión¹³⁶ (Phillips, 1976, p. 203).

¹³⁵ A collection reputed for publishing not only López Bago and Sawa, but also other "Radical Naturalists" such as José Zahonero (*La vengadora*, 1889) or Remigio Vega Armentero (*Doble adulterio. El fango del boudoir*, 1887; *La Venus granadina*, 1888).

¹³⁶ Trans: "*Crimen legal* is a cruder book than its predecessor, more militant in its social tones of protest. Determinism is almost the *leitmotif* of the novel. The language, still emphatic, is enriched with medical

This aesthetic leap could not have been possible without the influence and encouragement of López Bago: in the appendix to *Crimen legal* which López Bago himself wrote he metaphorically refers to Sawa's (former) romantic tendencies as "baratijas" (trinkets) which Sawa has brought over from the Romantics' home (López Bago, 1999 [1886] p.207). In this specific passage López Bago is referring to the exuberance of Sawa's prose which he [López Bago] does not deem suitable for the new naturalistic militancy of Sawa and on which he blames the influence of Hugo and Byron (López Bago, 1999 [1886] p.208).

It is well-documented that by the time *El cura* (López Bago, 1885) was published both authors had already met and knew each other personally and reasonably well¹³⁷. Sawa had produced the appendix to López Bago's *El cura* (and López Bago would in turn do the same for precisely *Crimen legal* a year later). Thus, and whereas the plots of both novels differ considerably¹³⁸, there are some key elements shared by both which suggest an influence of López Bago on Sawa: the articulation of both male and female characters around Gothic conventions; the strong anticlericalism of both works and, more incidentally, the use of Solomon's *Song of Songs* as a motif in the seduction episodes which take place in both novels.

Roman's sister, Gloria, the female protagonist of *El cura*, oscillates between the virginal child – "Often they [the Gothic family's favourite victims] are young women who although they are no longer children in a literal sense are treated as such by patriarchal power structures" (Cavallaro, 2005, p.142) – and the *femme fatale* who eventually yields in to his brother's advances and "returns his caresses" (López Bago, 1996 [1885], p.225). These two stereotypes split in *Crimen legal* into the two female characters, Rafaela (the legitimate wife) and Noemi (the conniving lover). This is quite illuminating about the role of the woman in Sawa's second novel and supports the idea that as a writer, he was too imbued of the dominant

terminology that reveal a clear interest on clinical detail. Sawa's fantasy is diminished, so his novel gains in precision".

¹³⁷ The anecdote of their first meeting is recorded by both of them in the appendixes they wrote for each other's works. A summary of this can be found in Correa Ramón's biography of Sawa (Correa Ramón, 2008, p. 81-83).

¹³⁸ *El cura* is the story of Roman, a 22-year-old Catholic priest who, unable to repress his "natural" sexual instincts (instincts which are constantly spurred by his daily contact with the female members of his parish), commits incest with his own sister Gracia.

social discourses which portrayed females either as submissive child-bearing home angels or whores. In that sense the capacity of the contestation discourse within which Sawa's literature is framed to offer a solid alternative perspective of subversion and resistance against the normalizing institutionalized values of the petty bourgeoisie is severely curtailed.

Likewise, main male characters in the respective novels (the priest Roman and Ricardo) are based in their characterisation on the dominant patriarchal stereotypes which had been articulated by preceding manifestations of the Gothic: the father; the husband and the brother. Thus, and although Roman is Gloria's brother, his role as such blurs so much that the climax of the novel is reached in sexual consummation, precisely as if he were a husband-like figure. With regards to this husband-like figure and the way it features in *Crimen legal* see what Michelle Masse terms 'Marital Gothic': "where the husband is present at the beginning, rather than the end of the story and 'repeats' the role of the father" (Masse, 1990, p.682). This is a concept towards which Joana Russ implicitly had already pointed in dealing with modern Gothic romance in her (rather aptly named) article: "Somebody's trying to kill me and I think it's my husband: The Modern Gothic". The conclusions of both authors run parallel (albeit reached from different critical and theoretical perspectives): Gothic narratives reinforce submissive stereotypes by negating, belittling or appropriating women's true voice (Russ, 1973). The oppressive role of patriarchy is not constrained to the settling of modern capitalism, in fact, in illustrating this oppressive role, Markman Ellis refers to one of the founders of the genre:

Without family, guardian or friend, Adeline [the heroine of *The Romance of the Forest* by Anne Radcliffe] fortifies her contested virtue by seeking an advantageous marriage. Patriarchy appears both the cause and the solution to her difficulties. The patriarchal mode identified political congruences between the authority of the father over the household and that of the king over a society (Ellis, 2000, p.52).

Patriarchy is one of the topics at the core of both *Crimen legal* and *El cura* (and for that matter, Sawa's last novel also, *Noche*). The family was at the time Sawa was writing both a model of political ruling and a model of economic relations. Sawa is decidedly ambiguous like

the whole of his novel. While it's true that Rafaela is deprived of a voice entirely and the whole of *Crimen legal* can be a protest against this situation it is also true that her abnegation (albeit in lukewarm appreciative terms) is not recompensed at the end of the novel. Likewise, in López Bago's *El cura*, and whereas it is implied that celibacy imposed upon male members of the cleric is to blame for the incestuous behaviour of Roman, such transgressive act does not seem as traumatic for his sister, whom on top of that is not bound by religious vows.

Thus, men are turned (almost doomed) by way of physiology to lust-driven animals who unleash their "unnatural" incestuous and homicidal manias. "Natural" was – as James Mandrell on his article on Spanish romantic poet Becquer's (1836-1870) poetry shows (Mandrell, 1995) – the way by which patriarchal dominant discourses would achieve perpetuation in nineteenth century Spain: women were home-bound by nature – they were angels of the house by virtue of their very own female bodies. Puebla Isla notes this paradox of the Radical Naturalists (and more specifically of Sawa) by which the ideological avant-garde (anticlerical, anti-bourgeoisie) so heavily relies on the dominant idiom to construct their discourse:

Tras de la lectura de sus obras naturalistas cabe la posibilidad de cuestionarse si no es una contradicción que Sawa, gran adorador de la mujer, que además de retratarla declara su intención de liberarla de las trabas sociales y de sus pesadas cargas morales – como demuestra en sus precursoras ideas en favor del divorcio y en contra del matrimonio orientado exclusivamente a la procreación – , castigue a sus figuras femeninas con la *enfermedad y la muerte*¹³⁹ (Puebla Isla, 2006, p. 247; emphasis added).

Common also to both novels is a very strong anticlerical component. It is somehow implied in *Crimen legal* that a second pregnancy would not have been fatal had the abortion taken place much earlier. That this did not happen was because of the moral misgivings of the first doctor who assisted Rafaela's labour (a staunch Roman Catholic) whose hesitations and

¹³⁹ Trans: "After having read his naturalist works it is tempting to ask oneself whether it might not be a contradiction that Sawa, who praises women, with his avowed intention of freeing them from social discrimination and taxing moral duties as shown by his advances ideas pro-divorce and against a procreation-oriented marriage, punishes his female characters *with illness and death*." Emphasis added.

doubts delayed the intervention considerably. It will have to be a second doctor (referred to in the novel only by the nickname of “el Salvador¹⁴⁰”) who practises Rafaela's much needed, late abortion ¹⁴¹. As per the anticlericalism of *El cura*, the plot itself is eloquent enough: the thesis defended by López Bago is that the Roman Catholic Church as an institution represses the most natural instincts of men creating an army of deviant, sexually dangerous and morally loose priests¹⁴². This aspect of their respective works was incidentally one of Zolaesque Naturalism's traits that the Radical Naturalists were only too eager to explore and incorporate into their works (“incidentally” because the anticlerical component of Zola's Naturalism was somehow circumstantial and to a certain extent marginal to his literary enterprise). In *Crímen legal*, I want to explore the framing of marital relationships within a genuinely Gothic pattern and support and frame this within theoretical approaches which have proved successful – such as Kristeva's abjection, but also other discourse-based theories, such as Foucault and Sontag's contributions on sexuality and medicine.

¹⁴⁰ “The “saviour”, an obvious take on one of the best known Christ's *pronomens*.

¹⁴¹ “‘Catholics defend religion on material grounds of utility: anticlericals claim that they, and not the Church possess the true spirit of Christianity’. Como observa B. J. Dendle, la defensa de la religión por los católicos apenas tiene nada que ver con la religión en sí misma, es más bien la apología de una sociedad que tiende a desaparecer tras la revolución. (...) Por ello buscan la España eterna, la España de siempre, no en el pasado, como los románticos, sino en el campo, en las sociedades rurales, donde el tiempo se ha detenido y los males de la civilización no han degradado la vida.” (Oleza, 1976, p.23) Trans: “As Dendle explains, Catholics’ apology of religion has barely anything to do with religion itself, and it is more the apology of the society which disappeared after the revolution. (...) That is why the search for eternal, unchanged Spain, but not in the past, as the Romantics did, but in the countryside, in rural societies, where time has come to a standstill and civilising evils have not had their degrading effect yet”.

¹⁴² It should be noted however that the priest's sister's reaction to her brother's advances is one of welcoming them. It is characteristic of the Radical Naturalists that despite their allegedly uncompromised fidelity to the Zolaesque enterprise theirs was a literature as much in debt with the mores characteristic of the Romanticism as with late nineteenth century Naturalism. The figure of the female as “perdition” of man is – according to James Mandrell – a staple of Spanish Romantic thought that pervades well into the last decades of the century: “Becquer's personal history as a lyric poet victimized by tragedies of love and an early death not only situates itself in the readily comprehensible narrative tradition of the tragic artist but also accuses woman as the culprit in this sad story.” (Mandrell, 1995, p. 62) and “The woman who is not a muse is vulgar, stupid, pathologically sexual, and therefore liable to punishment, be it in the form of dismemberment, as with Galdós' *Tristana*, or social isolation, as with Clarín's *Ana Ozores*” (Mandrell, 1995, p. 70).

5.1 Modern editions and secondary sources

Crimen legal was only the second novel written by Sawa¹⁴³ and little is known about its original reception: Correa Ramón, for example can only refer to two contemporary reviews of the novel, those of López Bago (in the epilogue mentioned above)¹⁴⁴ and critic Luis París who devoted a chapter of his book *Gente nueva* (1901) to Alejandro Sawa. This second review was, according to Correa Ramón, “menos tendenciosa” (“less biased”, in Correa, 1993, p.114) than Bago’s. Indeed, París does not fail to notice what he terms “nefanda influencia que López Bago imprimió a la anterior [novela], *Crimen legal*”¹⁴⁵ (París, 1901, p. 110). In any case, and despite their disparities, both reviews dwell on the same issues: the allegiance of Sawa to the new mode of Naturalism and the aesthetic implications of such allegiance, which had been a rather heated controversy in Spanish letters. Around 1882, at the time Emilia Pardo Bazán published her *La cuestión palpitante*, the debate was – as Gifford Davis has argued – probably finalised. Its resurrection was an astute manoeuvre by Pardo Bazán in order to gain public presence. Thus, while López Bago confesses his concern about what he terms “romantic knickknacks” that Sawa has brought over from the romantic house, París, as seen above, condemns the influence of Bago who is dragging Sawa into disgusting excesses.

The exhaustive bibliographies included in the different monographic volumes devoted to Sawa¹⁴⁶ and in the modern edition of his works do not include any specific reference in the literary press of the late nineteenth century to *Crimen legal* either. The reception of the novel can then be at best guessed: probably popular among anticlerical and radical republican

¹⁴³ The first one *La mujer de todo el mundo* is from 1885 and it was not published in Biblioteca del renacimiento literario, evidence of the aesthetic leap that *Crimen legal* was in its allegiance to the radical naturalist mode.

¹⁴⁴ “Respecto a la aceptación que recibió *Crimen legal* en los ambientes culturales de la época, resulta de obligada referencia el análisis que lleva a cabo López Bago (...) Este, como naturalista radical critica en Sawa un exceso de impulsividad, así como de adjetivación” (Correa, 1993, p.112). Trans: “With regards to the popularity of *Crimen legal* among the intelligentsia of the late nineteenth century it is compulsory to mention here López Bago’s analysis (...) [López Bago] as a Radical Naturalist criticises the dense use of adjectives of the novel and its impulsiveness”.

¹⁴⁵ Trans: “nefarious influence that López Bago lent to his previous [novel], *Crimen legal*”.

¹⁴⁶ Phillips 1976; Correa Ramón, 1993 and 2008 and Puebla Isla, 2006.

readers (only two years after its publication Sawa would go on to publish two short works¹⁴⁷ with notorious republican anticlerical José Nakens) but otherwise largely unnoticed by the literary mainstream. Thus, earlier bibliographical entries (pre-1900) focus almost exclusively in his theatrical contributions and most of the post-1900 press notes were obituaries commemorating the life of the old bohemian, rather than his literary production.

There are two modern editions of *Crimen legal* (Mbarga's from 1999 and Correa Ramón's from 2012), both of which include the appendix that López Bago wrote for the novel. It is characteristic of both introductory essays firstly, the aim to 'rescue' a writer (Sawa himself) who has been largely forgotten by academia and the reading public, in the case of Mbarga. More than a decade after Mbarga's wrote his, Correa Ramón wants also to rescue Sawa from the oblivion of the wider reading public. Secondly, both studies proceed to contextualise *Crimen legal*, by framing it within some of the topics which studies on Sawa had previously explored: anticlericalism, anti-bourgeois discourses, allegiance to literary Naturalism and the influence of Victor Hugo.

Other than these two introductory forewords to the modern editions of *Crimen legal*, it is possible to find scholarly contributions to the understanding of the novel in the monographic works of Phillips (1976), Correa Ramón (1993) and Puebla Isla (2006) and in the scholarly articles of Paolini (1984) and Gutiérrez Carbajo (2001). With the exception of Puebla Isla's, the other two works touch upon *Crimen legal* in order to contextualise it by providing some detail of its publication and framing it within its time, followed by a review of the literature up until the publication of the research. Puebla Isla's *La representación de la mujer en la narrativa de Alejandro Sawa*¹⁴⁸ provides some very interesting insights in the criminal nature of the male protagonist, Ricardo, taking as a departure point Gilbert Paolini's article from 1984. The thesis of Paolini is clear: *Crimen legal* is not so much a novel about anticlericalism or about the conflict between science and religion, but a study in natural-born criminality, embodied in the character of Ricardo:

¹⁴⁷ *La sima de Iguzquiza* and *Criadero de curas* both in 1888.

¹⁴⁸ Trans: "The representation of woman in Alejandro Sawa's narrative".

(...) esta novela [*Crimen legal*] examinada con arreglo a la antropología criminal de la época es más que un caso de medicina, de distocia, de conflicto entre la iglesia y la ciencia, adquiere otra dimensión y se presta a otra interpretación: la de la delineación del delincuente nato¹⁴⁹ (Paolini, 1984, p 49).

I suggest instead, that the novel's core theme is identity, as mediated by social mobility (the son of the humble labourer becomes a gentleman creating family frictions) and the apparition of new gender roles (a woman who cannot bear children is doomed to social death). Identity becomes, in this work by Sawa, a troubling issue which rarely (if ever) resolves harmoniously, hence the strong Gothic component of the narratives.

5.2 Plot summary

There is a certain sense of anxiety, of imminent threat, of pervading terror and horror¹⁵⁰ which permeates the whole of *Crimen legal* (beginning with its very title in which a social taboo such as crime is vetted by the powers to be by becoming "legal"). The boundary that ensures civilisation, which is governmental regulation of violence, is in Sawa's work questioned by deconstructing it and revealing its inner contradictions. The title of the novel thus refers the contemporary reader to the moral and ideological *chiaroscuro* of the Gothic¹⁵¹: the group of Radical Naturalists who fashioned themselves liberals are in fact sterner, fiercer moralists than

¹⁴⁹ Trans: "(...) this novel [*Crimen legal*] read in the light of criminal anthropology is more than just a mere medical case of dystocia; more than the conflict between science and religion, and lends itself to another interpretation: the portrayal of the natural born delinquent".

¹⁵⁰ While as Botting explains both terms "are often used simultaneously, distinctions can be made between them as countervailing aspects of Gothic emotional ambivalence. If terror leads to an imaginative expansion of one's sense of self, horror describes the movement of contraction and recoil. (...) terror marks the uplifting thrill where horror distinguishes a contraction at the imminence and unavoidability of the threat" (Botting, 2006, p 10). In the *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* the editor Jerrold E. Hogle also insists on the difference between both terms: "The first of these [Terror Gothic] holds characters and readers mostly in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety and sanity kept largely out of sight or in shadows or suggestions from a hidden past, while the latter [Horror Gothic] confronts the principal characters with the gross violence of physical or psychological dissolution explicitly shattering the assumed norms (including the repressions) of everyday life with wildly shocking and even revolting consequences" (Hogle, 2010, p.3).

¹⁵¹ "No other form of writing or theatre is as insistent as Gothic on juxtaposing potential revolution and possible reaction – about gender, sexuality, race, class, the colonizers versus the colonized, the physical versus the metaphysical, and abnormal versus normal psychology – and leaving both extremes sharply before us and far less resolved than the conventional endings in most of these works claim to be" (Hogle, 2010, p.13).

their conservative nemesis; and what is more, their moral accusations are aimed at protecting the same institution (and almost in the same terms) as the conservatives would: the traditional, nuclear, patriarchal family¹⁵². Note that I have occasionally adopted the use of the term *chiaroscuro* in this thesis. Traditionally a pictorial term whose usage has now been made extensive to other visual arts such as photography or cinema, *chiaroscuro* refers to the dramatic contrast of light and darkness in works of art. However, in the Gothic being an aesthetic mode of strong contrasts and ambiguities whose manifestations are not limited to the written word, the term seems especially suitable to define the characteristic violence of the genre. In fact, it has in recent times become part of the critical terminology stock of the Gothic, to the extent that Mary Ellen Snodgrass includes an entry for the term in her *Encyclopedia of Gothic Literature* (2005).

I have used *chiaroscuro* in this work firstly, to refer to the strong contrasts which are characteristic of the Gothic. Secondly, the term will also be used to refer to those boundaries where (in a metaphorical sense) light and darkness meet, creating spaces which partake in both. Such blurred lines generate that sense of ambivalence which is characteristic of the Gothic and has been emphasized by Fred Botting in the first pages of his monographic work on Gothic (see Botting, 2006, pp. 1-9).

As mentioned above, the very title of Sawa's first radical naturalist novel, *Crimen legal*, could be said to be founded upon a conceptual *chiaroscuro*. This oxymoronic title invokes two very different traditions thus emphasizing ambivalence and tension: on the one hand, the popular literature of horror and terror, the romantic sentimental novel, the literature which appeals at morbid feelings and cheap sentimentality; the sub-literature of the newspapers:

Los periódicos llenan las columnas con relatos del crimen de la calle de Fuencarral, del crimen de Valencia, del crimen de Málaga, los reporters [sic] y noticieros, en vez de pasarse la vida en el salón de conferencias, visitan los juzgados a todas horas, acometen a los curiales atosigándoles a preguntas, y con los datos que adquieren,

¹⁵² In *Crimen legal* there is a rather obvious concern with the disintegration of the familial structure – first and foremost an economic unit – and the mobility of social classes.

construyen luego la historia más o menos fantaseada y novelesca del espantoso drama¹⁵³ (Pérez Galdós, 2011, [1886], p.3).

The term “Legal”, on the other hand, is that of the aseptic, precise language of the judiciary, the language of the facts and the language of decimononical Realism. The language of Zola himself, the language of the real.

Not only the title, but, in a technique whose debt with feuilleton literature cannot go unnoticed, practically every single chapter culminates in a note of ambiguity which rather than render explicit testimony of horror and terror, brings about a suggestion of open ended (sombre) possibilities. In the first chapter, for example, Ricardo’s father recalls his own life up to the days prior to his son’s wedding. These memories are triggered by his son’s refusal to invite him to his wedding: in recalling the makings of his own son, Ricardo’s father cannot help but reflect on his own existence. At the end, his ramblings bring him back to the point where he started, the evilness of his own child: “Ahora se acordaba que un abuelo suyo murió en la horca por asesino y por ladrón y pensaba con espanto en si su hijo, en si Ricardo sería un canalla, un canalla por herencia, ladrón y asesino también, como su bisabuelo, como su antepasado¹⁵⁴” (*Crimen legal*, p. 76). The chapter itself finishes in a cry which implicitly carries a question: “¿Sería posible eso, Dios mío, sería posible!¹⁵⁵” (*Crimen legal*, p. 77). Ricardo is not at this point a man who will become criminal, but who may (or may not – and this is important) become one. The sense of indetermination, of not knowing, is far more powerful and a stronger sense of threat and anxiety than certainty. This sense of indetermination is in fact the very source of tension in Gothic narratives, characterised by ambiguity and ambivalence.

Likewise, the climatic passage of the second chapter, that of Ricardo and Rafaela’s first

¹⁵³ Trans: “Newspapers fill up pages with stories about the crime in *calle* Fuencarral, in Valencia, in Malaga, the news reporters, rather than spending their time in the pressroom are in the courthouse, bullying the authorities with questions, and once they have the facts they put together a more or less fantastic novel about these terrible dramas”.

¹⁵⁴ Trans: “He remembered now how his own grandfather died hanged accused of murder and theft and fearfully thought whether his own child, Ricardo, had inherited such evilness, whether Ricardo was a murder and a thief, just like his great-grandfather”.

¹⁵⁵ Trans: “Was that possible, dear God, was that possible!”.

sexual encounter, practically at the end of the chapter itself, ends in a rather discomfiting ellipsis: “Arrojóse sobre la hembra...”¹⁵⁶ (*Crimen legal*, p.86). The ellipsis not only carries connotations of rape (and the fact that they are mere connotations and not an explicit accusation is key here) but such connotations are added an even more disturbing nuance by yet another resort to Gothic aesthetics such as animalisation: Ricardo “launches” himself onto the “female of the species” shortly after he has actually been defined as “más ingrato que una bestia”¹⁵⁷ (*Crimen legal*, p. 86). This sombre note, is Gothic not so much because it actualises a given threat, but because it signals the potential for one which is not even defined, thus leaving this in an indetermination, in a liminal state, in a narrative suspension. This lack of concretion is the real source of anxiety. Most importantly, the animalisation of Ricardo takes place precisely in a passage heavily mediated by the corporeal: through sex. In fact, even when animalisation serves to emphasize or illustrate not so much a physical trait, as in this case, but for example, some behavioural pattern or refer to emotional distress, it is always mediated by physical metaphors. Juan’s (Ricardo’s father) determination and will power is assimilated to a “wolf-like nature” which prevented him from “starving and dying in the cold” (see the Spanish original “...estuvo expuesto muchos años a reventar de hambre, y que si no feneció de eso y de frío lo debía a su naturaleza de lobo” in *Crimen legal*, p.68). Ricardo’s mother protests the invectives against her son as a “bestia que defiende a sus cachorros”¹⁵⁸ (*Crimen legal*, p.68). Note that she does not resort to physical violence in the brief passage this instance has been taken from. She in fact debates with her husband, a most intellectual activity turned into physical animalisation through the metaphors with which the discussion is written about. This indeterminacy of the characters suspended in-between human and animal states is one of the most characteristic Gothic resources, in that the Gothic thrives in ambiguity. The real source of anxiety pervading the Gothic mode lies not so much on a given threat, but on the possibility of such threat and not knowing whether the threat will be ever actualised or

¹⁵⁶ Trans: “He launched himself upon the female”.

¹⁵⁷ Trans: “more ungrateful than a beast”.

¹⁵⁸ Trans: “beast which protects her cubs”

not thus perpetuating a sense of anxiety and projecting it ad infinitum.

The plot of *Crimen legal* seems to have been written as if taking Fred Botting's description of nineteenth century Gothic as prescriptive guidelines:

The bourgeois family is the scene of ghostly return, where guilty secrets of past transgression and uncertain class origins are the sources of anxiety. The modern city, industrial, gloomy and labyrinthine, is the locus of horror, violence and corruption. Scientific discoveries provide the instruments of terror and crime and the criminal mind present new threatening figures of social and industrial disintegration (Botting, 2006, p.114).

Also, and in defining the plot of *Crimen legal* as "Gothic", it will be helpful to take as a departure point Susan Rowland's paraphrase of Fred Botting's definition of the genre:

The Gothic tradition is both a specific event in literary history, stemming from the novels of horrifying apparitions in the late eighteenth century and the characteristics of a response to literary problems of *boundaries and taboos, the borders of knowledge, belief, representability and culture* (Rowland, 2001, p.110; emphasis added).

She further expands:

In the nineteenth century, the Gothic travelled more to the interior: to 'England' in both moorland and the metropolitan city, to domesticity in its eruption within the bourgeois family, to the feminine in fears of gender and sexuality, and to the psyche itself in the horrific productions of doubles and internal spectres (Rowland, 2001, p.111).

The plot of *Crimen legal* is rich in all this: the stark contrast of the countryside versus the city domestic imprisonment, class fears and anxieties, fear of sexuality and the threat it poses to the family as an economic unit, disruption of moral values and loss of control over reality. Sawa moves the locus of the Gothic horrors and terrors even a step further. In the late nineteenth century, the locus of the Gothic sensibility was the body itself anticipating by nearly a century modern conceptions of cinematographic body horror. The novel seems at times a catalogue of middle class anxieties. The Spanish middle class of the late nineteenth century was not as established as its European counterparts due to the considerably much slower

industrialization. Middle classes were almost exclusive of the urban environment and had to compensate for the lack of visibility as a social group by emphasizing the visibility of their culture values (i.e. projecting their values upon their material culture) and associating respectability with certain form of exhibition or exhibitionism.

Juan, the weak and ineffective hero, of very humble rural origins, travels to Madrid escaping poverty and starvation in his native Galicia. Once in the capital he manages through the years to put together a small fortune running his own bakery, thus overcoming his own class origins and becoming a member of the new emerging *petite bourgeoisie*. The novel opens with two of his obsessions which mingle both aspects commented upon by Botting in a single occurrence: his own son (Ricardo, a vampire-like figure who driven by greed and lust corrupts the familiar/social tissue) has not invited him to his wedding with Rafaela (the confused/threatened woman of Gothic narratives) due to social class concerns about the origins of his own father. Juan takes this to be such a malicious event that can help but feeling that his son has inherited the criminal and homicidal tendencies of a distant great-grandparent who was executed for his heinous crimes in what he calls “el salto atrás” (*the atavistic regression* in *Crimen legal*, p. 76) and to which Botting refers in terms of “secret, past transgression” and “ghostly return” (see Botting, 2006, p. 105).

The two main female characters (Rafaela, legitimate wife of Ricardo, and Noemi, the prostitute who seduces him) suffer imprisonment at some stage of the novel: Rafaela's imprisonment however is purely symbolic: when after the brutal abortion she cannot have children, her human condition is removed from her. She is as far as she can procreate and in that her femininity is reduced to the traditional petit bourgeois role of the “ángel del hogar” or “home angel”. When this expectation placed on her cannot be fulfilled because of the lack of children and the incapacity to start a family she becomes so limited that becomes reclusive. Rafaela is doubly imprisoned as woman and as a sterile woman. This is a good example of how Sawa had internalized the cultural ethos of the social class he claimed to despise so much. Noemi on the other hand suffers a rather different kind of imprisonment at the core of which there are class prejudices and concerns about mobility and inadequacy: “Todo el mundo

en la casa, y aun en todo el barrio, sabía lo que le pasaba; que no estaba casada; que aquel hombre, que casi vivía con ella no era su marido, sino su amante, el hombre que paga, el arrendatario de su cuerpo (...) ¹⁵⁹ (*Crimen legal*, p. 159). In no case imprisonment is imposed upon any of the characters by sheer brute force as in *Cornelia Bororquia* (c.1800) – the pioneering anticlerical novel of the Spanish tradition – where the Spanish Inquisition itself imprisons the female protagonist; or as in Sawa's own *Criadero de curas* (1888) where the priests who run a boarding school discipline the young protagonist by holding him captive in one of the cells. Imprisonment in *Crimen legal* operates in more subtle ways: it is the strength of social convention itself together with a very crude form of biological determinism that drives the doom of female protagonists. The male protagonist Ricardo on the other hand moves freely throughout all different situations/spaces which are heavily gender marked: the club, the brothel, the (invented) political reunions.

Sawa's vision of the period – or rather the vision his novels project – does not differ considerably from that of the conservative: *Crimen legal* can be read as a warning of how unbridled lust can dissolve the solid foundations upon which society rests. The implications of this go beyond the mere familiar circle when identifying Ricardo as the social climbing bourgeois *par excellence*: it is the whole society (and the economic system which sustains it) that will peril. When husbands fail – and by lacking control of their animalistic instincts they mingle with prostitutes – they fail also as citizens. They put in jeopardy the whole economic system by which wealth is transmitted, and they also put in jeopardy the way the main point of reference, the great allegory which articulated reality and provided it with an articulatory idiom is construed. That is, they will deconstruct the intricate family allegory upon which the Restoration period rests by pointing out its instability: where does the illegitimate child of the prostitute belong in relation to the legitimate family of the bourgeois *pater familias*? Contesting these ideas was certainly not easy and not always successful as the works of the Radical

¹⁵⁹ Trans: "All the neighbours in the building, nay, in the whole neighbourhood, knew what was going on. She was not married; that man who practically lived with her, was not her husband, but her lover; a man who paid for her body".

Naturalists show: these novels almost act as check lists of fears and anxieties against which dominant social attitudes should brace themselves.

The nature of the Gothic is after all the exploration of the possibilities of fear within a literary context and the subsequent commodification of these fears, hence the ambiguity mentioned above: the literature which (apparently) thrives at the margins of the literary canon – far from contesting given, received hegemonic ideas – can become a solid perpetuator of the set of symbols and metaphors which articulate the idiom with which these ideas were first implemented. For example, authoritarian fathers and submissive daughters are a staple of Gothic narratives since the very origin of Gothic literature; and what is more, these authoritarian Gothic fathers have also social, political and economic power.

The link between the family man and the man of state becomes obvious. In *Crimen legal* Ricardo hides his meetings with the prostitute Noemi from his milieu under the false pretence of running for a political post: his masculinity is thus both assessed and enhanced in a purely physical way (by indulging in casual, non-committal economically regulated sex) and (in the eyes of society) by devoting his time to politics. Even when this is a false pretence (he is certainly not a candidate for any office whatsoever), is the idiom with which it is articulated that misleads his environment and justifies and solidifies his position as a member of both his family and society. His wife is only too happy to comply with the servitude of professional politics in the same way that she will submissively accept her fate and retire to a sort of rural Galician Arcadia to meet her fate and die at the end of the novel. As a member of society her most natural end is death (i.e. non-existence) given that she has not fulfilled her feminine role (that of mother) and as such has not fulfilled either any other role available for her (because there aren't any, other than prostitute): women can only be daughters, mothers or sisters (within the family or the nation) or whores (outside any of those). Thus, an author such as Sawa, whose novels have traditionally been read as a challenge to the nineteenth century status quo reproduces the conceptual and ideological agenda of his age scrupulously.

It is not difficult then to see how persuasive the idiom was when even the literature of subversion adapted it for their needs: in trying to look for a literary referent with which to

articulate their ideology Sawa (and López Bago and Vega Armentero – and the other Radical Naturalists) turn to the available literary sources – the Gothic elements of popular fiction, with its rich tradition of anticlericalism and transgression– which, as everything which came from France, could be considered as morally suspicious regardless of its actual contents. While both aesthetics carried at the time connotations of transgression, the dominant social discourse had also very subtly permeated them. At the same time however, these discourses generate a dynamic which runs parallel to mainstream culture by articulating the idiom of subversion.

The family not only provides the wider socio-political organisational idiom: but by establishing standards of legitimacy among siblings is also in itself an economic system in which wealth is generated by its members in order to be inherited by the legitimate siblings according to the father's dispositions (and in turn augmented by these siblings' own families...etc). The prostitute could not have descendancy either from a literary, aesthetic point of view: children of the prostitute were projected into an ineffable vacuum. They were, to a certain degree, and using the term in Kristeva's sense, the abject of society¹⁶⁰. They produced an intense moral (and physical) repugnance – even so much more than their own mothers since being not legitimate they had no room in the economic order of society. However, this (the prostitute's child) is a motif largely exploited in the “novela lupanaria” (the “brothel novel”) which reflects the aim of the authors to create an idiom suitable to deal with this occurrence. In that sense Sawa's work once again moves between ambiguities and chiaroscuros.

5.3 Gothic Abjection and Performativity: Rafaela's Gothic body

The nearly fifty pages of “delectation in the most crude and disgusting detail” (Correa Ramón, 2012, p. 21) in which Rafaela's miscarriage/abortion is described, narrated and

¹⁶⁰ “what is abject (...) is radically excluded and draws me towards the place where meaning collapses” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2).

performed¹⁶¹ are a fine literary example of what Julia Kristeva has termed abjection but also, and within the context of the novel, a staging of that same abjection.

The Bulgarian-French theorist developed her concept of abjection in depth in her work *Powers of Horror* (the first edition in French is from 1980; the English translation would follow two years later). Drawing from (as in most of her work) structural Saussurean linguistics and traditional Freudian, Lacanian and – to a lesser extent – Jungian psychoanalysis she elaborated a complex theory of the early stages of formation of the (speaking) subject. Given the psychoanalytic foundations of Kristeva's work, concepts such as "subject" or "object" are to be understood specifically with regards to such tradition.

Within Kristeva's theory, "the term [subject] plays ambiguously between, on the one hand, subject as in the opposition subject/object or subject as in grammar; and on the other hand, subject as in subject of the state, or subject to the law – that is, subject is both central and de-centred." (Rice, Philip and Waugh, Patricia; 1992, p. 119). As part of Kristeva's wider integrating psycho-linguistic theory, the Kristevan subject is to be understood in relationship with language. Thus, abjection according to Kristeva is the process by which the speaking subject configures its own borders – which at the semiotic stage are still indistinguishable from those of the mother's:

What I call 'the semiotic' takes us back to the pre-linguistic states of childhood where the child babbles the sounds s/he hears, or where s/he articulates the rhythms, alliterations or stresses, trying to imitate his/her surroundings. In this state the child doesn't yet possess the necessary linguistic signs and thus there is no meaning in the strict sense of the term (Kristeva, 1992 p. 129).

In the pre-linguistic stages of infancy the child belongs in what Kristeva terms chora – as borrowed from Plato's *Timeus* – a linguistically embodying and integrating unity encompassing

¹⁶¹ "Perform" here both in its common acception of "to do; to carry out duly", or "to carry into effect" (*The Chambers Dictionary*, 2011), but also as part of the terminological corpus of performative studies, in which denotes "the performance aspect of any object or practice under consideration" (Loxley, 2007, p.40)

the new-born and the maternal body/language (in Kristeva both body and language are very closely, almost inextricably, linked). In order to become such, the subject needs not only to assimilate the language of the other (the language of the law, actually) but previously to this assimilation (and in order for this assimilation to take place) needs also to delineate the borders and boundaries which retain him within the maternal chora in order to transcend the “semiotic” stage by expelling what the subject her/himself is not: the mother – at this early stage – with whom identification is so strong. As part of Freud’s influence, it is possible to read this rupture with the chora in terms of Freud’s concept of the preoedipal, as Brigit Schippers suggests: “With Freud, Kristeva insists on the universal application of the Oedipus complex as the structure that frames the child’s entrance into the order of law and language” (Schippers, 2011, p. 68).

This violent expulsion which manifests itself with “spasms”, “vomit”, “retching”, “heartbeat”, “perspiration”, “sight-clouding dizziness”, “nausea”¹⁶²... is what Kristeva refers to as the abject: “the abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to I” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1).

One of the earliest formulations of the “object” in the work of Sigmund Freud is to be found in his *Three essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) as part of a wider discussion of Freud’s own theory of the drives:

If we introduce two terms and call the person from whom the person attraction emanates the *sexual object*, and the action towards which the impulse strives the sexual aim, then the scientifically examined experience shows us many deviations in reference to both sexual object and sexual aim, the relations of which to the accepted standard require thorough investigation. (Freud, S., 1905, p.7 my own emphasis)

Kristeva’s formulation of the abject (neither subject not object) constitutes in itself a theory on the formation of the subject: “Combining Freudian premises with Lacan’s emphasis on

¹⁶² All these terms taken literally from Kristeva’s own description in *Powers of Horror*.

language acquisition, Kristeva claims that the subject emerges as a result of language acquisition and of entrance into the symbolic form” (Schippers, 2011, p.41). But through the concept of “abjection”, Kristeva also reworks certain aspects of Freud’s psychoanalytical theory. In that sense, her work enables her to address issues such as motherhood or female subjectivity which are only marginally present in Freud’s work (Zakin, 2011).

This experience of abjection positions the subject in an identity threshold, hence the unassailable fear that occasionally accompanies abjection instances. The Gothic novel is full of instances which can provoke abjection in its readers to the extent that the abject has actually become one of the narrative conventions of the genre¹⁶³. It could almost be said that in its deliberately ambiguous stance, the Gothic mode is the abject of literature. But Gothic novels are also rich in abjection because abjection essentially dwells in borders and boundaries, which are precisely the spaces where the Gothic happens and elicits the fear which is to be its prime characteristic. The ultimate and definite fear is after all the fear of death and all its ramifications and symbolic and metaphorical manifestations: the fear of silence and impairment, the fear of imprisonment. Thus, borders and boundaries are also the places where Sawa’s *Crimen legal* is happening and where Rafaela’s abortion/miscarriage takes place. It is worth noting here though that the semiotic is not a stage which is ever completely superseded: “If it weren’t for the bodily energy speaking beings bring to (and put into) language, language would have little if any meaning to us” (McAfee; 2004, p. 18). This is the process through which Rafaela is going through: in abjecting her child she is abjecting herself. The idea of motherhood is – for a virgin child as she has been portrayed in the novel – abject. The infantilization of the female speaking subject is a common trend in a considerable number of

¹⁶³ Blood for example plays a very important part as a Gothic effect in three of the foundational novels of the genre (or rather *the three* foundational novels of the genre): the bleeding statue of Alfonso in Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, the blood-covered corpse which turns out to be a mannequin in Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, or the German folk tale of the bleeding nun which Lewis incorporates to *The Monk*; not to mention the importance of blood in Gothic vampire narratives: Polidori’s “The Vampyre”(sic), Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” and Stoker’s *Dracula*. Later on, and during the late nineteenth century Gothic revival tales of illness or scientifically induced facial or bodily disfiguration will also abound within the genre, Dorian Gray’s portrait and Mr Hyde being two of the most significant examples.

Gothic novels: for example, during the first spell, between 1765 and the 1820s the female protagonist will rarely be other than 'daughter', 'sister' or 'fiancé'; rarely married, grown up, sexually active woman.

This breaking with the chora which the abject with its violent bodily manifestations re-enacts is but a permanent reminder (permanent as the semiotic is, pushing into our language through the bodily manifestations of speech, through pauses, through humming, through stammering...) of the looming death which awaits every single human being. In that sense is also a reminder of the corporal dimensions of our language and of our selves: it reminds us that the total regression to the semiotic, to the lack of articulated language is a return to the stage where the subject is not subject yet (or anymore, because it has ceased to be); and consequently because a physical, material regression to the infant state is just not possible what is left is the death to which every single subject is doomed: "We encounter this discourse in our dreams, or when death brushes us by, depriving us of the assurance mechanical use of speech ordinarily gives us, the assurance of being ourselves, that is, untouchable, unchangeable, immortal" (Kristeva, Julia; 1982, p. 38).

This illusion of *untouchability*, *unchangeability* and *immortality* collapses for Rafaela during her miscarriage while losing her language/sanity in an abject return to the semiotic phrase amidst vomit, blood, pus, excrement when *touched* (as the law deprives her of her own body), *changed* (bearing child) and eventually *dying* (both socially as a virgin, childless mother and materially, when her destiny is sealed precisely at the time of the performance of the abortion).

Every language-based institutional act (in this case the medical and/or legal sanction of the pertinence, suitability or viability of an abortion) or cultural occurrence (the abortion itself, with the intricate network of personal, social, professional and institutional relations which it carries with it) is to a certain extent a performance. Institutional acts according to John Searle can only exist within human institutions (Searle, 1995, p. 27) in contrast to what he terms "brute facts" which are independent of those (such as for example the distance between the

Earth and the Sun) and one of their main characteristics is that “they can be created by explicit performative utterances” (Searle, 1995, p. 34). Thus, and while foetal malformation due to rickets is not itself an institutional act (foetal malformation and rickets can occur independently of human institutions) the abortion which is derived from those can be, precisely because of performatives: abortion can be a sin or a crime, and only when being pronounced so by the relevant institutions (the judicature and church respectively), becomes such. Gothic narratives and conventions thrive in the chiaroscuro of silence created in the boundaries between the brute fact and its institutionalization by the performative: “Performatives are crucial to the law; they are the very means by which the law retains its tenacious hold on the body of which otherwise it can know nothing. But also, the performative is in a curious and undecidable situation between speech and writing” (Punter, 1998, p. 7).

The emphasis thus during the crude scenes of Rafaela’s abortion and physical disintegration of her body is placed on the discourses through which the aforesaid abortion can then be performed. The operation is either a crime or a sin both being terms of the law, that borrowed language which Kristeva identifies with the symbolic: “Every social practice, as well as being the object of external (economic, political...etc.) determinants, is also determined by a set of signifying rules, by virtue of the fact that there is present an order of language” (Kristeva, 1986, p. 25).

The abjection portrayed in the chapters where Rafaela’s childbirth is narrated and described is three-folded: Rafaela is physically and psychologically abjecting her child; the narrator himself is abjecting the bourgeois pregnant female body through the crudities of his language; and some readers are bound to experience abjection when in the presence of the crudest passages such as: “[las partes genitales] desarrollaban viscosidades extrañas, coloreadas por estrías sanguinolentas¹⁶⁴” (*Crimen legal*, p. 107). Rafaela’s ordeal begins “en la segunda quincena del noveno mes de embarazo¹⁶⁵” (*Crimen legal*, p. 95). The list of her

¹⁶⁴ Trans: “[Her genitals] were oozing some strange viscosities coloured by traces of blood”.

¹⁶⁵ Trans: “Second fortnight of the ninth month of her pregnancy”.

afflictions is almost limitless, and every single complication and inconvenience of pregnancy seems to affect her:

El cosquilleo de araña en las partes internas del vientre, tan obstinado y molesto, que le producía espasmos, especies de convulsiones incesantes; los vómitos, el abultamiento, la tumefacción monstruosa de los pechos, con pinchazos tan agudos que la hacían poner el grito en el cielo; la ponderación del vientre, redondeado, fluctuante, convexo, realmente incomodo, que la impedía la libertad de movimientos; los estremecimientos insoportables del feto en su cárcel, por instantes más repetidos y más bruscos; el estado varicoso y edematoso de los miembros inferiores y de la vulva, que la hacía pensar con amor en la muerte; las granulaciones vaginales tan profusas, que habían hecho de sus partes un depósito de pus, mejor que el sexo de una mujer...; el flujo leucorreico abundante..., viscoso..., manchándole los muslos, pringándole las sabanas¹⁶⁶ (*Crimen legal*, p. 95).

Just a few pages later a new condition is added to those suffered by Rafaela: “pica”, an eating disorder by which those affected have the compulsion to eat non-nutrients such as earth, chalk, ashes, paper, glue or paint. While pregnant women are one of the groups among which the illness seems to have a higher incidence, it is by no means exclusive to them. Sawa however defines it (in two occasions in the same sentence) as one of the objects of study of obstetrics:

(...) en ciencia obstétrica se llama *pica* o *malacia*: enfermedad que se enseñorea de todo el cuerpo, como un vencedor implacable, pero muy especialmente de los órganos gástricos, y que determina la comisión de esas extravagancias y monstruosidades que citan los tratadistas de partos como verdaderas aberraciones de la sensibilidad y del

¹⁶⁶ Trans: “The spider-like itching within the womb, as obstinate as uncomfortable caused her spasms and endless convulsions; sickness, bloating, swelling of her breasts, so painful that she could not but scream; her stomach rounding, convex, uncomfortable, which limited her freedom; the repetitive and sudden movements of the foetus in its prison; the varicose veins of her legs, the infection in her vulva, that made her wish she were dead; puss-filled spots in her vagina, running down her thighs, staining the bedsheets...”.

gusto: preñadas que demandan el coito a cuantos varones se les aproximan, sin llegar a satisfacerse nunca; que rascan las paredes e ingieren grandes cantidades de yeso¹⁶⁷ (*Crimen legal*, p. 100).

The amount of factual errors in this short passage is overwhelming: not only is “pica” by no means exclusive to pregnant women; it is not linked to high libido either (Sawa links this appetite to what at the time would have been termed nymphomania – the term hyper sexuality is preferred nowadays, nymphomania being in the past exclusively used for women and loaded with negative connotations). A close reading of this list however shows how some afflictions are just connatural to a normal pregnancy while others fall within what could be termed “complications” and others are just completely unrelated. Thus, nausea and sickness and sharp pains in breasts affect pregnant women in very different degrees while the weight gain and consequent lack of mobility is common to all of them. On top of that Sawa when referring to the vulva as a “depósito de pus” (‘abscess of pus’) seems to be adding “vaginosis” to the lot of complications which is an infection of the vulvar area completely unrelated to pregnancy.

These listed are all complications characteristic of the pregnancy which might (or might not) be related to a more or less difficult labour. Naturally within the novel they pre-figure the miscarriage-cum-abortion which will render Rafaela unable to pro-create if she does not want to perish in doing so. This whole section then relies heavily on a pseudo-scientific discourse of the body which according to Kristeva covers over the semiotic side of the maternal body (see Oliver, 1993, p. 49).

Rafaela’s body is thus articulated throughout the two Western discourses which entrap her: religion and science. It is too often that Sawa relies on religious symbols (always taken from the Roman Catholic stock) in order to, firstly mock the whole religious network(s) of

¹⁶⁷ Trans: “It is known as pica in obstetrics, like a conqueror it masters the whole of the body, the digestive organs, mainly and it is the cause of those monstrosities that the experts in childbirth know about and that defy our sense of taste: pregnant women that demand sex from every man, that eat chalk they tear from the walls”.

significances – as in the scene of seduction where the Bible is referred to as “el galeoto”¹⁶⁸ (*Crimen legal*, p. 86). Secondly, he also uses the idiom to denounce the hypocrisy of the practising Catholics and their progressive distance from the original Christian creed of humility. His anticlericalism seems to, at times, be aimed more often at the institution of the Catholic church and not so much at its core beliefs: his use of the virgin, martyrdom and Jesus iconography and symbols can be rather benevolent or at least in line with the dominant discourses. As per the “pseudo-scientific” discourse, it so heavily relies on the medicalization of the body of Rafaela that in his attempts to taxonomize her pregnant body and ill body became so intertwined that pregnancy is practically treated as a disease. This approach contrasts with Ricardo’s mother’s pregnancy: “Mira Juan, yo siento un peso muy dulce en mis entrañas...”¹⁶⁹ (*Crimen legal*, p. 75). The main difference between both women is not physical (or in any case, not only physical): class issues lie at the core of Sawa’s appropriation of the medical discourse. Ricardo’s parents met “en uno de los horribles páramos de los alrededores de Madrid, elegidos por los industriales de poca monta para el establecimiento de sus volatines y de sus tíos vivos [sic]”¹⁷⁰ (*Crimen legal*, pp. 73-74). The courtship of Ricardo’s parents while not explicitly narrated is mentioned as a contrapuntal to Ricardo’s own: the analysis and study of relationships in relation to social class is a staple of the narrative of the realist narrative of the nineteenth century.

Note for example how the seduction of Rafaela takes place in a public space, a train. Thus, the trigger of the commission of the “crime” which gives its title to the novel is the way public pressure interferes in Ricardo and Noemi’s private affairs:

Todo el mundo en la casa, y aun en todo el barrio, sabía lo que le pasaba; que no estaba casada; que aquel hombre que casi vivía con ella, no era su marido, sino su

¹⁶⁸ “Galeoto” is a sort of masculine “Celestina”- the character in the Spanish tragic-comedy by Fernando de Rojas; a matchmaker. The term is derogative since when referred in these terms the match-maker is suspected of having profited in an immoral way from getting the lovers together instead of doing it out of altruism.

¹⁶⁹ Trans: “See.. I feel a very sweet weight in my womb”.

¹⁷⁰ Trans: “(...) in one of those horrible wastelands in the outskirts of Madrid, chosen by second-rate travellers to put up their fairs and merry-go-rounds”.

amante (...) que las mujeres la desairaban y no consentían visitarse con ella (...) que solo los hombres continuaban tratándola, pero eso por la situación equívoca que ocupaba en la sociedad¹⁷¹ (*Crimen legal*, p. 159).

Public and private slide into each other without entirely invading the other creating those ambiguous spaces. Rafaela's ordeal is, we are given to understand, neither an abortion nor a miscarriage; it takes place in the privacy of her bedroom and not in a medical establishment; she is tended for by husband and father in law and doctor, but not by midwife.

5.4 Abject Body Horror and Male Gaze

The concept of "body horror", together with that of "male gaze" are both terms which have been traditionally associated to cinematographic and filmic narratives. However, their use in the present context will prove a very useful tool: *Crimen legal* is a highly visual narrative, and it is a narrative in which the reader is often placed in the position of a spectator. 'Body horror' has been traditionally (but not exclusively) linked to Canadian film maker David Cronenberg's early films from the second half of the 1970's:

The subgenre in general [body horror] and David Cronenberg in particular, have been severely criticized. Both have been accused of a deeply conservative fear of the body in general, and the *female body* in particular. David Cronenberg's films, for example, are claimed to represent a horrified reaction against the sexual revolution, and permissiveness in general, in which he displays an *obsessive, gynophobic preoccupation with the female genitals. Sexual contact and sexual reproduction are said to result in disease and monstrosity in his films. As Barbara Creed asserts, this sub-genre in general 'reveals a fascination with the maternal body – its inner and outer*

¹⁷¹ Trans: "Everyone in the building, nay, in the neighbourhood, knew what was going on; she was not married, that man who practically lived with her was not her husband, but her lover (...) other women ignored her and would not pay visits, and only men would still address her and that was because of the ambiguous positions she occupied in that society".

appearance, its functions, its awesome powers'. For this reason, the subgenre is claimed to be deeply voyeuristic (Jancovich, 1992, p. 112; emphasis added).

The body is thus the object towards which the 'male gaze' is projected. It is an object of knowledge, desire and consumption but is also a threat to the male status quo and as such it has to be abjected:

The mother is a threat to the Symbolic order in two immediate ways. Her jouissance threatens to make her a subject rather than the Other against which man becomes a subject. In addition, she not only represents but *is* a strange fold between culture and nature that cannot be fully incorporated by the Symbolic (Oliver, 1993, p. 50).

This idea is further emphasized also by Laura Mulvey and although most of her work has focused on film theory her use of psychoanalysis and her exploration of the male gaze (a term that while she might not have coined she certainly popularized as a critical concept) can throw some light onto the abjected Gothic body of Rafaela. The male gaze serves two purposes for Mulvey: scopophilic satisfaction on the one hand – through the visual appropriation of the body turned object; narcissistic satisfaction of the libidinal ego on the other, via the projection of the self onto the object of desire (Mulvey, 2009, p 19).

The abject "body horror" which lies at the core of chapters IV, V and VI of *Crimen legal* (in which Rafaela's miscarriage/abortion is described) is characterized by a quasi-theatrical, cinematic texture. The scene(s) of an ill, naked woman in a bed being sexualized by observing men, should not be altogether unfamiliar to readers of either Gothic or modern day horror aficionados and brings to mind similar passages in works as different between themselves and as wide apart in time as Richard Marsh's Gothic novel from 1897 *The Beetle* – where the protagonist practically at the beginning of the narration intrudes upon the monsters bedroom – and the film *The Exorcist*¹⁷², from 1973 which takes place almost in its entirety in the

¹⁷² Naturally both works would have been unknown to Sawa; even *The Beetle*, despite being written slightly over a decade after *Crimen legal* and despite Sawa's stay in London as documented by Amelina Correa Ramón (vid Correa Ramón, 2008, p. 193). In any case, both (or rather, all three) share the same motif by which feminine (or

protagonist Regan's bedroom, to name just two examples. Lying on a bed – naturally in the nude (after all she is trying to give birth to her first child) – covered in all sorts of excrescences, Rafaela is under the scrutiny and gaze of her husband, her father-in-law and (at different times) two different doctors. The bed immediately brings together reminiscences of sexual activity and illness which in this occasion get fused into one: “Y pensar que Ricardo sentía triplicada su lujuria ante el espectáculo de aquella miseria..., de aquella porquería¹⁷³” (*Crimen legal*, p. 96). Thus, and to the same extent that mainstream film focus attention on the human form so does medicine – especially nineteenth century medicine, with the spectacle it made of operating theatres, and university anatomy practical classes, which were both a casual topic for some artistic manifestations of different origin and nature¹⁷⁴. The sexual arousal of Ricardo in the presence of his practically decomposing wife thus amalgamating both Mulvey and Punter's theories is both that of the sadist who desires the commodified body of the lover and also that of the masochist who projects himself onto the suffering of the loved one, a projection which is intensified by their shared (and frustrated) parenthood.

It could be argued that many are the male gazes projected upon Rafaela: not only the gaze of her husband, but also that of the different characters posed around her bed. However, of all the other gazes projected upon her body, it is only the husband's gaze that sexualizes the commodity that Rafaela's body has become. Thus, strictly speaking, it is only Ricardo's gaze that can be referred to as a “male gaze”, with the specific meaning that Mulvey attached to the concept. The male gaze articulates a fear of the female body which cannot be understood unless is mediated by sexual desire. There is no fear/desire in the gaze of any of

feminized) bodies where the boundaries or limits of the skin have been dissolved (by the supernatural as in *The Exorcist* or *The Beetle* whose evil protagonists fluctuate between sexes and ages; or by illness or medicalization as in *Crimen legal*) are sexualized by the masculine gazes.

¹⁷³ Trans: “To think that Ricardo's lust was tripled by that filth”.

¹⁷⁴ For example, a decade into the twentieth century Baroja would recall memories of his own training as a doctor in *El árbol de la ciencia* (Baroja, 1973 [1911] in which some passages are as crude (if not considerably more) as those of Sawa's – probably due to the emotional restraint with which Baroja's dissections classes are described, as opposed to the emphatic dramatism of Sawa. But also Claude Barnard –whose experimental method inspired Zola's narrative theories – and Charcot's lessons were also the subject for paintings in 1889 and 1886 respectively.

the doctors; there is no fear/desire in the gaze of Rafaela's father-in-law either. It is true, however, that there is a clear movement towards commodification in the emotional distance which mediates both the doctors' and father-in-law's gazes, but it is not necessarily a commodification dictated by sexual desire (i.e. it is not sexual commodification). Conversely, Ricardo's gaze is explicitly one of fear/desire (see above about how "his lust felt triplicated" precisely when his gaze is projected upon the bare, diseased genitalia of his powerless wife). Ricardo's gaze is a "male gaze" in that sadistically, he receives sexual pleasure from gazing the perils of his wife, while at the same time receiving masochistic sexual pleasure from a pain he experiences through gazing the suffering of his object of desire.

The instability of borders and boundaries made manifest by Sawa in the body of Rafaela transcends the physical and creeps into the sexual – an item familiar to the re-working Gothic conventions characteristic of the *fin-de-siècle*. The physicality of Rafaela and not so much her character, which remains buried and stultified underneath reams of patriarchal discourse and constructions of the feminine in the European nineteenth century, dramatically comes to the narrative foreground when in labour, and does so almost for its own sake: for the (quasi-erotic) delectation of male characters, readers and author himself into the obscene fragility of the boundaries of her body when these collapse under vomit, bleeding and suppuration.

In their furious anti-bourgeois diatribes, the Radical Naturalists however will be the ones to most subtly exploit the visual, gazing, "appearances-culture" of the time in a way which echoes one of the favourite motifs of the Gothic: the female in bed subject to the gaze of the controlling, normalizing discourse (normally medical, but also religious or legal). Here is a woman taking the role of a consumer good: the mainstream, canonical novelists of the time would often do the same with their prostitute protagonists. She is not so much a woman (is debatable whether that category did exist at all in the Restoration period¹⁷⁵) but a wife; and a brutally exposed wife for that matter: "el flujo leucorreico abundante..., viscoso...,

¹⁷⁵ "(...) the paternal order is one in which women, *if they exist at all*, are of inferior status and at the same time idealized (...)" (Labanyi, Jo, 1995, p. 17; emphasis added).

manchándole los muslos, pringándole las sábanas... Y pensar que Ricardo sentía triplicada su lujuria ante el espectáculo de aquella miseria..., de aquella porquería! ¹⁷⁶” (*Crimen legal*, p. 95 and 96).

Otherwise Rafaela is just a cliché assembled with the predominant discourses on womanhood of the era and described when first appearing in the novel as a purely physical being, almost an animal entity reduced to corporeality in accordance to a pseudo-Zolaesque idearium that Radical Naturalists constructed and put together out of different sources. Of Rafaela the reader is told when she is first introduced that she is “regular de todo, de estatura, de gracia, de belleza; regular hasta de inteligencia¹⁷⁷” and beyond that the description culminates with the rather colloquial “ni fu ni fa” (*Crimen legal*, p. 80). In using a colloquial cliché to culminate her description¹⁷⁸, Rafaela’s total lack of remarkable features is but emphasized (i.e. Sawa’s prose mirrors the characteristics of its object of attention and both prose and character described result dull and featureless). Her character remains in the discreet chiaroscuro of domesticity: visible within the boundaries of the home. In this sense this is perfectly consistent with the normalizing discourse of the time by which she is ruled: her introduction as having the “characteristic looking of everyone else” is consequential. Those same predominant discourses and constructions of the feminine had in Spain some specific features linked to the strong presence of Catholicism in the country (and its counter-discourse, anticlericalism) which while on par with their European equivalents give them a distinctive national character. Both Catholicism and anticlericalism were to a certain extent characterised for the degree of aversion or sympathy respectively which French culture would elicit among its followers and defenders. Thus, an attitude of sympathy towards French cultural imports would quickly raise suspicions of political progressive thinking, anticlericalism and anti-bourgeois attitudes (socialism) as the reactions provoked by Pardo Bazan’s *La cuestión palpitante* clearly exemplify (on this aspect, see González Herrán, 1989, p. 73). In aligning

¹⁷⁶ Trans: “The abundant flow of her vaginal discharge, viscous ..., staining her own thighs and blankets, sticky ... And to think that Ricardo felt his lust tripled in the sight of that display of agony ... of that filth!”.

¹⁷⁷ Trans: “Everything was common about her: height, graces, beauty... even her intelligence”.

¹⁷⁸ The expression “ni fu ni fa” can be roughly translated as “run of the mill”.

himself with the naturalist school Sawa advances (just like López Bago and the rest of Radical Naturalists) a political programme more than an aesthetic creed, and his idea of the feminine is subordinated to this agenda and dependant on the patriarchal discourses which shape it. If the idea of the Angel in the House became the feminine ideal of mothers and wives in Victorian households based on Coventry Patmore's poem of the same name –later to be parodied by Virginia Woolf on this same grounds- in Spain this ideal was to be re-enforced and enriched thus adding a wide new arrange of subtleties and nuances by the concept of the virgin-mother directly taken from Roman Catholic iconography: thus the body of the woman remains unpolluted (sex in its exchange of fluids defiles since the bodily insides transcend the skin barrier; interestingly enough though, only women seem to be defiled by sex) despite motherhood.

Rafaela's virginity seems to be an issue which remains unsolved throughout the novel (in her case virginity does not seem to be merely a physical attribution or a life episode and is more of a state or even a condition in her case) and is clearly linked to both the infantilization of her character and the medicalization of the feminine body – which was (or rather is) one of the many ways in which virginity can be conceptualized. On describing Rafaela, Sawa refers to her as having “naturaleza de virgen y clorótica¹⁷⁹” (*Crimen legal*, p 80). Chlorosis was a condition “thought to affect virgins in particular” (Bernau, 2007, p. 15) and as early as 1554 when iron-deficiency anaemia to which medical descriptions seem to link chlorosis was first described by Johannes Lange it was already referred to as “the virgin's disease” (Shorter, 1984, p.250).

In terms of infantilization during the passage in which the loss of her virginity in the train is described, the narrative voice refers to her as “pobre niña¹⁸⁰” (“poor girl”) despite being (we are told) a twenty-two year old woman. He further emphasizes her virginity in at least two

¹⁷⁹ Trans: “nature of a chlorotic virgin”.

¹⁸⁰ “La pobre niña, casi ahogada entre las pautas del fauno” (*Crimen*, p 82). Trans: “The poor girl, choked by the paws of the faun”.

occasions throughout this scene. By referring to her just as “the virgin¹⁸¹” just on the next page Sawa relies on heavily religious iconography: “(...) daban ganas de besarla. Pero no en la boca, como Ricardo; sino en la frente donde se besa a la virginidad y a la desgracia¹⁸²” (*Crimen legal*, p. 83). Her behaviour (or rather the lack of it) is that of a passive, unfinished, almost unformed being, childish and immature, patronised first by her husband then by a doctor and later on by her own father in law. All this time Rafaela has been defined on behalf of her physique: she has no personal (hi)story (as opposed to Ricardo who comes from a humble family which works its way up) apart from the intimation that she is an orphan; and her main attribution seems to be precisely her virginity – and this will be her defining characteristic even after getting with child on two occasions (!). Such is the case that while delirious during the childbirth Rafaela suffers a regression to the time when she was a virgin, this circumstance being once again capital in defining her: “Y haciendo su delirio más hondo, más íntimo, llevaba a la práctica, allá en las nieblas confusas de sus imaginaciones, los sueños de amor que conturbaron su organismo de virgen¹⁸³” (*Crimen legal*, p. 114). She is merely a body and, in that sense, Sawa is reproducing representational schemes characteristic of his time and age and more specifically borrowed from the dominant discourse. This was exactly the way in which approximately a century earlier Luis Gutiérrez author of *Cornelia Bororquia* (widely acknowledged to be the first anticlerical novel of the Spanish tradition and characterised for its heavily Gothic undertones) portrayed his heroine. Cornelia is imprisoned and trialled by the Holy Inquisition because she does not yield to the “impure” desires of a member of the Spanish Catholic Hierarchy. Sawa and López Bago represent a tradition that leans heavily on a Spanish romantic reinterpretation of the Gothic canon rather than on naturalist Realism. Imprisonment of the female body for example is a rather cherished motif in Gothic narratives

¹⁸¹ “Y lloraba la virgen, y acusaba a su familia, a sus amigas, a todo el mundo, por haberla dejado abandonada entre las patas del sátiro... (...)” (*Crimen*, p. 83) On the importance of the satyr as a symbol of unbridled lust in the late nineteenth century Gothic see Briggs, 1977.

¹⁸² Trans: “One felt like kissing her; but not in the mouth, like her husband did, but rather on the forehead, when one kisses virginity and perils”.

¹⁸³ Trans: “Making her delirium even deeper, more intimate, she recreated in the confused mist of her imagination the promises of love that agitated her virgin’s organism”.

and the transition between the Gothic imprisonment of Cornelia in the cells of the Inquisition and Rafaela's bondage to her bed and bedroom is illustrated in this passage from Punter:

What happens in the last years of the century is that the image of the prison as organically linked with the city, as a painful, even hellish, but essentially social experience, disappears; it is replaced by the recurrent images of the solitary dungeon on the one hand, and on the other the ubiquitous convent, social but silent, the home not of bluff and desperate honesty but of midnight intrigue, and there are obvious connections here with the evolutions of psychology and with portrayals of boundaries between inner and outer psychic worlds (Punter, 1998, p. 30).

While Punter refers to the late eighteenth century and the English written Gothic novel, his assertion is also perfectly applicable to the nineteenth century in Spain where industrialisation and subsequent urbanisation of rural areas took a slower turn, especially among the petit bourgeois who was to be the protagonist of this social and geographical transformation. This milieu is precisely where Sawa comes from. It is no surprise that he is interested in issues of permeability and contagion in a new landscape in which petty shop owners and prostitutes have occasional access – albeit temporarily – into the ideally separated and compartmentalized life of the bourgeois, “infecting” it, and the way this reflects, impinges and metaphorizes on the importance of the body and other liminal spaces, such as the home (as both the household and the house) or the family.

Childbirth would actually be the only occasion when the feminine corporeal would be allowed to intrude upon the lives of the petit bourgeois in the Spanish *fin-de-siècle* : the body of the bourgeois woman was for pro-creation in order to perpetuate not so much the numbers of a given social class but to solidify a symbol of the bourgeois economy based on production (of either feedstock or finished consumers' goods). Thus, families managed and conceptualized as if they were factories themselves (and vice versa, the locus of industrial production seen as a one big traditional patriarchal family with the bourgeois as the omnipotent father of the working places) reproduce and echo the economic ethos of its time. It is a very

easy symbol to understand among many other reasons due to its ubiquity and consequently permeates the social idiom of the industrialization (which in Spain was a later phenomenon than in the rest of Europe).

Family as a symbol also strengthened the social legitimization of the bourgeois at a time where social mobility posed a threat to the hegemony that bourgeois was beginning to attain and that had already rooted in other parts of Europe where industrialization was already well under way. There is an instance in *Crimen legal* precisely of how the aristocracy was beginning to lose its preponderance on behalf of the bourgeois by having its symbols and social identity signs appropriated (symbols and signs understood as part of the wider identity-shaping Orteguian “circumstance”): “Se casaron en San Luis, y, siguiendo la moda que los burgueses han copiado a los aristócratas tomaron el tren momentos después de terminado el refresco¹⁸⁴” (*Crimen legal*, p. 79). To the same extent that the bourgeois woman’s body was expected to be reproductive, the body of the working woman (as in *Noche* by the same author) was for exploitation and the body of the prostitute was paradoxically the way to compartmentalize these two instances – reproduction/exploitation – by avoiding contagion of procreation by lust by creating the physical body space where the borderlines could be clearly distinguished (for example Noemi enables Ricardo to lead his own masculine life of lust outside the nuptial bed and paradoxically and despite all the sexual activity they boast does not get with child once). There was nothing else outside these all-pervading stereotypes.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

What eventually victimises Rafaela is as much her condition of bourgeois married woman at the end of the nineteenth century in Spain as her very own body inability to bear children. In that sense, her victimisation is built around her very sense of identity. What *Crimen legal*

¹⁸⁴ Trans: “They got married in St Louis Church, and after the fashion the bourgeoisie has copied from the aristocrats they took the train shortly after finishing their drinks”.

shows is how inextricably social class and biology were linked in the late Spanish nineteenth century, an innovative aspect of my own research.

In order to articulate such linkage Sawa relies on the concept of family. Families are on the one hand, built through biology (i.e. procreation), whilst on the other hand can be said to be a social construct, in that there can potentially be many family models on top of the traditional, patriarchal one. Specifically, in *Crimen legal*, Sawa focuses on the Spanish middle class family of the late nineteenth century. To make his focus point even more central to the narration, he compares it to a different family model: Ricardo's parents. The main difference lies in the fact that this is a working class family. Sawa articulates the differences again from a biological point of view (Ricardo's mother has an uncomplicated pregnancy and labour); and from a social point of view: Ricardo's father is not a lust-driven whoremonger like his son.

Ricardo's liaisons with his prostitute lover take place during the second half of the novel. Noemi the good-cum-evil prostitute introduces herself in a textual way: when asked by Ricardo she produces an article taken from a magazine signed by A. Wasa¹⁸⁵. When Noemi finally speaks on her own behalf, and not through the imposed voice of the magazine article, it is to behave as an evil character. In Noemi, Sawa combines both traditions inherited from the bourgeois/middle class discourse: that of the prostitute as the threatening one which can corrupt the whole of the social fabric; and the prostitute as the fallen woman to be pitied and patronised through controlling, normative discourse. Both of them are textual constructions.

Rafaela is but (a textually constructed) body and Noemi is but a text. The relationship which Noemi establishes with herself is merely textual: random like the occurrences of the Gothic novels, whose passages mirror the emotional life and the plot of its protagonists; she is also built around these conventions: Noemi is introduced as an exploited victim (her own mother was a prostitute) to eventually become Ricardo's accomplice in crime. As a character she is manipulated depending on the expressive needs of the author.

Crimen legal can only exist at the borders of the canon, at the borders of genres and at

¹⁸⁵ A very poorly disguised anagram of Sawa himself who thus appears as a character (a textual character since it is but the mere printed name of the author of the article) within his own novel.

the borders of different discourses; it exists even at the borders of different narrative conventions drawing from, at the time, an already old fashioned understanding of Romanticism; rather incipient modernism and post-romantic Realism. Not only *Crimen legal* itself as a novel happens at the very boundaries of literary life but a good deal of what *Crimen legal* is trying to portray, i.e. nineteenth century society, happens at boundaries also. *Crimen legal* first appeared in a publishing house that would market the violent anticlerical diatribes of Sawa and López Bago, but also romances, historical novels, and Gothic works; the kind of prose that – like *Crimen legal* – existed at the boundaries of the canon¹⁸⁶. Both the human lives and the narratives which so zealously wanted to account for these human societies were also happening in the boundaries, on the hybrid spaces where two (traditionally) alien spheres meet. There are no scenes of entirely familial domesticity, which is always polluted or contaminated –like the blood of the bastard child – by the presence of friends, members of the extended family or even servants; while at the same time public spaces offer occasions for the display of the private and personal: lovers, wealth and the management of personal relations.

My contribution to knowledge lies in the way that the importance of family as an organiser and generator of identity signs has been explored from a Gothic aesthetics viewpoint. Sawa specifically frames his middle class family within Gothic conventions in order to convey his harsh criticism of the middle class ethos: the evil conniving husband who kills his own wife; the angelical wife who embraces her fate. Families had been a traditional plot-organising device on Gothic narratives from the very inception of the mode: take for example, *The Castle of Otranto* or *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Sawa, however, introduces among all these Gothic conventions a newfangled sense of corporeality marked by abjection which had remained previously unexplored. Sawa is, however, too imbued of that middle class sense of identity he criticises, and consequently, *Crimen legal* is not so much an indictment against such a family model, but a warning against its corruption.

¹⁸⁶ See Correa Ramón, 2012, p. 17.

6. *Criadero de curas*: Preliminary remarks

Criadero de curas (1888) was the second of Sawa's works to be published as part of the *Biblioteca del Motín*¹⁸⁷ ("The Library of the Riot"). From its inception the intention to frame the novel within an anticlerical context was clear. This 'library' was a collection of books which was marketed under the sponsorship of the (furiously) anticlerical newspaper *El Motín*¹⁸⁸. *El Motín* was a characteristic example of the Spanish *prensa joco-seria* (the satirical press) of the last third of the nineteenth century, a popular journalistic subgenre at the time, characterised by very short magazines of approximately 4 pages, peppered with short satirical texts both in prose and verse and published weekly (Bozal, 1979, p.183). Despite their "radical criticism of politics" these publications would offer "no solutions, no alternatives" to any of the socio-political maladies they so bitterly satirised (Bozal, 1979, p.190). In the case of *El Motín*, "the back page also included a number of advertisements for various items put out by *El Motín*'s publisher. These included novels [frequently anticlerical in theme and usually sympathetic to republicanism], poetry books, posters, postcards and other paraphernalia usually of an anticlerical nature" (Sanabria, 2009, p. 47). It was precisely in this back page that Sawa's novels were advertised and where the socio-political and economic context of their publication was clearly laid out. Spaces for the dissemination and discussion of anticlerical propaganda did abound in Spain in the late nineteenth century; *El Motín*, however was more than just that. Anticlericalism was the defining feature of *El Motín*, and as such a marketable commodity. Other publications would occasionally provide spaces of opposition to the Church, to ecclesiastical policies or to its priests. *El Motín*, on the other hand, in making anticlericalism its identity sign, built its own distinctive discourse on anticlericalism. *El Motín* was not only one

¹⁸⁷ The first of Sawa's *nouvelle* to be published as part of *El Motín* was *La sima de Igúzquiza* from the same year of 1888. It was advertised in *El Motín* for the first time on 9 February 1888, in the supplement to issue number six. (Hemeroteca digital. Biblioteca Nacional de España, February 1888, Web, accessed: 2 January 2017)

¹⁸⁸ Examples of other novels published by *El Motín* include *Mi mujer y el cura* (*My wife and the priest*) by José Zahonero (see issues of *El Motín* from January 1888: Hemeroteca digital. Biblioteca Nacional de España, January 1888, Web, accessed: 2 January 2017) or *Dos curas a cual peor* (*Two priests, one worse than the other*): Hemeroteca digital. Biblioteca Nacional de España, 8 August 1888, Web, accessed: 2 January 2017) whose titles are a good indication of their explicit anticlerical content.

of the longest running among the *joco-serios* (from 1881 to 1926) but also one of the most popular due precisely to its branch of anticlericalism: “lo que haría famoso a *El Motín* iba a ser el anti-clericalismo de que hace gala, quizá porque en los otros aspectos no va más allá – ni tampoco más acá – que los restantes periódicos joco-serios¹⁸⁹” (Bozal, 1979, p. 188). Thus, the issue from 26 April 1888 reads: “Antes de terminar la presente semana pondremos a la venta una nueva [novela], titulada *Criadero de curas*, original de Alejandro Sawa¹⁹⁰” (*Hemeroteca digital*. Biblioteca Nacional de España, 26 April 1888, Web, accessed: 2 December 2016). In publishing *Criadero de curas* as part of the catalogue of anticlerical editorial products of *El Motín*, Alejandro Sawa partook in the catalogue’s ideological idiom and contributed to create a very specific language for anticlericalism to the same extent that he received the influence of such language, a language which had been carefully attuned by José Nakens.

José Nakens (Seville 1841- Madrid 1926) founded *El Motín* in April 1881¹⁹¹ – although the journalist Juan Vallejo would have also had a capital role in its development (Molina Martínez, 1998, p. 264) and it could be said that it was practically Nakens’ sole personal responsibility. Between 1884 and 1885, when Sawa started publishing his first novels, *El Motín*’s campaign against Cánovas’ conservatism and its attacks against the Church caused *El Motín* to be sued on many an occasion. Some of its issues were seized by the authorities, it was fined a number of times, it was legally prosecuted in 84 occasions and 47 members of its staff were excommunicated by the Catholic Church. Nakens himself wrote (and published) extensively, and some of his shorter pieces were compiled in larger volumes with such significant names as *Colección de Fieras Clericales* or *La Musa Anticlerical*¹⁹² (Fuente Monge,

¹⁸⁹ Trans: “What made *El Motín* famous was the anticlericalism it proudly exhibits, maybe because it is not different from the other satirical papers when it comes to other characteristics”.

¹⁹⁰ Trans: “Before the current week is due, we will have a new novel on sale: *Criadero de curas*, an Alejandro Sawa original”.

¹⁹¹ For a brief autobiographical note on Nakens, where he mentions his experiences in the army and as a theatrical author see Nakens, 2010, p. 37-45. See also Molina Martínez, 1998, p. 263-264 for a biographical note and a brief bibliography, made up mainly of the compilations of the articles he himself wrote for *El Motín*.

¹⁹² Trans: ‘A Catalogue of Clerical Beasts’ and ‘The Anticlerical Muse’ respectively.

2015, p.301). The ferocity with which censorship applied itself against the publication is symptomatic of, in turn, the vitriolic attacks of *El Motín* against the establishment. Nakens would often describe in his writings a Spain which was “corrupta, chaquetera, fanática y conservadora¹⁹³” (Muiña and Villalba, 2010. P.32). With these credentials, Sawa’s novel could not be but based on a heavily anticlerical discourse – even more so than his previous novelistic efforts (*La mujer de todo el mundo*, for example, from 1885; or *Crimen legal* from 1886). *Criadero de curas* is then, not just another anticlerical novel by Sawa, but one in which he adopts the characteristic tone of *El Motín*, the characteristic idiom of *El Motín*’s own branch of anticlericalism¹⁹⁴.

There is a component of anticlericalism in both *Crimen legal* and *Noche* which coalesces with a very strong critique of the aristocracy and the middle classes respectively. In that sense, anticlericalism is not as central to these two novels as it is to *Criadero de curas* and constitutes yet another element more among the many available within the characterisation of the middle classes (together with, for example their materialistic drives or their lack of moral scruple) – a characterization which in the case of the Radical Naturalists was forcefully negative.

6.1. Modern editions and secondary sources

In the most recent scholarly article devoted to *Criadero de curas* to date, the novel has been characterised as an “anti-bildungsroman”¹⁹⁵ (see Ezpeleta Aguilar, 2014, p. 293). The

¹⁹³ Trans: “corrupt, nepotistic, fanatic and conservative”.

¹⁹⁴ See on the variety of the anticlerical feelings and the different discourses it generated: “Fueron tantos y tan diversos los campos en los que se puso de manifiesto la confrontación clericalismo/anticlericalismo que llegados a este punto cabe hablar más de anticlericalismos que de anticlericalismo” (Suárez Cortina, 1998, p. 129). Trans: “The fields were the confrontation between clericalism and anticlericalism were so many and so varied that it would be better to speak of anticlericalisms rather than anticlericalism”.

¹⁹⁵ “Arguably Germany’s best-known literary genre, the Bildungsroman (novel of formation) often retains its German name in other languages. Traditionally, it depicts a young man abandoning provincial roots for an urban environment to explore his intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual capacities. Whether nurturing or inimical, this new environment proffers the possibility of attaining wisdom and maturity. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister’s Apprentice Years*) (1794-1796) is usually credited with being the first example of the genre, and it still serves as the standard against which other Bildungsromane are measured” (see *Bildungsroman* in McCarthy, 2010, p.41).

brief life of its young protagonist, comes to an end as the novel finishes, curtailing thus the initiation process characteristic of the genre. The bildungsroman necessarily culminates in the completion of a fully formed man/human being who reaches adulthood. Ezpeleta Aguilar attributes this challenging of the genre to the lack of faith or distrust in education in modern day French and English narratives which would have influenced Sawa directly or indirectly. An earlier article by Gutiérrez Carbajo points towards a similar direction, in that it relates *Criadero de curas* with the formative years of the protagonist, albeit with certain considerations: “Ambas narraciones [both *Criadero de curas* and *Declaración de un vencido*] pueden ser consideradas “novelas de aprendizaje”, *aunque no se atienen rigurosamente a los cánones del género*”¹⁹⁶ (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2003, p. 748; emphasis added).

Gutiérrez Carbajo was precisely responsible for the first edition of *Criadero de curas* to be published after the original one in *El Motín*. In 1999, and published together with *Declaración de un vencido* in a single volume, Gutiérrez Carbajo provided not only a contextual introduction to both novels, but also a wealth of explanatory footnotes. In his introduction, Gutiérrez Carbajo abounds on some of the ideas he had earlier exposed in article format (See Gutiérrez Carbajo, 1991) – namely the concomitances between Radical Naturalists aesthetics and Zola theoretical corpus. Thus, he mentions how “late nineteenth century biologism” shapes characters, (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 1999, p. 58); how the lack of individualisation in the characters is reinforced by describing them in animalistic, zoomorphic terms, (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 1999, p. 57-58); and how the novel is structured around a symbolic dialectic tension of light vs. shade (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 1999, p. 61). In contrast to this, Ezpeleta Aguilar mentions how early forms of an incipient modernism can already be seen in Sawa’s *nouvelle*:

La novela corta *Criadero de curas* (1888) pone de manifiesto cómo la literatura española encuentra en el modelo Lópezbagueño una veta de la que surgen

¹⁹⁶ Trans: “Both narratives [*Criadero de curas* and *Declaración de un vencido*] can be regarded as “learning novels”, *although they do not strictly adhere to genre conventions*”; emphasis added.

narraciones que preparan el camino a las estéticas modernistas y de vanguardia. Y es que el escritor naturalista radical toma conciencia de la realidad con la intención de desenmascararla, pero libera además el lenguaje de algunos corsés¹⁹⁷ (Ezpeleta Aguilar, 2014, p.291).

The other modern edition of the novel currently available is Andreu Navarra Ordoño's from 2014. Whereas the introduction is considerably short and not aimed at the scholar – as Gutiérrez Carbajo's – it is the first time that Gothic aesthetics are explicitly invoked in the description of Sawa's novelistic:

Sawa era ya por lo tanto un escritor hecho y derecho cuando emprendió la redacción de la novela corta que nos ocupa, lo cual explicaría la seguridad con que maneja los resortes de la novela de claroscuros, violencias y sufrimientos, *la novela goticista*¹⁹⁸ (Navarra Ordoño, 2014, p.xiii; emphasis added).

The links between anticlerical literature in general and Gothic aesthetics had already been touched upon by Molina Martínez in his study of literary political anticlericalism in Spain in the nineteenth century. Whereas not specifically alluding to Sawa, Molina Martínez relates some anticlerical literature explicitly to Gothic aesthetics while at the same expanding his definition of the anticlerical literature of the period:

... relación con el costumbrismo, *caracteres de novela gótica*, cercanía al Romanticismo, desarrollo folletinesco, pasajes escabrosos, lenguaje entre soez y burdo, exaltación de la libertad frente al absolutismo, demostración de que los

¹⁹⁷ Trans: "The short novel *Criadero de curas* (1888) shows how Spanish literature found in the López Bago novelistic model a source for forthcoming modernist and avant-garde aesthetics. Radical Naturalist writers become aware of reality; and in unmasking such reality they release language from its limitations".

¹⁹⁸ Trans: "Sawa was a fully-fledged writer when he started writing this novel [*Criadero de curas*] which would explain the self-assurance with which he employs the devices of the chiaroscuro, violence and suffering novel: the Gothic novel".

personajes clericales no poseen vocación religiosa y de que la vida conventual o en los seminarios va contra natura¹⁹⁹ (Molina Martínez, 1998, p. 21; emphasis added).

Some of the elements cited above can be easily assimilated within Gothic fiction: although Molina Martínez does not expand on what he understands by “Gothic novel characters” it could easily be inferred – especially bearing in mind the other attributes he lists for this specific branch of anticlerical narrations. For example, canonical Romanticism pre-dated Gothic more considerably and in its exploration of subjectivity, incorporated to its stock a considerable number of Gothic tropes, such as imprisonment as a metaphor of madness or alienation. Likewise, the proliferation of “bizarre passages” or episodes is practically the *raison d'être* of the Gothic.

Molina Martínez’s thesis however points towards Gothic aesthetics as a catalyser or enhancer of the emotions of rejection against clerics and religion that anticlerical literature aims to trigger. The other appreciation of Molina Martínez worth mentioning is that he is one of the few authors who questions Radical Naturalists allegiance to their own creed: “Cabe preguntarse si estas obras tan cercanas al folletín y con la voluntad escueta de servir como propaganda ideológica, se encuentran dentro del Realismo o Naturalismo literarios tal y como se caracterizan en la segunda mitad del XIX²⁰⁰” (Molina Martínez, 1998, p. 37).

As per the reception of the novel back in 1888 it is probable that, just as with the rest of Sawa’s work, recensions and reviews of it would have been limited (if there were any at all) to other publications with which there was an ideological affinity. The publishing industry at the time, and more specifically, the publishing industry revolving around popular novel and other forms of editorial ephemera such as almanacs would have been completely different from

¹⁹⁹ Trans: “... its relation to the comedy of manners, characters taken from the Gothic novel, aesthetic closeness to Romanticism, development after the *feuilleton*, bizarre passages, coarse and rude language, exaltation of freedom against absolutism, evidence that priest inspired characters do not hold a true religious vocation and evidence also that life in religious environments goes against nature”.

²⁰⁰ Trans: “Is worth questioning whether these works, so close [aesthetically] to the *feuilleton* and with the thinly disguised intention of serving as propaganda are really within the confines of literary Naturalism and/or Realism as understood in the nineteenth century”.

modern conceptions of publishing. As Pura Fernández points out, there would have been a strong awareness among readers of the sort of product they were buying due to heavily specialised publishing houses and channels of distribution and the very dynamics established by the publishers, their authors and the reading public:

La literatura de combate propuesta por López Bago y sus acólitos, (...) se asienta sobre un sistema de asociación mecánica que permite reconocer el producto editorial, el sello de una edición naturalista, de una obra heterodoxa y escandalosa. (...) La novela de la Biblioteca del Renacimiento Literario adquiere un estatuto de paradigma editorial establecido sobre un claro pacto con el lector, el cual satisface en su demanda inmediata, lo que asegura su éxito²⁰¹ (Fernández, 2005b, p.129).

Thus, one of the few reviews about *Criadero de curas* is to be found in *Dominicales de Libre Pensamiento*. This was a like-minded Republican Masonic paper with practically the same four-page structure, where the last one is precisely, as in *El Motín*, devoted to advertising different items of what Sanabria terms the “anticlerical industry” (see above and Sanabria, 2009, p. 47):

La empresa de *El Motín* nos ha remitido la preciosa novela que acaba de publicar, titulado *Criadero de Curas*, original del conocido escritor D. Alejandro Sawa. Es un fidelísimo cuadro, tomado del natural, en que el autor ha pintado magistralmente las miserias y vilezas de la vida del Seminario. El protagonista, cuyo espíritu se rebela á [sic] permanecer en aquel antro de corrupción y perversidad, huye de él; mas apresado luego, es encerrado en inmundo calabozo, y rodeado por sus verdugos, que contemplan con satisfacción todos los detalles de su agonía. La narración es interesantísima, y el estilo correcto y elegante. Véndese esta obra, al precio de una peseta, en la Administración de El Motín, Fuencarral, 119, principal izquierda, Madrid,

²⁰¹ Trans: “The combat literature proposed by López Bago and his followers (...) is based upon a system of associations that makes the product of a given publisher recognisable. The novel of Renacimiento publishing house is established upon a pact with the reader”.

y en las principales librerías²⁰² (*Hemeroteca digital*. Biblioteca Nacional de España, 10 Junio 1888, Web, accessed: 6 December 2016).

6.2 Plot Summary

Criadero de curas is the (hi)story of Manolito, a young child who becomes a boarder at the Catholic Seminary of Ávila, rebels against the discipline of the institution, manages to temporarily escape and on being found, is returned to the seminary, where he perishes at the hands of the priests who run the establishment due to the severity of the punishment. Manolito is born in Ávila of Francisco and Juana, extremely devout parents who are characterised by, paradoxically, their lack of defining features. So once again and just as Rafaela in *Crimen legal* was “(...) regular de todo, de estatura, de gracia, de belleza; regular hasta de inteligencia²⁰³” (*Crimen legal*, p.80); Manolito’s parents, two characteristic specimens of the middle classes according to Sawa, are portrayed as:

(...) pródigos de nada, ni de sensibilidad, ni de inteligencia, ni de dinero (...) Eran por lo contrario como pertenecientes a una humanidad puramente de munición, temperamentos perfectamente acomodados al gusto medio, a la medida proporcional de todos²⁰⁴ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 11. All citations of *Criadero de curas* refer to the 2014 edition by Navarra Ordoño).

In referring to Manolito’s parents as “humanidad de munición” (human cannon fodder) their corporeality, their physicality is brought to the forefront of characterisation. Francisco and Juana decide early in Manolito’s life, that the young child is to become a priest; this occurrence

²⁰² Trans: “*El Motín* has just sent us the wonderful novel they have just published, *Criadero de Curas*, an original by Alejandro Sawa. It is a faithful portrait al naturel in which the author has portrayed the misery that life in a seminary is. The protagonist whose spirit rebels against that pit of corruption and depravity escapes; however, he is eventually captured and locked in a fetid dungeon, surrounded by his executioners who keep a satisfied watch over his agony. The narration is very interesting and its style elegant. The price of this work is 1 peseta and can be purchased in the offices of *El Motín*”.

²⁰³ Trans: “ (...) just plain, plain height, plain beauty, plain intelligence”.

²⁰⁴ Trans: “They were not generous; not generous with their intelligence; with their sensitivity or with their money. In fact, they were mere human cannon fodder, plain and average”.

actually constitutes the sententious beginning of the novel itself: “Quedó decidido. Aquel niño no podía ser otra cosa que cura²⁰⁵” (*Criadero de curas*, p. 7). The sentence also sets the programmatic tone of the novel, in that the readership of the novel would have been familiar with the idiom Sawa is referencing: the sense of ineluctable determinism by which the force of inheritance – extremely religious parents – and the milieu – religious education and environment – coalesce in order to turn Manolito into a priest. In a way, Sawa could be said to be true to the naturalist credo in this very specific instance at least – if not in others.

The crudeness with which Sawa refers to the parents of the protagonist seems to be an invective, a sort of accusation which, verging on the purely biological, Sawa aims at those members of the middling classes who succeed economically. There is an issue at stake here that in a way would be later echoed by Baroja:

Baroja se debate entre la defensa espontanea de los que se revelan como los más débiles, y la realidad de ver que, cuando esos hombres desfavorecidos asumen una medida de poder, actúan de manera no distinta de la que los que habían utilizado su predominio contra ellos en el pasado²⁰⁶ (Navajas, 1990, p. 19).

At age 10, it is decided that, being able to read and write, it is time for Manolito to enter the seminary. His own mother however, fearing the time when he will have to leave the paternal home keeps putting the enrolment off. When Manolito’s father (Francisco) dies, Juana, Manolito’s mother, cannot resign herself to be left alone and decides that Manolito will only enter the seminary once she dies herself, which the reader is given to understand, is a matter of short time. Manolito’s mother then finally passes away – in some scenes which combine the sentimental pathetism of the *feuilleton* with the obscene crudity of the corporeal Gothic and the organic so beloved to the self-fashioned “Radical Naturalists”. These aesthetics

²⁰⁵ Trans: “It was decided. That child would become a priest”.

²⁰⁶ Trans: “Baroja is split between the spontaneous defence of the weakest in society and the fact that once these outsiders assume power they behave exactly the same as those who were exploiting them did”.

of decay and degradation contribute to the atmosphere of doom and damnation that has been left implied in the first line of the novel (see above):

aquella triste y pálida mujer que, con las manos agarrotadas sobre el pecho sosteniendo el crucifijo, tendida trágicamente panza arriba en toda su extensión sobre el fondo de su caja de madera, abiertos los ojos, desencajada la boca por un último estertor, con el vientre abultado como el de una mujer preñada de nueve meses, quedaba allí en la más grande habitación de la casa²⁰⁷ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 23).

Manolito is then boarded in the Seminario Conciliar de Ávila. In order to ensure his education and care, he is endowed with his parents' fortune (55000 *duros*²⁰⁸) a fact which contributes to his commodification in the eyes of the priests. Once in the seminary the child will develop a very intense friendship relationship with a fellow student named Federico.

The whole severity of the establishment and its atmosphere of injustice eventually trigger in him a desire to escape, since readers are given to understand that – among other forms of control and repression – he is not allowed to be friends with Federico. The reasons, though, do not seem to be entirely clear: “¡Pero que le dificultaran las manifestaciones de su amistad con Federico...!, ¡que les impidieran ser amigos...!”²⁰⁹ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 49); it is however tempting to read this as an instance where priests could be alarmed at the prospect of romantic or sexual feelings being developed between both children, paradoxically fabricating a forbidden amorous liaison where there might have been none.

After a brief escapade, he is captured and restored to the seminary, from which he will never return alive: as a result of the imprisonment the priests in the seminary submit him to as a punishment for his elopement he dies of starvation. The violence with which he is punished

²⁰⁷ Trans: “(...) that sad and pale woman who with gnarled hands held a crucifix over her chest, lying down tragically face up on the bottom of a wooden box, eyes open, mouth disjointed on a last stertor, with her stomach swollen like a pregnant woman who was due, was left there, in the biggest room of the house (...)”.

²⁰⁸ Approximately the annual wages of 420 farm hands; obviously a considerable fortune (my own calculations, based on Carreras and Tafunell, 2005, p. 1173).

²⁰⁹ Trans: “They [the priests] did not want him to show affection for Federico! They were putting obstacles to his friendship with Federico!”.

is closely linked to his endowment; the priests who run the seminary cannot allow not so much the run of the student, but the potential disappearance of the wealth he is being sponsored with: “Ese joven no se va solo, lleva en su poder cincuenta y cinco mil duros... es un dinero que sale de la caja sin haber tenido siquiera el tiempo de calentar el sitio²¹⁰” (*Criadero de curas*, p. 61). The wealthier the student, the more severe the punishment he is submitted to, his body being a measure for his own chrematistic value, as in a commercial exchange, which elicits parallelisms to manual work or prostitution.

The punishing cell where Manolito perishes at the end of the novel, inhabited by rats and spiders, “(...) pero las ratas gordas como gatos bien mantenidos...!, ¡pero las arañas monstruosas que presentía por todas partes!, ¡pero las correderas!”²¹¹ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 82) stands in stark contrast with the open spaces of the garden where the other children play:

La hora del recreo había sonado y la gente menuda del seminario, ansiosa de libertad y de aire libre bajo el cielo, había asaltado las puertas que dan acceso al jardín del establecimiento, desbordándose por las avenidas del parterre y por la gran explanada que lo precedía, con el vigor imperativo de una fuerza de la naturaleza que pide plaza en los conciertos de la creación para contribuir a la labor inconsciente que todos los cuerpos realizan en la medida de sus funcionalidad y sus fuerzas²¹² (*Criadero de curas*, p. 84).

Thus, the novel ends in an elegiac tone which is emphasized by the freedom with which the other children enjoy their break.

²¹⁰ Trans: “That child is not escaping on his own, since he is taking fifty-five thousand *duros* with him... Those are moneys which are leaving the safe having barely had the time to be there”.

²¹¹ Trans: “(...) those fat rats, like well-fed cats! The monstrous spiders he could feel everywhere! The cockroaches!”.

²¹² Trans: “The bell announcing the break rang and the youngsters, eager for freedom and the open spaces under the sky, crossed the gates which opened onto the gardens of the seminary, flooding the avenues with the willing vigour of force of nature which claims its place in creation, in order to contribute towards the unconscious toil that all bodies contribute to”.

6.3 *Criadero de curas* within the anticlerical industry

The framing of Sawa's novel within an educational institution is – among other things – a way to incardinate the novel within, not only the anticlerical idiom, but also within the anticlerical industry of the time. Anticlericalism is, in the case of *Criadero de curas*, and due to the specific circumstances of its publication, part of a clear commercial strategy, aimed at a distinctive audience, and with a very clear aesthetic mark of identity. This mark of identity was one that drew equally from the popular novel of the time, left-leaning socio-political movements (such as a young Spanish socialism at its early stages of formation) and the very autochthonous, anticlerical tradition that had been gaining momentum throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. The main thesis of Enrique Sanabria's book on Nakens (Sanabria, 2009), the driving force behind *El Motín*, is precisely that Nakens' particular branch of anticlericalism, is to be understood as an inherent part of the republican nation building project. At this time in Spanish history, such a task had been neglected in favour of a conciliation policy which would leave behind political instability at the cost of a "weak yet heavy state machinery" (Vincent, 2007, p. 54).

What Sawa is specifically doing in *Criadero de curas* is to actualise a discourse which merges anticlericalism with the Gothic aesthetics of the popular novel within the specific Spanish milieu. As in a romance, priests in *Criadero de curas* do not show any redeeming features: they are brutal and ruthless and delight in being so. On the other hand, Manolito, the protagonist is noble and virginal, and as such especially vulnerable. Despite the environment of degeneration of the seminary, Manolito remains incorruptible. Thus, when the priests fail to break him down and proceed to punish him, his punishment is staged as the disintegration of his own self. Physical and emotional torture run parallel to each other and closely linked, so the discourse of anticlericalism is inseparable from certain perceptions of corporeality characteristic of Gothic aesthetics. The emotional appeal of the plot is incardinated in a context in which the main anxiety arisen by the Church is the interference in the family issues (and by extension, in the nation issues, and vice versa). In a society modelled after the traditional

middle class family the impact of Church meddling in family and/or nation issues would necessarily impinge on the other.

Education was, in the somehow strained relationships between the Spanish government and the Spanish Catholic Church of the last third of the nineteenth century, one of the constant currencies exchanged in the multiple negotiations between parties. Whereas the main objective of the clergy was to return to pre-1868 levels of estate safeguarded religious monopoly²¹³, it cannot be denied that education was understood by the Church as a powerful tool for its own sake in ensuring a powerful sphere of influence within Spanish society. Such is the case that Pope Pius IX himself, if not sanctioned, at least complied with the polemic Article 11 of the 1876 constitution, which enabled religious freedom, “on the understanding (...) that the Spanish Government would introduce legislation enhancing the Church’s role in education” (Callahan, 2000, p. 26). Not only religious monopoly, but the role of the Church in education was also precisely one of the ecclesiastical attributions that between 1866 and 1868 had been enhanced by the powers to be, namely “significant control over the appointment of new teachers and school curricula” (Callahan, 2000, p. 15).

Sawa’s novel is thus, on the one hand, coherent with the anticlerical-republican-nationalist project of renovation sponsored by *El Motín*, whereas, on the other hand, it is such a passionate and violent pamphlet-like denunciation of the clerical estate mores, that at times makes the whole anticlerical diatribe feel entirely gratuitous. Its forms and manners are vague, vaporous and generic: “(...) él ya sabía por las revelaciones de Federico y algo también por su propia experiencia, que lo que es con el cariño de los profesores del seminario no tenía que contar para nada. (...) ¿Es por ventura que un sacerdote puede querer sino a la sotana

²¹³ The proposed text of the education law presented in 1878 declared “that sanctions would be imposed on teachers failing to respect Catholic doctrine and morality in the classroom” - see Callahan, 2000, p. 29. It seems obvious in this specific instance that Spanish Catholic Church needed not only the acquiescence of the government, but also its active support in extending a punitive arm towards those educational areas which could potentially escape its jurisdiction.

que lleva puesta?²¹⁴ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 47). It is not so much that the profound lack of characterization makes such assertions unbelievable, as if the clergy were a unified self-contained organism of feeling and thought; it is also the violence of the language itself that results almost parodic: “Abrió la boca y aquello fue como si se hubiera abierto una letrina. Todas las inmundicias de su pensamiento desaguaron en oleadas fangosas por los labios del sacerdote²¹⁵” (*Criadero de curas*, p. 35). In that sense it can be seen how occasionally the political agenda weighs down the literary aspects of the novel:

(...) la novela anticlerical no evoluciona porque junto a hechos reales ficcionados recoge la tradición de la corriente y los nuevos escritores sectorizan opiniones para la consecución de un Naturalismo zolesco y demostrar la imposibilidad de la continencia sexual o defender el matrimonio del clero, más que considerar el anticlericalismo manifestación ideológica que desarrolla las convenciones que han formado lo que conocemos como materia anticlerical²¹⁶ (Molina Martínez, 1998, p. 38).

A priori, Naturalism, at least as understood by Zola (and not so much as he himself put his theories of the novel to practice) is not compatible with the Gothic. On the one hand, the Gothic was always a project of exploration of human subjectivity, which would explain the ease with which some of its elements got incardinated within certain aspects of romantic aesthetics. On the other hand, naturalist narrative theories were a (strong) reaction against – precisely – the excesses of romantic aesthetics which most heavily relied on the Gothic inheritance. See for example Zola in his essay “Naturalism in the Theatre”:

I am waiting for the time when there will be no more conjuring tricks, of any sorts, no more strokes of a magic wand which transforms things and beings from one moment to

²¹⁴ Trans: “He [Manolito, the protagonist] knew already from what Federico had told him and from his own experience also that he could not count on the tenderness of the teachers at the seminary (...) Can a priest love anything other than his own cassock?”.

²¹⁵ Trans: “He opened his mouth and it felt as if a latrine had been wide opened. All the filth of his thoughts flooded in muddy waves from the priest’s lips”.

²¹⁶ Trans: “Anticlerical novel does not evolve because, together with fictionalised real events it gathers also its own tradition where new authors polarise opinions in an aim to replicate Zolaesque Naturalism and show that chastity is impossible or to defend priests right to marry, rather than abound into anticlericalism as an ideology”.

the next. I am waiting for them [romantic play writers] to stop telling us unacceptable stories and to stop spoiling accurate observation by *romantic* incidents, the effect of which is to destroy even the good parts of a play (Zola, (1967) [1871], p. 220; emphasis added).

At the same time, the Gothic was born as a reaction against the materialism which was characteristic of the burgeoning middle classes of the eighteenth century: "Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life" – says Horace Walpole of the "modern kind of romance" (Walpole, 1978, [1765], p. 43)

6.4 Manolito: Gothic child/Gothic character

As a child Manolito precludes problematic definitions of the child characteristic of the twentieth century: "(...) the product of its domestic environment while being at the same time a predetermined, already-programmed human being" (Bruhm, 2006, p.99). The implications are that the child, in vacillating between the Lockean tabula-rasa and the Rousseauian inspired innocence on the one hand (Bruhm, 2006, p. 99) and the Freudian unconscious-layered human being on the other (Bruhm, 2006, p. 104), actually vacillates between either victim or wrongdoer. As Bruhm himself points out with regards to post-war moral panics affecting children: "As sites of innocence, they [children] were vulnerable to foreign invasion" (Bruhm, 2006, p, 100). Object and subject respectively in psychoanalytical terms – different roles within the Gothic evoke different sets of anxieties. In its incompleteness, the child is not only susceptible to victimization – in that it can be invaded, violated and re-constructed for nefarious deeds. The implications of being incomplete at this childhood stage are that the child can also be sexually ambiguous and/or ungendered.

Traditionally the Gothic – and other forms of horror and terror – have been imbued of contemporary fears and anxieties – by uncovering, enhancing or commercially exploiting them

(see Tropp, 1990, p.1). In putting a young child at the core of his novel Sawa is being a pioneer in pointing towards what would become a new source of anxiety with the turn of the century: childhood. These anxieties, in any case, and as Sue Walsh explains within the context of the Gothic novel, “point to a desire to attain a stable answer to an implicit question: ‘What is the child really?’” (Walsh, 2007, p. 183). In its failure to articulate a “stable” (i.e. explicit) answer, the Gothic – and in this specific case, Sawa’s novel – unveils the legitimacy of such question and justifies itself in that the source of anxiety once again lies in the ambivalence and ambiguity with which the anxiety manifests itself. It is not so much *what* the child is that represents a source of anxiety, but *not knowing or understating the nature of such what*. Naturally, the issue would not manifest so explicitly as this in the Gothic. To begin with, the departure point would be the illusory pretence that, in this case, “child” or “childhood” is a stable category. In *Criadero de curas*, the concern of nineteenth century society with gender and sexual identity and their bearings on social roles and behaviour manifests itself in the very person of Manolito, the child protagonist. In order to try and answer what is the child, Gothic narratives seek to dismantle the representation of childhood through the narration: “Narratives of darkness tend to *construct* the child as an *ambivalent creature*” (Cavallaro, 2005, p. 135; emphasis added). Thus, in those ambivalences weaved in Gothic child construction the true unstable nature of the child comes to the forefront: “... precisely because children are not yet fully encultured, they are frequently perceived as a threat to the fabric of adult society: they retain a connection with a primordial and inchoate world that does not respect rigid codes and fixed patterns of meaning” (Cavallaro, 2005, p. 135).

If or when conceptualised as a *blank slate*, children have a disruptive potential which has been duly exploited in Gothic narratives. In this section of the chapter I propose some parallelisms between Sawa’s treatment of female corporeality and the child’s, due, to a certain extent, to the lack of literary references from which Sawa can draw inspiration. In *Criadero de curas* there is tension arising from the transposition of some of the characteristics of the Gothic romance (such as the stock character of the young woman in peril) into a novel of anticlerical

propaganda which results in occasional incongruences. Sawa pioneers the use of a religious boarding seminar for the location of his novel within a context of anticlericalism. However, previous manifestations of anticlerical fictions would have been based on traditional Gothic narratives. Without previous narratives to guide Sawa in the writing of *Criadero de curas*, the sense of comradery between the children protagonists is based on the conventions of Gothic romance's amorous liaisons. Thus, in certain instances, the demonstrations of male heterosexual friendship amongst the children are unintentionally or accidentally portrayed in heavy hues of romantic love.

By supporting my thesis with what Enrique Sanabria has referred to as the "misogynistic language of anticlerical republicanism" (Sanabria, 2009), I will demonstrate that Sawa's places a series of female attributions on the protagonist child which have been directly borrowed from some of the anticlerical propaganda of his time (mainly from the periodical *El Motín*). In doing so, I challenge previous views of Sawa as a proto-feminist (namely Puebla Isla, 2006) and argue that his denunciation of some of the maladies which were afflicting contemporary women were just a way of pushing his political agenda of anticlerical republicanism. Such denunciation would have been cladded anyway in the terms characteristic of the middle classes idiom – which is paradoxical, when bearing in mind that this was the social class he so violently wanted to attack.

The ordination for which Manolito is educated – one could almost say "condemned" or "doomed" – is eventually aborted at the end of the novel because Manolito's nature and temperament, his own physiology, are not suited for the priesthood:

Era [Manolito] un símbolo fuerte del célebre aforismo de Hipócrates, grabado con oro en el frontispicio de todas las academias en que se enseña a estimar la vida: "Mens

sana in corpore sano”. Todo, absolutamente todo, si se quiere; todo, menos la larva de un cura²¹⁷ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 9).

This same “damnation” could be read however from the point of view of the Gothic, a mode in which the very sense of temporality, the incardination of reality within a time continuum carries a threat. The past is often the haunting of the present: it is but a repository of opportunities for the present to become haunted. Such haunting explains, on the one hand, the historical settings of the early examples of the genre – the middle ages in Spain or Italy; and on the other, the powerful symbolism of the ghost or revenant, two of the Gothic tropes par excellence, which transcend the temporal barrier in linking past and present within a single unique identity. It has been argued that, in a way, the child belongs in this timeless category of the undead: “(...) the child is seen as having no notion of time. Used for the generation of mystery and suspense, this absence of early memories is also taken as a sign that the child exists outside of time and is therefore timeless” (Georgieva, 2013, p. 193). This is clear with Manolito, the child protagonist of Sawa’s novel. In his timeless texture he can be innocent and pure, almost feminine in his affections; he can also be brave and virile. He is – almost literally – everyman. He is yet to become and in his state of indetermination, of incompleteness, he can be constructed as a blank canvas which serves the narrative purposes of the author. If the present is under the constant vigilance and threat of a past event which will eventually unfold itself, the present is the place where the ineluctability of the future is crafted. The body is the most cohesive expression of the impact of temporality in the human being and it is a constant reminder of human vulnerability. It constantly tests the boundaries between the possibilities which it offers – the body after all enables life – and its sheer vulnerability to external aggressions, which will in due course cause a necessary demise. The body of the child is even

²¹⁷ Trans: “[Manolito] was a strong symbol of Hippocrates famous aphorism, the one which is set in gilded letters at the door of all those academies where the love for life is taught: “Mens sana in corpore sano”. He could be anything; anything at all, anything but the larvae of a priest”.

more problematic in that tensions between conflicting views of their sexual identity develop precisely in the child's body:

There is currently a dominant narrative about children: children are (and should stay) innocent of sexual desires and intentions. At the same time, however, children are also officially, tacitly, assumed to be heterosexual. Cute boy-girl romance reads as evidence of the mature sexuality that awaits them, and any homoerotic behaviour reads as harmless play among friends or as a mistake that can be later corrected by marriage (Bruhm and Hurley, 2004, p. ix).

In starting the novel in fateful undertones, Sawa starts to articulate Manolito's damnation. A past decision – not taken by Manolito, but by his parents – directly affects Manolito's own existence – and not his parents', the parties more heavily involved in such arrangement. The decision to turn Manolito into a priest, thus becomes itself the revenant, the familial curse, in that it will not materialise until Manolito reaches maturity to be ordained. The decision looms threateningly over the child existence and consummates precisely at the time when it needs to materialise: when he ingresses to the seminary. In an ironic turn however, rather than becoming a priest, Manolito finds his own death in the process. This is, paradoxically not surprising, given the dark undercurrents with which the ecclesiastical career has been portrayed in the novel – a portrayal the readers of the novel would expect and be familiar with on the grounds of the context of its publication.

The alienation of the child (so dear to Gothic aesthetics) is in Sawa double folded: on the one hand, Manolito is an alienated character within the novel. He is ill at ease in the seminary and does not seem to socialise with other children (other than his friend Federico). He does not seem to understand the power dynamics between priests and students either – as evidenced by his confrontation with the Latin tutor, with whom he tries to reason and treat as an equal. On the other hand, there is a clear sense of alienation between Manolito as a character and his creator. Because Manolito is both “a character and a figure of style”, characteristic of children within Gothic narratives according to Georgieva (Georgieva, 2013,

p. 192) he is casted in a light of ambiguity. In fact, furthering the relationship of the representational ambiguity in both female and child representations in *Criadero de curas*, the same could be said of female characters in previous Gothic manifestations – or even in other Sawa's works such as Noemi the prostitute of *Crimen legal* – that they are “characters and figures of style” on Georgieva's words.

He is almost a character playing himself in his own life within the internal logic of Sawa's narrative. As such, Manolito is brought up surrounded by toy versions of the Catholic ritual implements, such as chalices and saintly icons which are brought from all over Europe; he even has his own chapel where he can perform – again and as in *Crime legal*, in both its senses of on the one hand “doing” or “executing” and on the other of “acting a part in a play” – the Catholic mass ritual:

De Paris, de Viena, de Roma, llegaban a la estación de Ávila todos los días cuantos juguetes religiosos pudo soñar la fantasía de un principito enfermo: altares completos, vasos sagrados, atriles, monigotes de madera y de yeso representando a todas las celebridades del santoral católico, chirimbolos de metal con adornos de talco, cromos, candelabros y hasta una araña de cristal soberbia para que pendiera del centro de la capilla e iluminara con los resplandores de sus veinticuatro bujías las solemnidades del culto²¹⁸ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 11-12).

This deceitful superficiality, almost like a *tromp l'oeil* which deconstructs religious ritual through playful exposure, is a characteristic element of the Gothic. Representation – in its sense of “performance” – takes place on the very frontier of reality, making thus reality itself difficult to distinguish from its ersatz copy, the pretence. There is a constant component of theatricality in Sawa – as already seen when discussing the episodes devoted to Rafaela's

²¹⁸ Trans: “All the religious toys that the imagination of a sickly prince child could dream of arrived in Ávila station daily from Paris, from Vienna, from Rome: fully fledged altars, sacred chalices, lecterns, wood and plaster images of all the celebrities in the catalogue of Catholic saints, metal menagerie, images, candelabra and a superb glass chandelier, hanging from the ceiling of the chapel which would illuminate with its 24 light bulbs the splendour of the mass”.

abortion in *Crimen legal* – which positions his readers in a similar situation to that of the shocked protagonists of the Gothic romance. Theatrical performance is a device by which for example given truths and dogmas can be de-constructed by bringing the mechanisms by which they acquire meaning to the forefront and in that sense dismantling them as mere social convention: as, in this case, with the Catholic ritual mass which Sawa exposes as a game or recreation for adults. This is a literary device that exploits the motif of the Doppelgänger from a textual point of view. As in a doubles game – so keen to the Gothic – Catholic Mass, as a text can be read as the ritual which sustains not only a faith, but a whole society or, alternatively, as useless pastime. This explains how on the one hand, the Gothic has been conceptualised both as a heavily transgressive form while being sustained upon very conservative (quasi-reactionary) narrative patterns, symbol and metaphors. The anxiety channelled and atoned for through Gothic narratives is based thus on the ambiguity of the Gothic discourse itself. The threat in Sawa's parody lies not so much on the fact that the Catholic Mass is a children's game or a theatrical performance, but on the fact that it is not clear whether it actually is any of these things or not: "...liminality or 'hesitancy' is also endemic to the Gothic, as Gothic is a means by which the third phase of the social drama is articulated" (Killeen, 2009, p. 11). By the "third phase of the social drama" Killeen refers to a previous section of her text where she refers to Victor Turner's theory of the development of social dramas in four stages: breaching of normal social relations; exacerbation of the breach; introduction of coping mechanisms and finally, acknowledgement that the breach is irreparable (Killeen, 2009, p. 10). Hence, a Gothic reading of this passage in Sawa's novel has to acknowledge the importance of social ritualised gestures (in this case, mass) in order to ensure and facilitate the social cohesive identity of large segments of the Spanish population of the last third of the nineteenth century in order to understand how deeply the threat in his parody runs: "Play is often considered a vital part of the process through which children develop into adults through the understanding and application of rules within given parameters" (Cavallaro, 2005, p. 136). Thus, and whereas in referring to play in the lines

above Cavallaro points towards “one of the social strategies deployed to socialise children” she is also implicitly pointing towards the potential subversive values of play.

This aspect takes a more sinister turn at the end of the novel when Manolito is actually sacrificed in a Christ-like manner in a sort of inversion of roles, as if the game had prepared him to stage his actual death. It is characteristic of the Gothic to emphasize the totemic value of both toys and religious implements: “Traditionally, they [dolls] were objects to be taken quite seriously – as fetishes, religious icons and images endowed with metaphysical properties” (Cavallaro, 2005, p. 137). The Catholic ritual acquires, after being mocked as play or a game, negative and threatening connotations, which are later confirmed in Manolito’s death. A bit like the child itself, the Catholic mass and its playful nemesis– that of the representation of the mass that Manolito carries out in his own chapel – is suspended in ambiguity: harmless for Manolito; a ritual which carries an echo of sacrificial rituals for the priests who rule the seminary. Religious ritual – and more specifically Catholic mass – has also got a long tradition within the Gothic in that it represents the breeding ground of and for the demonic: “Since its outset, the Gothic Novel has been obsessed by the demonic in its various manifestations. Satan is the most common and singular example of a demonic presence, though others would be evil spirits, devils, ghosts and supernatural disturbances” (Mulvey-Roberts, 2009). Mathew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796) is the most obvious example, in that a pious priest becomes Satan’s worshipper after being tempted during the exercise of his pastoral duties. In a ruthless (and very serious) mockery of the religious rituals, the priests, become the demonic figures who, in celebrating a black mass of sorts, sacrifice a human child to the “god” of economic gain in an ironic inversion of the Catholic mass – which in instances such as the sharing of bread and wine can be interpreted as a communal celebration of selflessness. Despite his avowed anticlericalism, Sawa is – very characteristically in some anticlerical sectors of the late nineteenth century in Spain – not so much preoccupied with the proliferation of clericalism, but with the misinterpretation clericals are (deliberately or not) carrying out of their own dogma, sullyng it. The short paragraph where Manolito exhales his last breath is rich in elements

which suggest a ritualization of death. Certain aspects of the Christian dogma, such as the resurrection of Christ, coalesce with Gothic motifs – see below the portrayal of priests as a “black stain”:

Volvió en sí, abrió espantosamente los ojos, no como quien despierta, sino como quien resucita, y al verse rodeado de la gran mancha negra que producían los profesores del seminario agrupados alrededor de la cama de su víctima el niño lanzó un grito de espanto y volvió a perder el conocimiento²¹⁹ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 83).

Going back to the characteristic Gothic issue of the child’s sexuality, I would like now to consider the relationship between the two protagonist children of the novel. Manolito’s relationship with Federico is described by means of clichés practically lifted from the stock of amorous romance which invite to consider it almost as a homoerotic liaison between the two children:

Tenía necesidad de Federico, lo necesitaba como el aire para la respiración, y así no es de extrañar que hiciera de él su amigo; y a pesar de que lo notaba débil y enfermo, a pesar de que lo notaba niño y completamente varón por todos los cuatro costados, insaciable de sensibilidad, no lo quiso amigo solo e hizo de él padre y madre y súbdito y caudillo, todo en una pieza. Hizo del objeto de sus ternuras, una dilatación del propio ser y su sustancia. Y tuvo momentos en que, al verlo rodeado de sus compañeros de clase, le brillaron los ojos como a un dogo que teme que le arrebaten su presa. Había en ese afecto un germen fuerte de amores poderosos que habían de estallar en el porvenir, conforme fuera el planeta girando sobre su eje²²⁰ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 46-47).

²¹⁹ Trans: “He [Manolito] came round, opened his eyes frightenedly, not as someone who wakes up, but as someone who has come back from death, and when he saw himself surrounded by the great black stain that the priests formed around his bed he cried in fear and lost consciousness again”.

²²⁰ Trans: “He [Manolito] needed Federico as air is needed for breathing, so it should come as no surprise that they became friends; and despite he could tell that Federico was sickly and weak, despite he couldn’t tell whether Federico was a child or a virile man, insatiable for kindness, he wanted him not just friend, but father and mother and follower and leader, all in one. He became the reason for his tenderness, and extension of

For example, when Manolito offers himself in a Christ-like figure manner to be punished in lieu of Federico – who has been unjustly accused by one of the lecturers of not knowing the Latin lesson – he is just behaving as the knightly hero who is willing to give his life for his maid. Naturally, there is also here a component of fear of child sexuality which is uncomfortably resolved as it corresponds to the Gothic. In being sexualised, the relationship between both children articulates a sense of despair which is characteristic of the torn lovers, while at the same time retaining their childlike characteristics of innocence and purity:

Tuvo Manolito, a presencia de aquel niño que inspiraba las virginidades de su afecto el sentimiento de la amistad, tuvo, con ser tan fuerte, el mismo instinto ciego de las vegetaciones parasitas en el momento en que dirigen sus ramas, que parecen tentáculos al tronco al muro donde se proponen agotar la vida en un fuerte abrazo que no languidezca nunca²²¹ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 42).

Note however, that such sexualisation is an accident as a result of the lack of previous literary models with which the affects of an infantile friendship can be convincingly represented. This would explain the reason why occasionally (but not always) the drives of the characters appear to be, after Freud, clearly sexualised, based on the amorous liaison of the Gothic romance.

Such a use of “virginity”, which Sawa anticipates already in *Crimen legal* when referring to Rafaela (paradoxically when she is giving birth, in labour) points toward a strongly anticlerical gendered language. As in *Crimen legal*, virginity is, in *Criadero de curas*, almost a social marker, a condition closely linked to the infantilization of the characters which transcends the fact of whether they have had sexual intercourse or not. This idea will be further

himself and his own substance. And there were times when he saw Federico surrounded by his other classmates and his own eyes sparked like those of a mastiff who will fight whoever wants to dispute his prey. There was in that affection the offspring for a powerful love which was to explode in the future, as the planet went on turning...”.

²²¹ Trans: “In the presence of that child who inspired friendship to the virginity of his affections, Manolito headstrong as he was – the same blind instinct of the parasitic plants that hold the tree-trunks or walls where they hope to die with their tentacle-like branches”.

developed below: anticlericalism was framed within a heavily misogynistic language since women were perceived to be more vulnerable to the nefarious influence of priests.

6.5 Anticlerical gendered language

Manolito exhibits heavily gendered behaviours, both masculine and feminine, which are at times, at odds between themselves and at odds also with what it is expected in terms of societal roles in relation to those behaviours. For example, he fantasizes with proudly flaunting his muscles at his own mother in a specific context of masculine assertion: “Mira, tienta aquí, en los brazos. ¿Ves que duro esta? Es que no han nacido para levantar objetos tan poco pesados como la hostia de redención o el cáliz ²²²” (*Criadero de curas*, p.19). In this passage, Manolito is fantasizing with – once again – performing, playing the role of the head of the family. The pater familias has died and in contesting the parental decision to send him to the seminary he also takes upon himself the normal attributions of husband and father: his plan to avoid the seminary is to relocate his own mother with him (i.e. become the new father and as such rule not only his own destiny but that of the whole familial unit). Such intention comes clad in a gender-marked discourse of corporeality: the strong heavy muscles are an identity symbol of masculinity which establish a clear physiological demarcation between Manolito’s corporeal reality and the female body, and most importantly, between him and the priesthood. Virile, strong arms are wasted in the daily duties of the – implicitly effeminate – priests. As seen above, when Sawa says that there was not even the larva of a priest in Manolito, it is not the first time that Manolito’s alleged unsuitability for the robe is presented in strictly physical or physiological terms. Paradoxically, these instances of priesthood/femininity assimilation sit rather at odds with a discourse which saw in the priest a threat to conjugal stability on two antithetical opposed grounds. On the one hand, the priest would make up for sexual celibacy by indulging in other mundane pleasures – just like women, more susceptible

²²² Trans: “Look here, feel my arms. Aren’t they strong? They were not made to raise light objects like the holy host or the mass chalice”.

to less intellectual endeavours; which were to be financed by middle class wives' donations to the Church. The image of the effeminate, almost emasculated priest is evoked by the protagonist of *Criadero de curas* himself precisely in the same instance quoted above just before referring to his muscles: "Ese traje negro, *compuesto de faldas como el de las mujeres*, me da tristeza el verlo²²³" (*Criadero de curas*, p.19; emphasis added). On the other hand, the anticlerical discourse was keen also on conjuring the image of an unnaturally sex deprived man who seduced the aforementioned bourgeois wives in order to satisfy mainly but not exclusively the same sexual urges whose lack of was also parodied in the anticlerical press of the time and of which Sawa partook (see Delgado, 1993, p. 37 on the priest as "rival of the husband"). This is actually made explicit in what Sanabria refers to as "the gendered language of republican anticlericalism" (see Sanabria, 2009, chapter 5). The way these antithetical ambiguities in the construction of the priest from the anticlerical perspective are conciliated is also rooted in a physiological idiom of sexual differentiation. French historian Jules Michelet (1798-1874) as quoted by both Delgado (1993, p. 41) and Sanabria (2009, p.129) – whose translation I quote below, emphasis added – proposes that it is in the nature of the priest to partake in both gender identities:

Three elements form the system [the system referred to is marriage]: (1) the man, the strong and violent one; (2) the woman, fragile by nature; (3) the priest, born a man and strong, but who has preferred himself fragile, resemble women, and who in this way can participate as one or the other, and *meddle between the two*.

Sanabria ties the characteristic tone of anticlericalism – "pornographic, homoerotic, comic, and misogynistic" (Sanabria, 2009, p. 123) – with a decidedly sexist discourse at the core of which lay Spanish republican anxieties about virility. It is probably paradoxical from a contemporary point of view, that the allegedly most progressive political forces and discourses

²²³ Trans: "That black dress, made of skirts, like women's – it makes me sad".

of the time – those which championed republicanism and anticlericalism – did not unanimously embrace gender equality:

A pesar de que fue la lerrouxista Clara Campoamor la gran defensora de las posturas sufragistas, la casi totalidad de diputados radicales, republicanos y radical-socialistas – incluida la propia Victoria Kent – se opusieron a lo que se contemplaba como una condena a muerte de la República a manos de la reacción clerical²²⁴ (Delgado, 1993, p. 51).

Gender inequality was carefully woven into the master guidelines of the republican anticlerical discourse, in a way that the insistence on biologically differentiated bodies tied in with socially differentiated roles (see Sanabria, 2009, p. 126-127). The whole republican-anticlerical campaign, became thus a three-pronged endeavour of misogyny, anticlericalism and republican nationalism.

Consequently, misogyny became so embroiled with republican anticlericalism (or anticlerical republicanism) that the three are indistinguishable among themselves, forming a cohesive and self-contained body of thought:

Spanish republican men of the Restoration were particularly concerned with what went on in the confessional between their mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, and the priests; the hypersexuality or dysfunction of both women and priests; the ‘emancipation’ of women; and the honor of the once proud and virile Spanish nation sapped of its vigor by the Church and clergy and its hold over Spanish women (Sanabria, 2009, p. 125).

The idea of an embodied masculinity is further explored in relation to the priesthood when Manolito asserts his masculine identity in contraposition to that of a priest. Manolito recalls the incident when he first confronts the lecturer who intended to punish his friend Federico unfairly

²²⁴ Trans: “Despite being a Lerroux supporter, Clara Campoamor, was the champion of female suffrage; most radical members of parliament – republicans and radical-socialists (Victoria Kent herself included) opposed to what they saw as a death sentence to the republic at the hands of republican reactionaries”.

in terms of a heavily gendered sense of hierarchy: “Un niño no debe ponerse nunca a papitos con un hombre, y luego su protesta fue, cuando menos, un acto de sublevación contra la disciplina²²⁵” (*Criadero de curas*, p. 49). That reliance on discipline as a legitimate ordaining principle is symptomatic of masculine gendered spaces such as the army or, in this case, the religious seminary where the presence of women is banned. Discipline itself is not contested: as a symbol of masculinity, Manolito happily embraces it; just as he embraces also the hierarchy established between boys and men. After all, these are symbols of identity in specific instances in which identity is built around sex and gender: childhood identity is precisely the conundrum to be resolved at the core of Sawa’s novel.

At the same time, and in having Manolito imprisoned at the hands of the priests, Sawa is drawing from a very clear tradition of anticlerical gendered language, a tradition which finds in women (and not so much children) the natural victims of the abuses of the clergy – just as the Gothic novel does. The character of Manolito is thus feminized in his ordeal which brings to the forefront the potentially sexual motivations of the priests who punish him. For Manolito to be punishable and become a proper Gothic heroine he needs to go through the textual rituals and constructions of the Gothic romance which are closely interwoven with different anticlerical discourses – even from the early induction of the genre, when the Gothic was more often than not synonymous with Catholic medieval brutality and obscurantism. Thus, Manolito’s affection for Federico; the considerable endowment he brings to the seminary – almost like the dowry of a soon-to-be-wed woman; his imprisonment when he does not yield to the wishes of the priests and finally his passive death due to starvation, are all instances of his construction as female-gendered.

Of Federico, we are to know as readers that his own uncle looms over him just as the villain of the Gothic romance looms over the infatuated couple, whose forbidden relationship – just as Federico and Manolito’s – is to be disrupted: “[Federico, in being told that Manolito

²²⁵ “A boy should not stand up to a man; his protest was, after all, an act of rebellion against discipline”.

has no family whatsoever] Qué más vale eso que no tener, como a mí me pasa, un tío que es también cura y que, después de haberse portado muy mal conmigo, me encierra en esta casa, castigándome por cosas imaginarias que yo no he pensado hacer nunca²²⁶” (*Criadero de curas*, p. 46). In fact, when considering whether to escape or not, the single most powerful argument that Manolito can think of in favour of staying in the seminary is precisely the fate of his friend Federico when left behind: “En poco estuvo que abandonara su determinación diez minutos después de haber decidido llevarla a la práctica con todas sus consecuencias, obseso ahora con el recuerdo de ese pobre amigo suyo a quien iba a dejar abandonado²²⁷” (*Criadero de curas* p. 51).

Manolito also arrives at the seminary with a considerable economic endowment. That image is somehow echoed in the illustration from the issue from 22 September 1910 in *El Motín* (see Sanabria, 2009, p. 133, fig. 5.1.) which portrays a lady on her way to ingress in the nunnery, escorted by two priests and carrying with her a valise with half million pesetas, which readers are given to understand is to be bequeathed to the convent. The parallelism between Manolito’s situation which is kept against his will based almost exclusively on the pecuniary value he has acquired in the eyes of the priests brings to mind republican anticlerical attitudes towards Church influence and meddling on the family affairs in a way which can bring serious economic repercussions: “In a society in which men built up dowries for their female offspring, anticlericals argued that priests greedily tried to convince young women to enter convents in order for the Church to reap the benefits of those dowries” (Sanabria, 2009, p. 132). There are obviously differences between both instances. For example, whereas it is implied that these female “offspring” join the convents willingly (albeit under the quasi-mesmeric influence or affections of the husband-like priests) Manolito is opposed to the idea well before his ingress. What is common to both however, is certain imagery, a sort of grammar built around

²²⁶ Trans: “Better that [Federico refers to Manolito’s total lack of family] than having an uncle who is also a priest, like I have, and that has behaved badly towards me and locks me up in this place and punishes me for imaginary things he has invented up and that I did not even intend to do to begin with”.

²²⁷ Trans: “He almost lost his determination to escape within ten minutes of having made up his mind, obsessed as he was with the memory of his friend who was to be left behind, abandoned”.

the image of the commodification of the victim. As a motif is unique in other literature of religious boarding schools in the Spanish tradition, a characteristic which could be explained due to the pioneering nature of Sawa's work. In his article on *Criadero de curas*, Ezpeleta Aguilar cannot find any earlier novels which specifically take place within the oppressive walls of an educational institution. Indeed, he mentions *El último estudiante*, from 1883, a novel that, whereas it is framed within naturalistic aesthetics deals with university life (Ezpeleta Aguilar, 2014, pp. 292-293). From 1890 onwards – year of publication of *Barrabás* by José Zahonero – boarding school novels follow each other in regular succession in a way that could be said almost constitutes a subgenre (see Ezpeleta Aguilar, 2014, p. 302-303; for a more specific discussion of Jesuit pedagogy within the context of the boarding school/seminary novel see also Igelmo Zaldívar, 2015).

Since there are no novels which predate the aesthetics of *Criadero de curas*, the idiom with which Sawa builds his narrative is borrowed to a large extent from the already established language of misogynist anticlericalism. There are no other precedents – other than for example, the ones offered by the Gothic tradition which in that sense run parallel to the republican anticlerical idiom. Think of for example, *Cornelia Bororquia*, which partakes on both idioms. The economic motivation of the imprisonment was in fact a common occurrence in anticlerical literature – the victimization of the young male child, not so much so. The young male child has nothing to offer the priests in the restricted world view of republican anticlericalism; consequently, in order to be used as ammunition against the Church the child needs to be gendered in a way that readers will recognise the ideological cues of the text. In the young heroine of the Gothic novels coalesce many of the anxieties of anticlerical republican misogyny, anxieties that can find no articulation in the figure of the male child. Thus, male children are – in anticlerical texts – spared the threat posed by the Church unless, as in Sawa's novel, they are conveniently (mis)gendered. Anticlerical literature of the time would focus mainly on the potentially devastating effects of Church-sponsored education – not so

much on the child himself, but on the republican militants who would have to combat a stronger Catholic Church.

However, the instances of the novel where both discourses most clearly coalesce are precisely the imprisonment and death of Manolito, which constitute the emotional zenith of the novel and as in *Crimen legal* – where Rafaela's death provides the only possible closure of the novel – its natural conclusion. In fact, it could be said that Manolito starts dying from the instance he decides to escape. Manolito has not been yet brought back to the seminary from his escapade, and the priests are already planning his punishment – which will inevitably lead to his death. After all, in Sawa's world of Gothic physical determinism Manolito's lack of physical attributes for the priesthood means that since there is no room for him within the normative family (both his parents are dead) he is to disappear and die. However, this being a later novel, Manolito's own voice is more nuanced – in comparison for example to Rafaela's in *Crimen legal* – and readers get to hear it sometimes among the white noise of the narrator's own. This however, does not preclude it from being a mismatch of different discourses, like a patchwork quilt.

6.6 Other Gothic motifs: incarceration

Whereas one of the most characteristic Gothic elements of *Criadero de curas* is the imprisonment to which Manolito is subjected by the priests who run the seminar, I would like to focus not so much on the incarceration itself, but on the fact that such incarceration is bestowed upon a child – and a male one, for that matter. In Gothic works, incarceration is normally suffered by a young woman; and while such incarceration normally disrupts her amorous liaisons thus enhancing considerably the dramatic tension of the novel, the ulterior motivations of such imprisonment are mostly, but not exclusively, economical. However, sex and romance are so inextricably linked to the commodification of this female prisoner that it is almost impossible to consider one without the other: "In Gothic narratives featuring the

malicious incarceration of a woman, greed for material gain, and/or lust for power and sex tend to be behind it” (Lee Six, 2010, p. 23; see also p. 20 for a more thorough consideration of female imprisonment within a Gothic context). That is, in securing the romantic interests of the female protagonist, her lover will also have access to her fortune. Thus, whenever a female surrenders her wealth to their guardians, custodians and/or captors within the context of Gothic narratives, the whole affair tends to be strongly gendered and framed within social structures of marriage and/or kinship. The – commonly female – body is placed within a dense web of economic interest, normative familial ties and sexual desire and violence in which all three elements pull for the control of this body:

In famous romantic works like *El trovador* or *Don Juan Tenorio*, the seduction of the nun or novice necessitates and even justifies the murder of some man with power over her will, usually a father or possessive brother. Such Oedipal themes are commonly elaborated via allusions to sinister aspects of Church history – the Inquisition, the autos-da-fe, the secret prisons, mysterious acts of sacrilege, the ability of clerics to mesmerize young women, and so forth (Mitchell, 1998, p.37).

In yet another example of the assimilation of Manolito into a female character, he does not enrol into the seminary until after both his parents are dead which gives the priests carte blanche to after trying to unsuccessfully “seduce” him, kill him in order to keep his fortune. The hapless orphan of the Gothic novel is such in his triple role of female (i.e. desirable for male sexual consumption); wealthy (commodified) and unprotected. It is not often that children – and even less frequently male children – feature as the victims of traditional Gothic villains’ machinations (although this has been reversed in more modern forms of Gothic). This is because in order for a male child to be a successful object of exploitation (from the Gothic point of view) he would have to elicit as much sexual desire as economic attractive.

As with the examples of Don Juan, provided in the quote above, the way religious motifs are presented in the novel rely heavily on Gothic conventions. The second chapter, for example, where Manolito enters the seminar is titled “Ingreso en la sombra” (“Entering the

shadows”); the priests are described as “sayones funebres” (“funereal gowns”) (*Criadero de curas*, p. 26) and the seminary is referred to as a “calabozo” (“dungeon”) (*Criadero de curas*, p. 27).

By limiting the freedom and constraining the movements of their female protagonists, Gothic authors can explore liminal states of the psyche using bodily metaphors of decay and decomposition which echo the mental anguish of their imprisoned protagonists. It also provides authors with a chance to articulate metaphors of sexual possession, rape and abuse. Incarceration in itself can well serve as either the anticipation, the extension or the metaphorical substitution of the (sexual) possession of the other’s body. In fact, it is the case in many an occasion that the metaphor for sexual violence within the Gothic incarceration context is so thinly disguised – or just not disguised at all – that imprisonment and/or incarceration can take place for its own sake: the motivation is purely sexual in a way in which the incarceration is itself the act of violation, transcending its original metaphorical value and becoming a form of sexual aggression.

In a way, this is (potentially) a problematic approach in *Criadero de curas* since, at no point in the novel are hints of sexual violence against the boarding children intimated. This did not seem to be part of the anticlerical stock of criticisms aimed at the Church; at the time the concern would be that of priests substituting husbands in the affections of their wife’s (see Haliczzer, 1996, p.183). This explains the heavily gendered language with which anticlericalism manifested itself at the time (see Sanabria, 2009, chapter 5). This also explains the insistence of Sawa in the quasi-sexualisation of the children protagonists, in order to reconcile the plot of his novel with an anticlerical idiom he was familiar with and which sat at odds with his novel²²⁸. Thus, the perniciousness of the close contact with priests was for the anticlerical propaganda

²²⁸ See for example a similar case in *Crimen legal*, when he wants to assimilate the physical decadence of Rafaela – a trope normally articulated around the loss of virginity in the context of possible or potential prostitution – and how this sits uncomfortably with the fact that she is a married woman, and pregnant, for that matter.

of the time more closely linked to the evils of religious education than to the threat of physical or sexual violence upon children:

Through the confessional, the clergy could not only undermine the bourgeois husband, normally considered more liberal and progressive than his wife, but could also ensure that the children were educated in Church schools since the confessor would instruct the women of the family to oppose any other arrangement (Haliczer, 1996, p. 197).

For example, Haliczer quotes only two instances before 1888 – year of *Criadero de curas* publication – where anticlerical literature explicitly invokes children in order to warn readers against the influence priests can exercise through aural confession (see Haliczer, 1996, pp. 186 and 187 on respectively, Blanco White and Morphy and Taxil). Even in these occasions the concern is mainly focused on the familial fabric of society, of which children are but a mere component, compared with the actual core of such fabric: the wife. Apart from that distinction of grade, it could be said that, in a way, both female characters (wives or wife-like figures) and children fall within the same conceptual category – and together with the infirm or elderly form the nemesis of the republican anticlerical champion, characterised by his masculinity and virility. Thus children safety rarely featured on the anticlerical industry of the time unless specifically referred to their education; see for example Mitchell, 1998, pp.38-39, where in a brief survey of anticlerical literary works education is but mentioned once, in the words of Father Coloma, as a battlefield of sorts where not only anticlerical militants, but supporters of the Church themselves were invested, not so much in education per se but in the symbol of public power that control of education represented for both factions.

It would not be until later that sexual violence against youth would be explicitly presented as an anticlerical motif. It is not until 1930 that Haliczer first spots an instance of sexual violence aimed at children. His example, however is taken from a cheap pornographic book: note that Mitchell refers to pornography as “the perennial tactical ally of the anticlerical industry” (Mitchell, 1998, p. 37). Under the pretence of an alleged criticism of the protagonist priest’s behaviour the author finds the excuse to set out a plot of exploitative proportions,

where the image of young girls and boys are commodified for sexual consumption which in a way defeats its critical purpose (Haliczer, 1996, p. 193). However, Timothy Mitchell quotes novelist Blasco Ibañez in response to fellow author and priest Coloma almost 40 years earlier, in 1892, that the child is better off at home than in the hands of sexually perverted-sadists (Mitchel, 1998, p.41). In any case, Blasco is not explicit: he could as well be referring to the threat that the influence of such “sadist” could pose (turning the men of tomorrow into sadists themselves) and not so much to the sexual threat that the priests could specifically pose for children.

The crude portrayal of gratuitous violence is reminiscent of both Poe’s “The Pit and the Pendulum” (1842) and other Gothic(ized) instances of markedly sexualised imprisonment such as *Cornelia Bororquia* (1801 – on the dates of publication see Dufour in Gutiérrez, [1801] 2005, p. 11) to take an example from Spain which keeps in pace with religious inquisitorial violence, just as Poe’s short story and, in a way, as Sawa’s own novel²²⁹. *Cornelia Bororquia* is abducted by the Archbishop of Seville who after trying to seduce her unsuccessfully (Gutiérrez, [1801] 2005, p. 88) imprisons her “en el más lóbrego calabozo del *Santo Oficio* para *ablandar mi empedernido Corazón*”²³⁰ (Gutiérrez, [1801] 2005, p. 90; emphasis added). Russell Sebold points towards the implicit Gothicism of *Cornelia Bororquia*, in that its author “diseñó su novela para que recordara el siniestro atractivo de esos deleites sádico-eróticos que estaban de moda en la literatura europea de aquel tiempo”²³¹ (Sebold, 2002, p.57). In incarcerating Cornelia, her captor can prolong or re-address his sexual satisfaction and turn it into a form of scopophilia – whereas the captor (and readers/viewers) meet sexual satisfaction

²²⁹ Although mainly remembered by scholars nowadays, *Cornelia Bororquia* was an incredibly popular novel in Spain throughout practically the whole of the nineteenth century, with several different editions and even a *pliego de cordel* (the Spanish equivalent of a chapbook) version; see Dufour, 2005, p. 28. In fact, it was such its success that inspired *Vargas* (1822) a Romantic novel by Blanco White rich in Gothic elements, in the vein of for example Walter Scott (see Benitez, 1995, web: https://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/7374/1/ALE_11_04.pdf accessed 3 February 2017).

²³⁰ Trans: “In the darkest dungeon of the Inquisition to make my heart surrender”.

²³¹ Trans: “[the author] wrote the novel in a way that is reminiscent of the sinister allure of the sadistic-erotic enjoyments which were so fashionable in European literature at the time”.

in observing the perils of the prisoner; see in previous chapter Mulvey's treatment of the male gaze from a cinematographic point of view and my own application to literature.

While trapped in their respective dungeons, both the nameless protagonist of Poe's story (also a male) and Manolito are unaware of their captors' machinations. Poe relies on mechanised forms of torture that do not seem to need human agency once started – such as the pendulum which threatens with slicing the protagonist's entrails – thus depersonalising the inquisitors. In the same way, Manolito perishes not so much through the agency of his keepers, which in keeping with depersonalisation processes are normally portrayed as a single self-contained body or by resorting to animalisation, but through their inaction. The priests just throw Manolito into a subterranean cell, letting the cold, the damp and the rats undermine Manolito's health. There is one important distinction however; whereas there are no executors as such in Poe's: "(...) the narrator is positioned front and center throughout, with any other character being either absent or only minimally glimpsed (one of his persecutors) or mentioned (his rescuer)" (Fisher, 2008, p. 85) the readers of *Criadero de curas* are invited to witness the council where Manolito's fate is decided. In that sense *Criadero de curas* sits between Poe and Gutiérrez's *Cornelia Bororquia*. On the one hand, the very exercise of violence is so depersonalised that it is difficult to see a sexually sadistic motivation behind it – as in Poe's; while on the other hand, by enabling readers to be privy to the priests' delight in considering what the best punishment for Manolito should be readers become aware of the potentially sexual motivation behind the priests' actions – just as in Gutiérrez's. As readers, we are to experience first-hand anticlerical sadistic pleasure, a form of torture with strong sexual connotations. In *Criadero de curas*, violence upon Manolito is not received or perceived as sexually driven by Manolito himself, and although within the novel there seems to be no awareness of the sexual motivation of the punishment by the priests themselves, passages as the following suggest otherwise:

No había entre ellos más diferencias sino que unos se contentaban, siniestramente mudos, con alargar el hocico como olfateando ya el castigo próximo a ser ejecutado,

y otros prorrumpían en alaridos que significaban en lenguaje humano el afán que el momento del sacrificio se apresurara cuanto antes. Bestias carniceras todas²³² (*Criadero de curas*, p. 63).

This incongruent tension between the apparent lack of awareness of a sexual act, and its commission, is in fact due to the difficulties which Sawa faces when trying to reconcile his references (Gothic romance and anticlerical misogynistic propaganda) with a sort of *bildungsroman*.

6.7 Other Gothic motifs: Gothic spaces and display of violence

It is *intra muros* that the most important events of the plot unfold. Inner spaces, or places where a sense of enclosure and/or imprisonment prevails are rather suited for the development of a series of motifs characteristic of the Gothic framework. In this specific case, Sawa captures the reality of the isolation of such institutions albeit once again, with a caveat:

(...) los seminarios no fueron nunca instituciones religiosas de clausura. Mas si jurídicamente no lo eran, se vivía en ellos un distanciamiento respecto del mundo e incluso de la Iglesia misma, que bien pudiera decirse que vivían clausurados frente al movimiento general de ideas y preocupaciones que interesaba a los mundanos, es decir, a los que no vivían en la clausura, sino en el mundo que tiene los límites que dios le puso²³³ (Díaz Mozaz, 1976, p. 23).

Thus and whereas the seminary where Manolito is boarded would have been exposed to the exterior – among other things by “regular” students (i.e. those who were there coursing

²³² Trans: “The only difference between them was that some of them had enough with stretching their muzzles as if sniffing the punishment whereas others would howl hoping that the moment of the sacrifice took place as soon as possible. All them were carnivorous beasts nonetheless”.

²³³ Trans: “Seminaries were never religious institutions of permanent enclosure. However, their seclusion from the world – and even from the Church itself, was such that, their dwellers were actually barren from the ideas and concerns of the rest of the world”.

their studies, but who were not to follow the ecclesiastical path or career) – Sawa builds an almost-mythical structure, closer to the haunted castle of the Gothic romance than to the educational institution in order to convey the idea of not so much physical, but intellectual isolation and emotional restraint.

There are however other spaces apart from the perishing dungeon which also function symbolically or metaphorically within the text, such as the school itself or even the walled city of Ávila, with its connotations of religious bastion, being the birthplace of the towering figures of Spanish mysticism Saint John of the Cross²³⁴ and Saint Teresa of Ávila; to create the sense of doom and fatality which impregnates the novel. As Cavallaro puts it: "... in the realm of Gothicity, the family and its dwellings are often coterminous" (Cavallaro, 2005, p. 146). Enclosed spaces work as apt metaphors of the psyche within the Gothic context: "Gothic novels, like psychoanalysis, explore the ostensibly irrational or 'distempered'" (Masse, 2012, p. 308). In the enclosed space which the seminar is, dark, occult recesses of the psyche can fester, such as the sadistic tendencies of the priests which would have been repressed in normalised spaces. Another feature which contributes to this is that the denizens of such space are actually mostly children which would have been – in the late nineteenth century conception of childhood – unfinished beings, closer to the primordial materials with which animalistic nature is built, before its adult socialisation.

The violence with which the vocal of the congregation that is to decide on Manolito's punishment expresses himself, is so physical that its signs, such as the reddening of the skin or the shortness of breath, are actually concomitant with those of the sexual arousal: "Aquí se interrumpió poniéndose encarnado hasta la raíz de los pelos; no se sabe si fue rubor o indignación lo que le acometió en aquellos momentos²³⁵" (*Criadero de curas*, p. 57). See also this other example: "Hubo una pausa que significaba para el pensamiento lo que la disnea

²³⁴ Saint John technically was born not in Ávila, but in a town within the municipality some 30 miles from Ávila called Fontiveros.

²³⁵ Trans: "He stopped there, blushing to the top of his head; it is not known whether from shame or indignation".

para la respiración; se ahogaba, le faltaba órgano para pensar²³⁶ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 57).

It is only a few paragraphs below, that Sawa himself acknowledges explicitly the extreme physicality and corporeality of the emotions and reactions of the speaker: "(...) repuesto de su turbación que, como se ve, *era puramente física*, continuó actuando de ponente, relleno de odio, macizo de malas pasiones y sin poderlas expresar, martirizado por la torpeza y la lentitud incorregibles de su palabra²³⁷" (*Criadero de curas*, p. 58; emphasis added). However, and as it is often the case with Sawa he errs into blatant contradiction when assimilating discourses from different idioms or sources. On the one hand, the turmoil the speaker suffers is "*purely physical*", whilst on the other, he is "full of hate and the lowest passions". The paradigm of the commodification of Manolito, by which he acquires an appeal which is as economical as sexual in that it has been fetishized by the priests comes to the foreground when the motivations for the severity of the punishment become explicit:

Aquella suma, cincuenta y cinco mil duros, evocada de repente, fue de un efecto que supera la descripción más ajustada: mudose la color de muchos individuos de la junta hasta tornarse lívida en alguno, y todos alargaron el hocico como excitados por el apetito de una golosina colosal ofrecida en banquete inopinadamente, por sorpresa²³⁸ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 61).

Thus, the tension goes into a crescendo which is characteristic of the Gothic: the nefarious plans of the priests become apparent as becomes apparent also the economic motivation of their sadistic drives – which once again are characterised by a quasi-sexual physical, primary reaction which becomes assimilated to hunger. One of the reasons for this is to make clear the distinction between what is performance and illusion and what is real. Physical

²³⁶ Trans: "He made a pause, which was to his thoughts what dyspnoea is to normal breathing; he was choking; he could not think".

²³⁷ Trans: "Once recovered from his distress which, as it can be seen, was purely physical, he kept chairing the meeting, full of hate, full of low passions, not being able to express them, mortified by the slowness and coarseness of his speech".

²³⁸ Trans: "That sum, fifty-five thousand *duros* suddenly brought up had an effect that cannot be described: the colour drained from the faces of the attendees and they stretched their muzzles as if having been offered a delicious treat in an unexpected banquet".

manifestations of inner turmoil tend to be given a seal of truth, or validity, hence the anger of the priests, which is matched to their dubious moral behaviour. From a literary point of view, Gothic metaphors of imprisonment enabled the exploration of liminal states of psychological being which paradoxically, are echoed in physical images of emaciation of instability such as bleeding, vomiting or suppuration. These explosions of physicality – which can be made to be manifested also on other ineffable emotions, such as the love felt by the two children – stay in clear contrast with social convention and pretence, which has to be interpreted and read into, and as such and by extension, becomes misleading. The Gothic needs of these performances, since the anxieties it articulates lay in the ambivalence and ambiguity of such anxieties: the meeting is for example, and extremely ritualised affair, where the priests take off their capes, and proceed to seat together while the rector of the establishment ensures that formalities are followed, almost like a choreography (see *Criadero de curas*, p. 56). Sawa underlines the way the words of the speaker might not necessarily match his motivations precisely by insisting on the fact that his brief speech justifying the harsh measures to be taken against Manolito is all performance. As readers we are reminded that whenever the main speaker coughs or blows his nose he is playing to an oratorical, rhetorical effect to hold the attention of his audience (see *Criadero de curas*, p. 58). In contrast, other physical acts which are not bound by the artifices of language make his intentions clear: “Con la cara completamente congestionada de rabia, cerrando los puños y descargándolos fuertemente sobre la mesa, al igual que hacen los mozos de cuerda en sus disputas de la brisca y la taberna ²³⁹” (*Criadero de curas*, p. 57). Readers are given to understand that this reaction – in contrast to coughing or blowing his nose – cannot be avoided since it substitutes language rather than enhance it. He starts banging violently on the table with his fists when he cannot find the words for his indignation.

²³⁹ Trans: “The face congested with wrath, banging on the table with his fists, like yobs in the inn, when quarrelling about a game of cards”.

6.8 Concluding remarks

Bodily, corporeal sexuality is a quasi-constant presence in *Criadero de curas*. The relationship of both children (Manolito and Federico) is described in terms of romantic love (see above with regards to the homoeroticism with which the relationship is conveyed). In keeping with a tradition of Gothic imprisonment and anticlerical gendered language Sawa feminises his child protagonist. Also, as explained above, although sexual violence is never explicit the delectation with which the priests condemn Manolito to a dungeon is heavily reminiscent of sadistic sexual pleasures. By homosexualising the relationship between both children, Sawa, in line with *El Motín* is making the misogynist language characteristic of the anticlerical republican magazine which sponsors his novel extensive to his own work. The attributions of the children are shared with the infirm or the elderly – and naturally the female – in a way that highlights the macho ideal of the republican man: mature, virile, healthy. It is easy to see the attraction of Zola's theories for Radical Naturalist writers, who identified closely with this ideal of anticlerical republicanism. The configuration of this stereotype is heavily bodily marked. However, some of the most comprehensive discourses on the body from a literary point of view had been developed through a Gothic lens specially during the last third of the nineteenth century. Likewise, the works of not just Sawa, but the other Radical Naturalists are invested in the same aesthetical project. Consider for example the agonies suffered by different characters taken from the Radical Naturalist stock such as Rafaela in the previous novel studied *Crimen legal*, whose female condition – pregnancy – is medicalised turning her into an ill human specimen unfit for the republican cause, in clear contrast to her husband, for example – who despite being portrayed as a despicable petite bourgeois – always from Sawa's perspective – happily survives her into old age. In *La prostituta* a novel by López Bago from c.1884 the counterpoint to the republican ideal comes in the figure of the marquis in his double condition of syphilitic (i.e. ill, sick) and elderly. The terms in which his illness is presented could perfectly have served as a model for Sawa's depiction of Rafaela's

pregnancy. The marquis lays in bed, observed by other men – impotent, in every single sense of the word and deprived of speech:

Y los dos entraban en el gabinete, cerraban la puerta, y al poco rato salían de allí gritos ahogados, roncros, poderosos, estridentes, la gama entera del dolor, y a cada grito la voz de Pérez, diciendo con enojo: “Vaya señor marques, ánimo, esto es preciso. ¡Ya me falta muy poco!”²⁴⁰ (López Bago, 2005 [1885], p. 178).

Following this passage, the doctor in the novel will abound on a very thorough description of the marquis illness, symptoms... etc. while having breakfast with the marquis himself and the priest that caters for the marquis own spiritual needs. The passage is thoroughly humiliating for the character of the marquis on the double grounds that he is deemed weak and impotent, but also in that his malady has moral connotations.

He has no say in his treatment and stays commodified as the women/children of the other Radical Naturalists. In *Criadero de curas*, Sawa attributes the “sins” of the woman/ill/elderly to the child: susceptibility to religious influence – see at the beginning of the novel, for example, the way Manolito embraces religious liturgy; making Manolito a weak prey of the priests, just as the woman was in the confessional (see Sanabria, 2009, p.128) or other intimate, enclosed spaces full of symbolism. The physical educational environment itself, is just like the confessional an enclosed space which no man – the priest is not conceptualised as such– can intrude. Sawa takes a topic which is dear to anticlerical republicanism – the invasion of the soul (see Michelet’s quote in Sanabria, 2009, p. 129) and adds a physical component.

The body of the child is at the core of all these occurrences: body as object of affection between friends (“A partir de la tarde en que quedó establecido el consorcio, sus corazones no hicieron sino acercarse un poco más todos los días²⁴¹” in *Criadero de curas*, p. 46); body

²⁴⁰ Trans: “Both of them would walk into the cabinet closing the door behind them. Shortly after that powerful, strident screaming, the incarnation of pain, could be heard from behind that door. The doctor would answer irritated to every scream: ‘Come on sir, it has to be done. I am almost finished’”.

²⁴¹ Trans: “From that day when they agreed on their friendship their hearts got closer and closer with very passing day”.

which is imprisoned and decays in its quasi-feminine attributes (“Con la cabeza sepultada entre las piernas y las manos hundidas en el vientre tenía más resistencias que oponer a las embestidas del frío y del hambre, que no tendido a la larga sobre el suelo fangoso del calabozo²⁴²” in *Criadero de curas*, p. 82) and finally body as the site of sadistic-come-sexual pleasures:

¡No hay que pegarles palizas a los muchachos para corregirlos de sus defectos! ¡Con no dejarlos dormir ni darles de comer sino muy poco, se adelanta más con ellos! ¿Que no es bastante porque el chico es fuerte y se burla del castigo? Pues se le agrega el calabozo, y allí forzosamente se le obliga al arrepentimiento²⁴³ (*Criadero de curas*, p. 64-65).

Criadero de curas was written and published within a very clear socio-political context of republican anticlericalism. That, it could be argued, is the real issue at the stake of the novel. Spanish Catholic Church had free rein in the control of lecturers, students and text books in tertiary education for most of the nineteenth century; it was also the main provider of secondary education for boys and girls (Gómez Molleda, 1997, p. 8). Hence the battle for education became closely imbricated in the battle for a new project of Spanish regeneration: republicanism, as one of the pillars of such project could not possibly be understood without anticlericalism. From the anticlerical republican point of view, religious interference in the nation’s affairs was hindering the renovation project needed to shake off Spain’s national crisis (economic backwardness, progressive loss of the colonial empire, political instability). The anticlerical Nakers whose paper published novels such as Sawa’s together with vignettes of violent, lustful, glutton priests and monks was one and the same with the Nakers who abused republican leaders who leant towards the right of the political spectrum from the pages of his magazine – often on the grounds of their clerical sympathies (see Sanabria, 2009, p. 51 for

²⁴² Trans: “With his head buried between his legs and the hands on his lap he could offer better resistance to hunger and cold, rather than laying down on the muddy floor of the cell”.

²⁴³ Trans: “There is no need to beat the children up to amend their mistakes! It is much better to prevent them from sleeping and feed them but very little! Is the boy strong and makes a mockery of the whole punishment? We can then add the dungeon to the punishment and he will repent there!”.

examples on Castelar and Pi i Margall respectively). The satirical cartoons which accompany the texts very often coalesce both aspects of his criticisms, as when for example a trio of fat, rifle and sword yielding clerics stand tall over a mound made of human carcasses “preaching the extermination of *liberals*” (see Sanabria, 2009, p.95, fig. 3.3; emphasis added).

However, in weaving his novel, Sawa borrowed consistently from the idioms of several different cultural traditions: firstly, *Criadero de curas* clearly continues with a line that partakes in the most Gothic and tenebrous aspects of the French socialist romantic tradition²⁴⁴. Secondly, it is also imbued of “the gendered language of anticlerical republicanism”, an idiom characteristic of the “anticlerical industry” – see Sanabria 2009. This is an idiom which shapes and nuances often opposite concepts such as lecherous priests with effeminate almost-castrated priests by making them compatible within the same discourse. What unifies these antithetical representations of Church and clergy is the quasi-gratuitous violence with which religion is to be blamed for Spain’s decadence. Any form of criticism is legitimate as far as it is aimed at the Catholics, as it has been seen in Sawa. Despite his alleged devotion to Zola’s naturalistic creed the documental value of his novels is at best limited, despite Zola’s own dictum of objectivity.

When bearing in mind the narrow relationships between the building of the liberal regime and the interference of the Church in certain political educative matters²⁴⁵, it should come as no surprise that anticlericalism became such a necessary component of the national(istic) Spanish republican project. Thus, *Criadero de curas*, can be read – and has traditionally been read – as a work whose main goals are the counteraction of religious interference in the public

²⁴⁴ “As great admirers of the Third Republic, Spanish republicans often absorbed the political ideologies of brothers to the north of the Pyrenees (...) The thoughts and writing of these men appeared most frequently in the pages of the Spanish republican press, which also serialised novels by Eugene Sue, Dumas, Balzac, Hugo and Lamartine among others” (Sanabria, 2009, p.125). It has actually been suggested that republican anticlericalism especially during the second half of the nineteenth century it is not a specifically Spanish phenomenon but rather a French one – which eventually spreads throughout Europe (Molina Martínez, 1998, p. 27). In support of this thesis, Molina Martínez mentions for example the anticlerical works of Diderot (see Molina Martínez, 1998, p. 180).

²⁴⁵ Such as, according to Gómez Molleda, the amendment of article 11 of the 1876 Constitution and the intellectual independence of the University (Gómez Molleda, 1997, p. 19-20).

education (in Ezpeleta Aguilar, 2014; Navarra Ordoño, 2014 and Gutiérrez Carbajo, 1999). One of my contributions to Sawa's research is that, by extension, *Criadero de curas* can also be read as a warning against religious interference on all other aspects of public life (and not just education) and as a manifest for the need of the secularization of Spain as part of a republican nation-building project, two original interpretations which have not been considered by any of the three scholars above.

However, Sawa's work stands also within a very clear literary tradition, a tradition which in exploiting collective and personal fears and anxieties finds itself at the threshold of several different idioms. One of the main characteristics of the Gothic is ambivalence and ambiguity within the treatment of such fears and anxieties.

As an author however, Sawa could be said to stand in a dialectic position against the idioms he is handling. As with the construction of the female in the previous chapter, his construction of children and childhood is a purely textual one. He seems to be driven by the need to create yet another instance with which to articulate his attack against the clergy. In attempting to do so he has to leave aside his alleged naturalistic literary agenda, which in its claim to faithful reality portrayal is not compatible with the agitated tones of propaganda. Thus, the driving force of his novel is not a Zolaesque rendition of reality. There is no documental aim in Sawa's work, which is cladded in subjectivity. Instead, the novel is built upon the idioms with which republican anticlericalism has created its distinctive sense of identity. The strongest models of *Criadero de curas* are not to be found in literature – let alone in Zola. *Criadero de curas* is a novel not so much about the death of a young child in a seminary, but a novel about the construction of the literary anticlerical idiom of the late nineteenth century – bear in mind that this is one of the first novels (if not the first one) to be based in a seminary and have children as the victim protagonists of clergy abuse. In clear opposition to the naturalistic dictum, Manolito partakes in the stock of the clerical/anticlerical idiomatic tensions: he is either a victim of clerical abuse or the champion of anticlericalism – but in any case, he never reaches identity as a real child. Like the prostitute Noemi in *Crimen legal*, whose biography is mediated

within the novel by the intermission of a pamphlet, Manolito's portrayal is not nuanced; the circumstances of his life are hardly believable. Neither Manolito's emotional fabric nor his vital peripeteia belong to the tradition of the nineteenth century realist novel. He is but a mere symbol, a symbol aptly built with the set of communicative devices characteristic of *El Motín* poured into the mould of the popular novel. It is this way that Sawa can comfortably assimilate childhood innocence to a final sense of female vulnerability: because this specific brand of female vulnerability Sawa deploys is precisely capital in the articulation of – not the naturalistic novel – but of republican anticlericalism. Since the character of Manolito is but a mere pretext for an anticlerical attack, potential anxieties about gender and child sexuality are safely resolved under the anticlerical guise.

7. *Noche*: Preliminary remarks

Noche (1888) was to be the last of Alejandro Sawa's novels to be written and the last work of certain length to be published in his lifetime²⁴⁶. After having published two short works as part of the Biblioteca del Motín (*Criadero de curas* and *La sima de Igúzquiza*, both in 1888), Sawa would have *Noche* published in – once again – the “Biblioteca del Renacimiento Literario”, editorial home of the other self-styled Radical Naturalists commanded by López Bago. This would be – as with his other works – the only edition in Sawa's lifetime. It seems paradoxical that despite being a work of maturity that displays higher levels of narrative complexity than its predecessors, there is to date only one modern edition of the work (that of Mbarga, from 2001). This is especially of note as all Sawa's novels have been re-edited at least once ever since²⁴⁷. *Noche* is in fact a novel where all the different threads that comprised Sawa's previous novelistic efforts are finally woven together. In tracing the physical and moral downfall of a whole family, Sawa deploys a more complex set of literary techniques than in previous works. *Noche*'s plot is considerably denser than that of *Crimen legal* for example, which is focused upon a single occurrence (Rafaela's abortion). *Noche* also presents a wider array of characters, in contrast to *Criadero de curas* which concentrated almost exclusively on the peripeteia of its protagonist Manolito. There is also in *Noche* a much deeper engagement with contemporary literary theoretical tenets – in that Zola's theoretical dictums seem to have been paid closer attention to – and consequently a decidedly experimental aim, which on occasions points towards an incipient modernism.

²⁴⁶ In 1899, 1907 and 1910 he published respectively three short works: *Los reyes en el destierro* (Kings in Exile); *Historia de una reina* (*The Story of a Queen*); and *Calvario* (*Calvary*), the first and last ones being respective adaptations of the theatre play *Les Rois en Exile* and the novel *Jack* both from 1876 by French author Alphonse Daudet. Posthumously and through the mediation of Sawa's widow, Jeanne Poirier, and with the help of Valle-Inclán and Ruben Darío, *Iluminaciones en la sombra* – a collection of miscellaneous texts – was published in 1910. In the archive of Sawa, kept in the Residencia de Estudiantes (Madrid) there are letters from his brother Miguel to his widow Jeanne which show evidence of Valle-Inclán's mediation in the publication of *Iluminaciones en la sombra* (Archive SAW 1/71; document # 2 at Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid).

²⁴⁷ See new editions listed in the chronological order when the different novels were originally published: *La mujer de todo el mundo* [1885] in 2013; *Crimen legal* [1886] in 2012; *Declaración de un vencido* [1887] in 2005, 2006, 2009 and 2017; *Criadero de curas* [1888] in 2014 and *La sima de Igúzquiza* [1888] in 2011.

In fact, in evidence of the importance and regard that the work eventually acquired, and with which it was considered, it was the only one of his works which while not re-published during the lifetime of the author, was at least re-edited very shortly after his death²⁴⁸. In 1918 a considerably abridged version of *Noche* was published in the collection “La novela corta” (“The short novel”) as a tribute or homage issue “to the Spanish novelists of the nineteenth century” (see Sawa, 1918). This was a collection which starting in 1916 and on a weekly basis issued 499 *nouvelles* or abridged novels – until June 1925²⁴⁹. The variety of published authors is wide ranging and covers both aesthetically and chronologically several different tendencies and generations within the literature of the nineteenth century as well as the first third of the twentieth century in Spain²⁵⁰. From the first generation of Spanish romantics to the generation of realists and late-romantics which followed and who reached artistic maturity in the 1880s and as far into the twentieth century as the “noventayochistas” (members of the literary generation of 1898) and the modernist generation or even the erotic novelists of the post-First World War period²⁵¹ these abridged novels were a well-known publishing phenomenon in Spain at the beginning of the century²⁵². This was a popular format at the time and the

²⁴⁸ Towards 1908 and when his economic problems were becoming seriously pressing Sawa tried to have *Declaración de un vencido* (1887) published again, and thus, he offered it – unsuccessfully – to the publisher Maucci – and some others, after Maucci rejected it – through the mediation of Rafael Ruiz López (see Archive SAW 1/15; documents # 1, 2 and 3 at Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid).

²⁴⁹ See Anon. (2016) “Colecciones novela corta en España s. XX”, available at https://issuu.com/institutocervantestanger/docs/catalogo_expo_novela_popular, accessed on Weds. 17 May 2017 and Anon. (2006) “Una colección de novelas cortas de José María Vargas Villa”, available at <http://mdc.ulpgc.es/cdm/ref/collection/moralia/id/202>, accessed on Weds. 17 May 2017. Note that this late reference erroneously gives 1914 as the starting year of the collection; it also mentions that prices could range between five and ten cents per issue. However, some of the latest issues would retail for as much as thirty cents.

²⁵⁰ Towards the end though “La novela corta” focused mainly on modern authors, since at this stage the reading public was the driving force of the publication and had already shown preference for its contemporaries (Sánchez Álvarez-Insúa, 2007, p. 98).

²⁵¹ Romantics such as Larra and Fernán Caballero are respectively published in December 1917 (two issues) and in 1918 (two issues also). Perez Galdós, cornerstone of the Spanish nineteenth century realist canon, is the author of the first issue in January 1916; and Pardo Bazán was represented in several issues between February 1916 and October 1920, for example. Issues with works by “noventayochistas” also abound: Baroja (in June 1916) Unamuno (in July 1916, April 1920 and December 1920) and Azorín (February 1917) can be found in the collection. As for the modernists, one of the weekly issues from April 1916, is devoted to Pérez de Ayala. Finally, is worth mentioning erotic author Alvaro Retana. Although now forgotten by the wider public; he was incredibly popular back in the day and as such four of his titles can be found in the collection: in December 1921; and January, May and September 1922.

²⁵² For a full catalogue of the nearly five hundred titles which comprise the collection see Thon, Sonia (2007) “Índice de la novela corta...” in

economic success of these publications contributed considerably to the proliferation of such collections:

A principios del siglo XX en España se comienza a difundir la literatura en colecciones de novelas cortas, en rústica, de formato octavo y con no más de cien páginas por obra. El papel es de baja calidad por lo que se abarata el coste. Aparecen editoriales especializadas en este tipo de literatura como Editorial Bruguera, Toray o Molino²⁵³ (Anon., 2016).

The pioneering collection would have been “El cuento semanal”, from 1907 – see Sánchez Álvarez-Insúa, 2007, p. 91; and 2010, p. 65 – whose original success triggered the avalanche of forthcoming collections in years to come and which according to Sánchez Álvarez-Insúa would reach its zenith with precisely, “La novela corta”, when reading became “the cheapest pastime available” (Sánchez Álvarez-Insúa, 2007, p. 93). “La novela corta” introduced a series of innovations which would make it extremely competitive pricewise and would also make it the model for collections to come: in addition to cheaper paper, the progressive elimination of illustrations and images, which were more expensive to print (Sánchez Álvarez-Insúa, 2007, p. 93). In this specific edition of *Noche* author Cristobal de Castro (1874-1953) writes an introductory “semblanza literaria” (“literary portrait”) where in just a few lines Sawa’s early works, and his sad end – “ill, almost blind and forgotten²⁵⁴” (Castro, 1918, p.1) – are evoked for the reader. Since the works were traditionally abridged by the authors themselves (see Sánchez Álvarez-Insúa, 2010, p. 67 with regards to Azorín, Trigo and Insúa), it is tempting to think that in this case, Cristobal de Castro himself was the editor who adapted the original of *Noche* for publication in “La novela corta”.

http://languages.acadiau.ca/tl_files/sites/spanish/resources/banner_images/sthon%20novelacorta.pdf, accessed Weds. 17 May 2017.

²⁵³ Trans: “At the beginning of the twentieth century in Spain literature is beginning to be widespread through collections of short novels; paperbacks in octavo and no longer than hundred pages. Paper itself is very low quality, which reduces costs. Publishing houses specifically devoted to this type of literature appear then: Bruguera, Toray or Molino”.

²⁵⁴ The original actually reads: “enfermo, casi ciego y olvidado”.

7.1 Modern editions and secondary sources

With regards to the early reception of *Noche*, and as with other works by Sawa, there is little or no bibliography or records. Thus, and among a plethora of references to biographical sketches and generic articles on Sawa, Mbarga lists in his edition only one entry specifically devoted to *Noche* that predates the twentieth century: in February 1889, *Los lunes del Imparcial* listed *Noche* among “the new books”. This was the weekly literary supplement of the newspaper *El Imparcial*, rather prestigious in that it was privately funded rather than being the official newsletter of a given political faction thus ensuring its impartiality. The review is ambivalent: while it concedes that Sawa is a talented author (his style is “brave”, “concise” and “expressive”) the anonymous reviewer laments “the freedom with which Sawa rakes the mud of reality in order to extract even more mud²⁵⁵”.

However, from an academic point of view, *Noche* is the only among Sawa’s novels which has been read through a heavily theoretically imbued lens, despite being one of his least studied works. Most criticism on or about Sawa has revolved around his allegiance to naturalistic modes and individualised attention to his novels has been scarce in a critical or theoretical input. Such is the case that, whereas some articles can be found dealing with different aspects of specific novels of Sawa, it could be said that both Andrea Villa’s²⁵⁶ and Travis Landry’s²⁵⁷ are the only academic pieces to date specifically devoted to *Noche* – albeit in comparison to *Carne importada* in the case of Villa. Andrea Villa contributed in 2013 her article to the volume *El Naturalismo en España: aproximaciones desde una perspectiva actual* (Garza, 2013). In her article – which borrows considerably from Kristeva’s theory of the abject (see above the chapter on Sawa’s first Radical Naturalist novel, *Crimen legal*) – Villa focuses on the anxiety, which is characteristic of the period about female identity, by arguing that the

²⁵⁵ The original actually reads: “Es lástima que un escritor tan notable como el Sr. Sawa gaste su lozana y exuberante imaginación en revolver el fango de la vida para sacar de él... fango.” In Anon. (1889) “Libros nuevos – *Noche*” in <http://hemerotecadigital.bne.es/issue.vm?id=0000659634&page=6&search=sawa&lang=en>; consulted on 19 May 2017.

²⁵⁶ “La autoconciencia de lo abyecto: redefinición de la subjetividad femenina en *Noche* de Alejandro Sawa y *Carne importada* de López Bago”

²⁵⁷ “A Romance with Darwin in the Evolutionary *Noche* of Alejandro Sawa”

death of some of the female characters following their social abjection could be read as symbol of resistance against the imposed role model of the “angel in the house”:

las protagonistas de estas obras ejercen una doble función: poner de relieve la caída del ángel del hogar como lo “abyecto”; y elucidar de forma subrepticia, tras el velo del falso erotismo y la prostitución, problemáticas sociales que aquejan a la sociedad española y bonaerense finisecular²⁵⁸ (Villa, 2013, p. 228).

Landry’s work on the other hand – a chapter from his book *Subversive seduction: Darwin, Sexual Selection and the Spanish Novel* (Landry, 2012, chapter 7)– refers to *Noche* as a clear example of how Sawa questions contemporary interpretations of Darwin theories. In deconstructing conservative nineteenth century perceptions of Darwin’s work – Landry explains – Sawa is placing Darwin in his actual context, reminding his readers of the importance of “ethical agency central to Darwinian thought” (Landry, 2013, p. 184).

Other than that, the only other academic approach to *Noche* that can be found is the introduction in Mbarga’s own edition of the novel. Mbarga’s introduction is rich in fresh ideas, which due to the specific context in which they are presented, are unfortunately not fully developed. He points out for example towards the complexity of *Noche* in comparison to previous novels by Sawa (Mbarga, 2001, p.38-39); Sawa’s manichaeist treatment of his characters (Mbarga, 2001, p.43) which enables Sawa the portrayal of the *pater familias* as an authoritative figure of power such as an executioner or a dictator (Mbarga, 2001, p.44 and 53); and what is probably the most original contribution to Sawa’s scholarship: the possibility of reading *Noche* as a satire of the aspirational middle classes (Mbarga, 2001, p.55). It is very often that the humorous parodic component of certain Sawa’s passages has been overseen, research having focused primarily on the dark overtones of his oeuvre. This is yet, another characteristic of Sawa’s work shared with Gothic aesthetics at large: the ease with which they

²⁵⁸ Trans: “the protagonists of these works play a double role: on the one hand, they represent the fall from grace of the angel in the house as the “abject”; on the other, hidden behind the false pretence of eroticism, they are the vehicle through which looking into late nineteenth century Spanish and Buenos Aires social problems”.

lend themselves to parody. However, for the purposes of my research I will focus on certain aspects of Gothic aesthetics present in *Noche*. Mbarga timidly remarks on some elements which while he does not necessarily acknowledge as Gothic (such as the tyrannical figure of the father – see above – or the oppressive atmosphere of the family dwellings – Mbarga, 2001, p.66) are characteristically so. Taking the Zolaesque conception of family as a departure point and leaning on affect theory I intend to show how some characters engage with their milieu through Gothic narrative conventions.

7.2 Plot summary

Noche is the story of a Spanish lower middle class family's inception and decadence during the last third of the nineteenth century. In *Noche*, the offspring of a physically robust (albeit intellectually limited) father and a rather vulgar mother end up becoming examples of all the possible maladies that can affect a middle class family in the Spain of the 1880s. On the one hand, Don Francisco, the father, is characterised by the amalgamation of physical strength and limited intelligence (*Noche*, p.94; all citations of *Noche* refer to the 2001 edition by Jean-Claude Mbarga). On the other hand, Doña Dolores – also known familiarly as “Lola” – is described as someone totally lacking in personality (*Noche*, p.98). All five children are – like their parents – stunted in one way or another: Lolita, the eldest child and daughter is as attractive as naïve (a naivete which borders on plain stupidity). Paquita, the next child (and daughter) to follow, totally lacks any will or spirit to face the oppressive circumstances of her life – just as her mother. The three sons (Paco, Nazario and Evaristo respectively, from the oldest to the youngest) all have in common either their selfishness or lack of moral scruple (or both).

Although originally from Ávila²⁵⁹ Don Francisco decides to relocate his family of five children to Madrid hoping for better economic prospects:

deseando alargar un tanto los horizontes limitadores de su existencia, que comenzaba a hacersele difícil por la poquedad de sus medios de vida y el aumento considerable de su familia, [Don Francisco] aceptó un puesto de 10000 reales que le habían ofrecido en la Dirección de los ferrocarriles del Norte²⁶⁰ (*Noche*, p.104-105).

In making the economic welfare the main (in fact, *only*) driving force of the relocation, the core of the family's existence is reduced to a merely economic issue and consequently the family itself is commodified into a production unit. By building their stock of values and morals upon quintessential Spanish lower middle class traits such as religiosity and economic aspiration, Don Francisco and Doña Dolores are responsible for the personal and vital failure of their children and consequently, for the failure of the family also – something Sawa seems to relish on. It is actually at this stage of the novel when moving to the capital that the sense of doom, which accompanies the characters and characterises the novel, starts to become prevalent, almost oppressive.

Shortly after arriving in Madrid, Lolita, the eldest child, is, in her very early twenties, naively seduced by a local Don Juan who elopes with her only to abandon her once his seduction is consummated. After being repudiated by her father in the most possible crude terms, (to his wife he screams): "... la pelotada de mierda con que esa cochina de tu hija trata de ensuciar mis canas²⁶¹" (*Noche*, p. 139) Lolita seeks refuge (and advice) in her confessor. The priest

²⁵⁹ Despite being the setting for *Criadero de curas* and the birthplace for all protagonists of *Noche*, the paradox is that Sawa might not have even visited Ávila – there is certainly not mention of such visit in Correa Ramón's biography, the most complete and exhaustive up to date. If he did, it certainly did not leave a deep imprint in his personality, in the way that, for example, Paris or Madrid (or even London) did. This reinforces the idea that the Castilian city was chosen for its symbolic resonance as bastion of the most rancid Spanish Catholicism, home of St Teresa, for example.

²⁶⁰ Trans: "... wishing to expand the limiting horizons of his existence, an existence which was beginning to feel difficult given his economic shortcomings due to the growth of his family, he [Don Francisco] took a position in the Northern Railroad Company, with a salary of 10000 reales".

²⁶¹ Trans: "... the amount of shit with which that scum you have for a daughter is trying to soil my late age..." Incidentally, *Noche* is probably the only novel from the whole of the last third of the nineteenth century in Spain which makes explicit use of the word "shit". It certainly does not appear in any of the works by Pérez Galdós,

however, takes advantage of her vulnerable situation and, after having been grooming her during confession²⁶² brutally rapes her. With nowhere to turn to she becomes a prostitute shortly after her encounter with the priest and vanishes for good. Paquita, the other sister, will not follow in Lolita's footsteps though; since Lolita has set a dangerous precedent the vigilance upon Paquita becomes even fiercer, and subjugated to an iron discipline (a discipline she partakes in by imposing it upon herself) she is not even allowed in the streets – not that she would want to anyway. See below on the “evils” she believed awaited for her out in the streets.

The eldest brother Paco²⁶³ proves to have an excellent memory – despite not being especially bright – just like Don Francisco, his father, thus emphasizing the inner workings of heredity (always according to the Radical Naturalists, obviously): “ (...) Don Francisco aprendió todas esas cosas: leer, escribir, y las cuatro reglas, de labios de un cura que entretenía los ocios obligados del confesionario y la misa haciendo ejercicios de enseñanza primaria con los chicos de su parroquia²⁶⁴” (*Noche*, p. 97). Paco's feats of memory however, pass for intelligence among his parents and consequently he is destined for an education which will eventually lead to a career in the priesthood. Despite following certain chronological order of birth in the narration of the different siblings' life adventures, Sawa makes an exception for Paco. Lolita, for example, being the eldest is the first upon whom the action focuses; then, after her fall, the focus of the narration moves onto her sister (who is the next sibling in age) and her physical ailments. However, the sequence is interrupted here, and Paco is skipped, only to reappear at the very end of the novel, in order to represent the ultimate degradation of the family and let the decadence of the González family be given the ultimate

Clarín or Pardo Bazán, which is telling about the Radical Naturalist search for a Realism which would not shy away from the most unpleasant aspects of reality.

²⁶² See previous chapter on the misogynistic language of nationalistic republicanism and the dangers of the confessional.

²⁶³ Note how so far, all children have been named after their parents which denotes the parental lack of imagination, a point that Sawa himself makes in *Noche*, p.101: “Dio a luz al primer hijo, que era una hembra, a la que bautizaron con el nombre de Dolores, sin más razón que la de que ese era el nombre de la madre (...)”; trans: “Their first child was born, a girl, who was named Dolores, the only reason being that it was precisely the mother's name”. The lack of imagination is a criticism implicitly addressed to the whole middle class.

²⁶⁴ Trans: “Don Francisco learned Reading, Writing and Arithmetic from a priest who taught the basics to the children in the parish in the spare time that his duties allowed him”.

seal of approval precisely by the malevolent behaviour of a priest. In fact, it could be argued that, to a certain extent, a priest is also instrumental at the beginning of their decadence, since Lolita embraces prostitution after being raped by her confessor.

Paco's feats of memory enable him to memorise useless information by rote: the example provided in the novel is the *almanaque*²⁶⁵, which Paco memorizes in its entirety in eight days: "Por vanagloria se comprometió a aprenderse el *almanaque del Zaragozano* en diez días, y los ocho, ya lo repetía de pe a pa como un fonógrafo en ejercicio²⁶⁶" (*Noche*, p. 107). This is an implicit criticism of the sort of education provided by the Spanish Catholic Church which was only marginally present in *Criadero de curas* for example and is certainly more prominent in *Noche* – see below examples of Evaristo and Nazario with regards to their education. Education becomes, in the specific context of *Noche* and in its broader sense (understood not only as mere "schooling" but including also "upbringing") a key concept within the novel.

Both Nazario and Evaristo, the two remaining brothers, follow similar or parallel paths of degradation, in that a very strong sexual impulse, which manifests itself in violence and murder within a specific economic context, proves to be their demise. Nazario, in a subplot that closely follows that of Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* (1867), starts an affair with the wife of his boss – the owner and manager of a fabrics and clothes store. In due course, Nazario supplants the original husband – killed by the lovers with an overdose of laudanum – and consequently becomes the owner of the business²⁶⁷.

Finally, the youngest child and brother, Evaristo, in attaining maturity becomes a regular customer of the gambling dens and the bars of ill-repute. In his daily dealings with the marginal denizens, he takes a prostitute as a lover with whom he eventually falls in love. Blind with

²⁶⁵ An *almanaque* is a sort of calendar or diary which includes information such as what saint a given day is consecrated to, a weather forecast, popular festivities...etc. The "zaragozano" was the most popular among farmers who relied on the forecast for their crops.

²⁶⁶ Trans: "He determined to learn the whole *almanaque* by heart in ten days, out of mere pride, and after only eight days he was already repeating it like a phonograph".

²⁶⁷ There are slight differences between both works however: in *Therese Raquin* both lovers kill themselves when they cannot stand the disintegration of the relationship, due to the remorse after the crime.

rage, Evaristo stabs to death the prostitute's new love interest – who not coincidentally, and being a paramedic, happens to have better economic prospects and a more salient social position than Evaristo himself. In a scene that explicitly echoes and parallels Lolita's – his older sister – demise, his father brutally disowns him and hands him over to the authorities personally: “Es mi hijo; pero también reniego de él, *como renegué de su hermana*. Aquí os lo entrego²⁶⁸” says Don Francisco in *Noche*, p.240; emphasis added. After being taken away by the authorities Evaristo (again like Lolita) disappears for ever.

Towards the end of the novel, Paquita will come down with tuberculosis due to the strenuous labour of keeping the household, her father having lost his job in the Railroad company. By the time she becomes ill, the economic situation of the family is precarious, since she is the only bread winner. Her father decides then to seek help among his sons to buy the medicines she needs to alleviate her symptoms. This is important, since it is made explicit in the novel that she is doomed to death nonetheless. The medicines, for which her father so urgently seeks economic aid, will make her demise more bearable, but will not prevent it. This single fact emphasizes the necessity of Paquita's death within the internal logic of the novel and the ideology which drives it. Both Paco and Nazario will reject Don Francisco on different grounds and Evaristo, at this point imprisoned by the crime committed, cannot possibly help his father. The plot, which actually weaves the lives of all siblings together, is in fact the development of an illness.

7.3 *Noche*: Gothic affective novel

To a certain extent, *Noche* could be said to be the most *Zolaesque* of Sawa's novels. Firstly, because the whole novel revolves around the decadence of a single family; and secondly, because such decadence is, in *Noche*, pinned onto the naturalistic combination of predetermination and milieu – which runs through several different generations of said González family. Both ideas were very dear motifs to Zola: firstly, familial bonds as a plot-

²⁶⁸ Trans: “He is in my son, yes, but I disown him just as I disowned his sister. Here, have him”.

structuring device. Secondly, the pseudo-scientific idea by which certain traits are so deeply ingrained in the physiological human fabric that cannot be transcended or superseded.

As such, he made it explicit both in his theoretical works and in the twenty novels that comprised his Rougon-Macquart cycle²⁶⁹. For Zola, the concept of family provided not only a thread with which to amalgamate the plotline of the whole Rougon-Macquart series, but a whole philosophy in novel composition:

I want to explain how a family, a small group of human beings, comports [sic] itself in a society, flowering to give birth to ten, twenty individuals, who, at first glance, seem very dissimilar, but who upon analysis are seen to be intimately bound one to the other. Heredity has its law, like weight (Zola, (1967) [1871], p. 160).

As such Sawa's deployment of the aspects of Zola's theories that he (and the other Radical Naturalists) misread is more nuanced than in his previous narrative works and characterised by a drive to apply and research those into more depth. For instance, the behaviour of at least two generations is brought to the foreground – in comparison to previous novels, where the action would revolve mainly around a single protagonist character – and the collusion of milieu and inheritance – admittedly, a very personal understanding of milieu and inheritance which could arguably be flawed in some of its tenets – is capital in the articulation of such behaviour.

However, in Zola's works family-based novel-plotting encourages the thought that "organic development [goes] beyond the mechanistic plotting of cause and effect" (White, 2007, p. 23). In Sawa's *Noche* on the other hand, the plot seems to be constrained precisely (and paradoxically) by a too-mechanistic adherence to a certain theory of literary Naturalism – or rather, to certain interpretation of Zola's theory of literary Naturalism. As Susan Harrow argues, it is certain interpretation of, not so much Zola's novels, but of his theoretical dictum – or rather, an interpretation of his novels clouded by his own theoretical dictum – that has condemned the French master to be read "backwards", rather than forwards. See here, for example how

²⁶⁹ For a list of all the novels of the cycle together with a brief summary of their plots see Nelson (ed.), 2007, p. xii-xvii).

she compares Zola and Flaubert: “The categorical, conservative view situates Zola as a realist-Naturalist whilst Flaubert’s modernity allows the author of *Madame Bovary* and *Bouvard et Pécuchet* to be read forwards (by Sarraute or Robbe Grillet)” (Harrow, 2010, p.3). In evoking a sense of ineluctability, a sense of entrapment within the walls of milieu and inheritance both Zola and Sawa at times frustrate the potential of “organic development” that the family as plot-structuring device opens up. It could be argued that such limits the psychological portrayal of the characters. Jameson, however, proposes an alternative reading: according to Jameson, Zola “offers some of the richest and most tangible deployments of affect in nineteenth-century Realism” (Jameson, 2015, p. 45). This is the lesson that Sawa (inadvertently?) might have finally learned from the French master: to articulate the tensions which, according to Jameson, are inherent to Realism (discourse /story; telling/showing; the narrative impulse/ the affect) in a way that “new kinds of perceptions (...) serve as vehicles for affect itself” (Jameson, 2015, p. 49).

Specifically in this chapter, I will work with a formulation of affect which borrows largely (but not exclusively) from Fredric Jameson’s work on nineteenth-century realism mentioned above. Jameson’s first foray into defining his usage of the term is by distinguishing “affects” from “emotions”. Emotions, on the one hand, can be named and are consequently historically bound and contingent. On the other hand, affects “elude language”, thus posing a representational challenge to realist authors “in the effort somehow to seize its fleeting essence and to force its recognition” (Jameson, 2015, p. 31).

The other two main characteristics that Jameson places on his working definition of affect are closely linked: firstly, following Rei Terada, he defines the corporeal component of the affect as opposed to a conscious state (Jameson, 2015, p. 31). Secondly, in being a mere “bodily feeling”, the affect’s temporality is for Jameson that of an “eternal present” (Jameson, 2015, p. 36), which in narrative terms he opposes to “destiny”, at the intersection of which he places realism (Jameson, 2015, p. 26).

I will supplement Jameson's definition of affect with yet two more aspects which stem from on the one hand, French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre (1962 [1939], albeit with certain caveats) and on the other hand from Sianne Ngai (2007) and Jonathan Flatley (2008) respectively. The first one is that the affect is a form of engagement with the world at large. However, following Gregg and Seigworth (2010), I will challenge Sartre's assumption that affective engagement is a form of "magical thinking". As it will be seen below in more detail, I argue instead that affects are powerful cognoscitive tools.

The second element with which I intend to supplement Jameson's definition, closely follows the previous one, as developed in the paragraph above and is based on the concept of "affective mapping" developed by Jonathan Flatley (2008). If the affect is a cognoscitive tool that enables certain form of knowledge of the ways of the world, it then follows that it can be learned; if the affect can be learned, it can consequently be shared – as suggested by Rebecca Haidt when using the metaphor of contagion when referring to the ways affects are shared by communities (Haidt, 2006). It is at this point that through "affective mapping", affects can become visible and consequently can reorganise the experience of the individual with regards to himself and with regards to the community. This political aspect of the affect is, in Sianne Ngai, supplemented with a consideration of the affect in combination with aesthetics, which as it will be seen below in the relevant discussion of Sawa's *Noche* offers a prime occasion for "ugly feelings" (Ngai, 2007).

Thus, by affect I refer to an ineffable bi-facial structure (corporeal and emotional) which in enabling a form of cognition can be made to uncover socio-political issues suffered by a given community. More specifically, in literature, the affect will prove a representational challenge, firstly in its ineffability, in that authors will have to develop new techniques compatible with the formal aspects of the novel in order to allude to the nameless affect. Secondly, because in its atemporality, the affect runs against the representational grain of the realist European novel of the nineteenth century based upon "the flatlands of everyday life", "the more humanly bearable comfort of the everyday" (Jameson, 2015, p. 27).

One of the most salient characteristic of *Noche*'s is precisely its nuanced representation of affects. It is not so much the influence of Zola's novels or his theory, but rather the misreading Radical Naturalists made of Zola's works and theory that characterises plot development in *Noche*.

Those works and theory (Zola's) acquired a very specific meaning in the Spanish literary imagery of the late nineteenth century: that the novel was to be – implicitly and deliberately – “ugly” in that it had to be opposed to the “pretty novel”: “*La prostituta es claramente una obra polémica, de combate contra la novela romántica, contra la novela bonita de Valera, contra la novela docente alarconiana, es decir, contra todo proyecto literario que no aspire a la verdad naturalista*”²⁷⁰ (Fernández, 2005a, p. 65; emphasis added). Thus, an “ugly novel” which versed on family would necessarily verse on an “ugly family”, one in which “ugliness” would be a concept mediated by the point of view of the middle classes' fears and anxieties. According to Franco Moretti, bourgeoisie literature and identity were built around a set of keywords²⁷¹ such as “useful”, “efficiency”, “comfort”, “serious”, “influence”, “earnest” and “*roba*” (an Italian term that can be roughly translated as “property”) (Moretti, 2013, pages respectively: p. 35; p. 39, p. 44; p. 67; p. 120; p. 131 and p. 149). A semantic landscape is thus mapped, one which gives readers the measure of this social class: hardworking; honest, moderate, balanced and influential. The “ugly novel” of the Spanish Radical Naturalists is then to necessarily contest these conceptual constructions by offering their reverse and consequently affront bourgeoisie's own conceptualisation of (beautiful) reality/novel. Some of the characters in *Noche* will respond with “idleness” and “vagrancy” to the ideas of “useful” and “efficiency” – such as Evaristo and his whoring exploits; with “economic hardship” to “comfort”, as when Paquita has to sleep on a straw mattress despite her illness; with “carelessness” and a “bohemian lifestyle” to “serious”. These challenges to the middle class life and novel ideal translate themselves

²⁷⁰ Trans: “The prostitute is clearly a polemic work, of opposition against the romantic novel, against the pretty novel by Valera, against the doctrinal novel by Alarcon, basically against every literary endeavour that does not reach out towards naturalistic truth”.

²⁷¹ By his own admission, Moretti follows the models provided by Raymond Williams (in *Culture and Society and Keywords*) and Reinhart Koselleck (in *Begriffsgeschichte* and *Social History*) – see Moretti, 2013, p. 18.

into class fears and anxieties which are reflected within the plot around the familial fabric: prostitution, and consequently, adultery; debilitating and degenerating physical illness; moral corruption – understood according to middle class moral standards; threats posed by the Catholic Church and its representatives to familial and/or marital stability; and finally, a portrayal of the working classes in dark undertones which emphasizes and justifies their lower social position by focusing on their lack of productivity as a way to more clearly (re)define the boundaries which separate both social groups. This is often achieved by representing blue-collar workers as regulars of the cafés and bars and gamblers, rather than representing them in the more realistic milieu of the factory, for example (something that Zola did actually do, in *Germinal* from 1895 and *La Bête Humaine*, from 1890, where he wrote about the mining industry and railroad workers respectively). Thus, it could be said that taking some of Zola's theories as a departing point, Sawa reverses them: the characters are predetermined to build their own milieu, rather than the other way around. In being stupid, morose and selfish they start a stupid, morose and selfish progeny: it is not that parents Don Francisco and Doña Dolores are doomed to their end on strictly speaking their socio-economic background (i.e. their milieu). The aspirational middle classes, like the parents in *Noche*, shape their own milieu rather than the opposite. The furious anti-bourgeoise stance of Sawa is thus characterised by agency: the bourgeoisie of his novels are biologically at fault and as such are building a social class (and a milieu) at fault also. It could consequently be argued that despite following in Zola's footsteps by adopting the concept of family as the blueprint of the novel, Sawa aligns himself with what Petrey refers to as the "dominant ideology of the age" in the quote below, rather than contesting such ideology:

This definition of society as explaining the virtues and vices of the people within it sets Zola's novels squarely against the dominant ideology of the age during which he wrote. For that ideology, it is not the milieu that explains character, but character that explains milieu. Members of the bourgeoisie live in a clean and healthy world because they understand that cleanliness is next to godliness and act accordingly. Workers live in a

filthy and degraded environment because they have appalling habits that lead them to thrash their surroundings and ruin their lives along with their neighbourhoods (Petrey, 2007, p. 40).

As per the concept of *milieu* or environment, the way it is interpreted by Radical Naturalists in general, and by Sawa in particular, is rather *sui generis*. Whereas *Noche* takes place during a span of approximately thirty years (see Mbarga: "... se puede deducir que la historia de la familia González transcurre aproximadamente en treinta y cuatro años²⁷²" Mbarga, 2001, p. 63) there is however no reference in the novel to the rather convoluted political times Spain went through between 1868 and 1898: coup d'état in 1868 to de-throne queen Isabella II; monarchy of Amadeo just two years later; the beginning of the second Carlist war in 1872; another coup in 1874, on this occasion to restore the house of Bourbon; a new constitution in 1876; end of the first Cuban insurrection in 1878... The list could be elongated *ad infinitum* only to culminate in the definite loss of the last remnants of Spanish Imperial past in 1898. The milieu in Sawa's *Noche* is strictly circumscribed to the socio-economic organisation which is a middle class family transplanted from the provinces onto the capital, almost alienated from political history. Compare with Zola and how the French author made explicit the historical coordinates of his work: "... by means of their individual dramas [Zola refers to his own characters in the Rougon-Macquart series] they thus constitute *a narrative of the Second Empire from the ambushade of the coup d'état to the betrayal at Sedan*" (Zola, (1967) [1871], p. 161; emphasis added).

This type of family which retracts and folds unto itself, almost endogamic, is a rather common Gothic trope and examples can be found from the very inception of the genre: *The Castle of Otranto*, or what probably is the most popular novel of the classic Gothic period, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. In these works, the oppressive structure of the conventional patriarchal family is symbolised by the crumbling manor, or castle, where the dwellers/members of the

²⁷² Trans: "... it can be deduced that the story of the González family takes place in approximately thirty-four years".

family are trapped, stranded or imprisoned; by the cruelty of the different members of the family against each other (sibling rivalry; fatherly abuse); or even by the oppressive burden of the family lineage itself (or the “haunting of the past”) in the form of ghosts which bewitch the dwellings and torment their inhabitants²⁷³. There is however a rather modern twist in Sawa and that is the preponderance that the purely organic (flesh, organs, bodily tissues and fluids) takes in *Noche*; and the way this corporeality, this organic physicality is embroidered within the general family/home/dwelling fabric. To a certain degree it could be said that the organic, the familial flesh and blood that entraps the family, is the substitute of the oppressive physical structure of the house, in a twist of a traditional Gothic motive which nuances more finely one of the social anxieties this metaphor exploits: alien contagion. Whereas on the one hand, family constitutes a barrier against foreign bodies – think for example of how the siblings’ different romantic liaisons end tragically – on the other, it is family that carries its own curse within itself. As if the flesh and blood of the protagonists were the bricks and mortar of the old oppressive manor house of the traditional Gothic, humans are fabricated with the materials of their own demise. Hence Paquita dies of consumption: her body is the ticking bomb waiting to explode with terrible consequences – in fact, all of her siblings are a time bomb. Just like a concentric shockwave whose expansion becomes wider and wider, Paquita’s illness first affects her personally; eventually, it reaches her parents; then, the wider family; eventually, the whole social class; and in due course, the whole society will be affected by the dire destiny of Paquita, who represents all daughters of these middling classes. At the same time, it evidences (and exploits) another source of social anxiety in a Gothicised manner: corporeal vulnerability, which can operate at the strictly physical level (as a reminder of the weakness and temporality of the flesh at a time when technological and economic advances were not necessarily improving the quality of life of the wider population) or as a symbol of other ailments (the potential crumbling of the self and the society and societal structures, such as

²⁷³ Despite its constant evolution the haunting coalescence of home/family has been a constant of the Gothic ever since the early examples provided: examples can be found in Dickens, Stoker or Peake, just to mention three authors from different eras within the English tradition.

the – traditional – family of which that self partakes). At times, Sawa's novel feels like the swan song for a family model which has started to disappear, a type of family which will be irremediably lost and whose model is not sustainable anymore in modernity. The traditional family, Sawa seems to be saying, is broken. There are thus other areas or points of contact between Sawa's oeuvre and Zola's theoretical dictum that run deeper than the more superficial family-based plotting or the invocation of inheritance and milieu; and those touch more closely upon the modern sense of the corporeal which both authors shared. It is at this point that Sawa's influence and relationship with Zola becomes more complex: "We are trained by Zola into forming new habits of perception in accordance with the new realms and dimensions of body reality thereby opened up to us (Jameson, 2015, p. 59). If, on the one hand, *Noche's* interpretation of naturalist cornerstones could be said to at times stiffen the plot, it is no less true that, on the other hand, the way Sawa borrows from Zola's conception of the nineteenth century affective universe is decidedly modern. In fact, it could be said that it pre-empted modern critical conceptions of Zola's novelistic enterprise (such as Harrow and Jameson's). The attention that Sawa pays to the corporeal is on par with some of the most accomplished works of his generation – and that certainly includes the big three of the Spanish realist canon, Galdós, Pardo Bazán and Clarín. For example, and with regards to the emphasis on the corporeal in mere physical descriptions, in referring to how attractive Venancia (Nazario's lover) is, her carnality is emphasized, as if not belonging to a human body, as if disjointed and independent: "Una hermosa mujer, cuyas carnes se desbordaban de abundancia y de lujuria²⁷⁴" (*Noche*, p. 188; emphasis added). The emphatic use of "carnes" (flesh) in the plural, together with "desbordar" – which in Spanish can also be translated as "overflow", "spill" or even "flood" evokes images of liquid flesh, flowing freely, escaping and breaking from the body, thus depersonalising said flesh and the body of Venancia. Also, it is flesh that simultaneously belongs to and runs from Venancia, flesh which autonomously exits for its own sake and for the satisfaction of lust and sexual instinct. Unbridled sexual desire/lust is also a

²⁷⁴ Trans: "A beautiful woman, whose flesh bulged over with abundance and lust".

very dear topic to the Gothic in that it represents an area where reason crumbles – it connects to animality and reverts the psyche to a Freudian id²⁷⁵ where layers of civilisation try to prevent it from coming to the surface. The metaphor of sexual desire as dehumanising animalisation is taken a step further when turning the object of desire into a mere amalgamation of flesh – as with Venancia. The Gothic body serves as an extended metaphor of the chiaroscuro of the modern psyche and the threats of animal regression and/or madness. This is certainly imbued of a popular conception of Darwinism very dear to Gothic aesthetics by which evolution was a dynamic process (i.e. humans could devolve as much as they could evolve) and Freud's theories – again, viewed through a popular lens – by which, the whole of a society can crumble if abandoned to its primary urges – just as its subjects.

7.4 Lolita and Paquita: sisterly parallel lives

Regardless of the influence of certain (miss)interpretation of Zola's dictum, there are plenty of aspects of *Noche* which are familiar and common to other works by Sawa; for example, the tone prevalent in this novel is still that of a heavily gendered Gothic corporeality. Whereas the female Gothic body was the main topic of *Crimen legal* and the incarcerated/imprisoned Gothic body of the child was the driving force of *Criadero de curas*, in *Noche*, Sawa tends to, on occasions, write about the whole of the protagonist family as if about a single corporeal entity. Consequently, the members of such family are conceptualised as, on the one hand, bodies or organic unities on their own right whilst on the other hand, showing a certain degree of organic dependency on the wider familial organisation. Likewise, the family itself, modelled after a body, will suffer all sorts of malfunctions when its constituent components start failing.

²⁷⁵ “[The id] contains everything that is inherited, that is present at birth (...) above all, therefore, the instincts” (Freud, [1940] 1989, p. 14)

In a way, *Noche* bears witness to Sawa's novelistic evolution in the chronological arrangement of his topics. If *Crimen legal* was the chronicle of the socio-corporeal implications of reproduction, it is tempting then to read *Criadero de curas* as a speculation on the fate of the unborn child of *Crimen legal*. The social milieu of both sets of progenitors in *Crimen legal* and *Criadero de curas* respectively is very similar. *Noche* thus takes this exploration of how certain sense of corporeality is framed within a very clear socio-familial milieu a step further. In *Noche* it is a whole family's sense of corporeality which is portrayed in Gothic undertones – i.e. not just a couple of spouses (*Crimen legal*); not just an only child (*Criadero de curas*); but the coupling made by Don Francisco and Doña Dolores and their five children. Whereas Sawa focuses on the parents and five siblings, the determination to build a wider familial context within the novel is evident when for example tracing the ancestry of the head of the family back to two generations. Thus, on Don Francisco's father, Sawa remarks: "Su padre no había sido así, tan grande y tan fuerte. Fue, por el contrario, un hombrecillo flacucho y pálido, cuya vida se había arrugado sobre los bancos de las sacristías y las antecámaras de los juzgados en un ejercicio sistemático de todos los momentos, que no variaba nunca²⁷⁶" (*Noche*, p. 94).

In *Noche* Sawa also refers briefly to Don Francisco's mother: "La madre de Don Francisco era también, como el padre, insignificante y pequeña. Rubiaca, anémica, casi sin sexo; un repugnante esputo de humanidad. Hacía, de consiguiente, buena pareja con su marido, ella clorótica y el exangüe²⁷⁷" (*Noche*, p. 95). Significantly, and as in *Crimen legal*, there seems to be no biological history, no ancestry for the female member of the marriage, as if the male were the necessary driving force of the events which are to unfold in the novel – also from a strictly biological point of view and once again, against Zola's dictum, as interpreted by Petrey above by which the milieu crafts the personality, and not the other way round. Don Francisco's grandfather was a brute that "rompía las nueces a puñetazos, y unas veces por hacer gracia,

²⁷⁶ Trans: "His father had not been like him, big and strong. On the contrary, he had been in fact, thin and pale, whose life had wasted away on the pews of churches and working in the offices of the courthouse".

²⁷⁷ Trans: "Don Francisco's mother was also, like his father, small, insignificant. Blondish, anaemic, almost sexless. A repulsive spittle of humanity. She was a good match for her husband, she being chlorotic and he being bloodless".

otras porfiando, se comía las cáscaras²⁷⁸” (*Noche*, p. 96): that is the reason for Don Francisco’s physical constitution. However, his wife’s ancestry is left unknown as if deemed irrelevant and implicitly she is not to influence the biological traits that will drive the family’s decadence. There is no lineage that can be traced, and in that sense, there are no personality features that she has inherited or that can be transmitted through the laws of heredity that were so dear to the Radical Naturalists. Despite limiting the story of the family to three generations – and even at that, partially so, given the lack of information on Don Francisco’s wife side of the family – this is an obvious attempt at echoing or reproducing Zola’s magnificent Rougon-Macquart saga. There is the clear will to build a more ambitious novel than its precedents in which the theoretical tenets of the Radical Naturalists were more clearly exposed and worked through. After all, family provides the perfect combination of inheritance and milieu – a sort of social petri dish, which was the crystallisation of Zola’s literary ambition.

This deliberate adherence to certain aspects of the naturalistic creed precisely on his last work is to a certain extent paradoxical. In a way, Sawa always struggled to get rid of the “baratijas que se ha traído de la casa de los románticos²⁷⁹” (López Bago, (1999) [1886], p. 207), as López Bago denounced in the epilogue he wrote for Sawa’s *Crimen legal*. Sawa chose to get rid of such romantic mannerisms at a time in his career when his allegiance to Naturalism was waning and his aesthetic thought, if not its practice, progressively distanced itself from naturalists’ tenets. This could be read, nonetheless, under the light of Harrow’s interpretation of Zola (above), by which his sense of corporeality invites us to consider Zola as an author who transcends the generic limits of nineteenth century Realism-Naturalism; likewise, Sawa’s adherence to Zola’s dictum does run deeper in *Noche* than the most superficial aspects of family-based plot building.

²⁷⁸ Trans: “[Don Francisco’s grandfather] could break the shells of the walnuts with his bare fists and then sometimes as a joke, sometimes out of pride, would eat them”.

²⁷⁹ Trans: “bibelots and menagerie he brought with him from the Romantics’ house”

As with his other works, the start of the novel sets the programmatic aesthetic tone of the whole narrative: “Se casaron por la ley de la costumbre; algo influidos también por la afición que mutuamente se inspiraban²⁸⁰” (*Noche*, p. 93). As it has already been seen, the criminal nature of the male protagonist of *Crimen legal* (Ricardo) is both hinted at and constitutes the very beginning of the novel. Likewise, in *Criadero de curas*, the damnation of Manolito is implicit in the sententious beginning of the work, where the reader is told that it had been decided that Manolito could not be anything but a priest. In *Noche* and in just one sentence, quoted above, the coalition of a given circumstance (i.e. the socio-cultural environment of the middle classes, the “mandate of tradition”) together with the characteristic innate temperament of the bride and groom (“the keenness they had for each other”) will set the family, that these two spouses are to form, on the path of moral and physical disintegration. There is yet another element which points towards Zola in these lines: in starting the novel with a marriage, Sawa is making explicit the central focus that family as a concept is going to attain throughout the narration. Whereas it could be argued that family is also a central concept to the plot development of *Crimen legal*, in *Noche* the family is taken as a single organic unit. Family is conceptualised in *Crimen legal* as the framework through which to articulate the inner workings of (pseudo) heredity. In *Noche* it is not so much *these* workings that Sawa is going to focus his attention on, but rather on the framework which sustains them (i.e. the family itself). The emphatic value placed on the corporeal emphasizes the idea of common familial ties. As such, it is an invitation to conceptualise this family as a single physical organism and not just as a social institution. All members of the family – father mother, sisters, brothers – are but the limbs and organs of a single body which entraps them while at the same time being an integral part of themselves. Even within that single corporeal entity that is the González family, further subdivisions can be found just as in any other biological organisation. As in units of or within a larger biological set, the different members of the family can be grouped according to their physiology: the two sisters, physically assaulted by sexual violence and illness, respectively;

²⁸⁰ Trans: “They got married due to the mandate of tradition and the keenness they had for each other”.

the two younger brothers, who reversely, are instrumental in the death of two different men; and finally, the brother who becomes a priest, who in his being ungendered occupies a place of his own. There is almost a taxonomizing will, as if by adopting the scientific method novelists become compelled to list and classify their characters within certain constructed social categories. The expressionistic physical descriptions where references to bodily functions or physiological processes abound are constant.

Don Francisco's feelings of homesickness are conveyed in terms of physical pain as soon as he leaves his natal Ávila: "... se trasladó con todos los suyos a Madrid, no sin antes experimentar en el cuerpo, al salir de Ávila, sensación de dolor semejante a la que debe sufrir un árbol añoso, en el momento en que lo arrancan de cuajo²⁸¹" (*Noche*, p. 105). Notice how Sawa emphasizes the fact that he is not merely utilising metaphorical language by which he is comparing the emotional duress of separation from the native land to physical avulsion: Don Francisco does actually feel *in his body* the real physical pain of separation. At the same time, these new vital developments are actually conveyed in physical terms, suggesting real distances (Ávila/Madrid) that cannot be easily travelled in both directions, as if the family could not possibly return to Ávila again: "... al deslizarse el tren sobre las primeras placas giratorias de la estación de llegada, vio con los ojos de la inteligencia, ahora lúcida, vio cortada, con tajo vertical, a su vida, en dos secciones²⁸²" (*Noche*, p. 105). Sawa relies on heavily connotative language here that highlights the pain of separation; thus, he abounds on the synonyms of "corte" ("cut") such as "tajo" (a "slash", a "gash" in English). In doing so he manages to convey a finely nuanced emotional state which precludes the interest in the representation of mental states characteristic of modernism. This oppressive sense of almost damnation becomes highlighted on arrival to their Madrid dwellings, when once again it will manifest itself in the form of an affect: "... notó el piso angustioso de pequeño²⁸³" (*Noche*, p.

²⁸¹ Trans: "he relocated with his family to Madrid, not without feeling in his whole body, when leaving Avila, a pain similar to what an old tree must suffer, when uprooted".

²⁸² Trans: "as the train arrived in the station, he saw with the eyes of intelligence, his own life cut in two sections"

²⁸³ Trans: "the flat was so small that gave him anxiety"

106). This feeling features quasi-physical qualities, in that it is so deeply engrained within the familial fabric that is to be felt only as far as one is a member of the González family. In fact, it could be said, in Gothic terms, that it is almost a curse, as if yet another trope from the classic Gothic period becomes assimilated to contemporaneity under a different guise.

Lolita's fall from social grace reaches its summit (or its depths) in her teeth violently chattering with cold when returning to the priest's house for shelter (*Noche*, p. 165). In this same instance, her surroundings are described in a way that their effect/affect upon her is enhanced: the ground upon which she is walking is damp and muddy (*Noche*, p. 166) – a description that could only feel relevant when barefoot or poorly equipped for cold and which reflects her physical vulnerability as much as it reflects her emotional haplessness. In the case of her sister, see this instance where the description focuses on how consumption ravages her despite the devotional prayers of her parents: “Pero ni por esas desarrugó el buen Dios el entrecejo, y la pobre niña continuó *derribada en su lecho de morir, arrojando los pulmones por la boca*²⁸⁴” (*Noche*, p. 178; emphasis added). The emphatic, connotative language that is so characteristic of Sawa enhances the corporeality whenever a physical act or action is involved. Paquita is “derribada” – an adjective traditionally applied to buildings and which suggest collapse and demolition, debris, dust... etc whereas at the same time she is “spitting her lungs out of her mouth”, practically abjecting them, putting distance between her flesh and the body her own flesh constitutes, contesting the limits of her own corporeality and consequently contesting the limits of her own personality. It is significant that she finally attains a sort of lucidity when her illness becomes fiercer – see below. Abjection is after all, in Kristeva's terms, an extreme physical reaction to a threat to the contours of personality. The sisters' is a corporeality still represented under Gothic conventions and which is narrated into an affect that challenges the temporality of the flesh. The tension, upon which the equilibrium which sustains the “antinomies of Realism” (see Jameson, 2015) is built, tends to irrevocably

²⁸⁴ Trans: “Not even that was enough for the good God to stop frowning upon them, so the poor girl remained collapsed on her dying bed, spitting her lungs out of her mouth”.

tilt to one side eventually disrupting such delicate balance and prefiguring new expressive modes which transcend nineteenth century Realism.

More important even than these constant descriptions of the purely corporeal, is that the description of affects and feelings or emotions in general becomes also more and more physical. In this Sawa marks a considerable difference with previous works: if the Gothic unstable bodies of *Crimen legal* and *Criadero de curas* respectively (those of the pregnant female and the child) were the occasion to contest perceptions and representations of the (disintegrating) self, the corporeal sensations of Lolita and Paquita (and the other members of the family) do not present such occasion anymore – or rather, not *just* such occasion. The bodies of the two sisters – and it is relevant here to take them together as a unity – do not just offer the opportunity for (more or less) crude or articulated metaphors of the processes of a crumbling psyche. In *Noche*, this corporeality is irrevocably linked to death through the sense of destiny which articulates the tale/récit, as understood in the specific context of Jameson's *Antinomies of Realism*: “a biographical framework (...) which has however been here melodramatically intensified into an extravagant sense of impending doom” (Jameson, 2015, page 46).

After having pleaded with their father for months to be taken to a party (*tertulia*), the daughters of the González family finally find themselves at the doors of their hosts' house facing their social unsuitability in a trial-like manner:

fue un milagro extraordinario de los nervios el que las dos mujeres no cayeron [sic] al suelo desmayadas, desvanecidas de terror ante el espectáculo de aquel mundo absolutamente nuevo que surgía imponente ante ellas; fue un fenómeno de resistencia, el que hubieran podido dar dos pasos hacia adelante, el esfuerzo locomotivo preciso para franquear la entrada de a casa²⁸⁵ (*Noche*, p.131).

²⁸⁵ Trans: “It was an extraordinary miracle that their nerves did not give in and made them collapse, fainting with terror besides that new world that imposingly appeared beside them; it was but a physical phenomenon, that they managed to take two steps forward, and make enough of an effort to cross that doorstep”.

Both girls' panic comes from a sense of economic disadvantage coupled with their provincial origins and the commodification of their own bodies. In a way, the tension which builds up has such strong sexual connotations in that what is at stake when they arrive at the party is almost the loss of their virginities, the loss of their sexual-physical innocence – or rather their loss of innocence *tout court* – and with such loss the death of certain sense of identity.

The physical and emotional implications the arrival to the party has on both girls attest to the violence with which the affect manifests itself: far more attuned than their own father, both girls understand (i.e. know) the transcendence of what is about to happen. They are learning (through the affect) of the ways of the world: they want to fall unconscious or take flight. The cognitive component of emotions was already considered by Sartre as early as 1939 in his *Sketch for a Theory of Emotions*: “The emotion is a specific manner of apprehending the world” (Sartre, [1939] 1962, p.57).: “In a word, during emotion, it is the body which, directed by the consciousness, changes its relationship with the world so that the world should change its qualities” (Sartre, [1939] 1962, p.65). There is a caveat to Sartre's approach though: whereas in this sentence Sartre maintains one of the basic tenets of most definitions of affect (namely that is a mental/physiological bi-facial structure) the implication (further developed in his essay) that the knowledge derived from the emotion is a “magical” means of engaging with the world seems harder to sustain. For example, Sartre states in his essay: “Flight, in active fear, is mistakenly supposed to be rational behaviour (...) We do not take flight to reach shelter: we flee because we are unable to annihilate ourselves in unconsciousness” (Sartre, [1939] 1962, p.63). I believe however, that such flight – taking the same situation as Sartre as an example – is in itself a cognitive way of engaging with the world and understanding, learning and consequently behaving in accordance to the knowledge and understanding of such world as derived from what the emotion has revealed in its capacity as a cognoscitive tool. This has been touched upon by Gregg and Seigworth in the introduction of the volume on affect theory they jointly edited in 2010 “Indeed, affect is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing

immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations" (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p. 1). To affect or to be affected is to recognize and acknowledge the world and engage with it (building certain knowledge of it in the process). In the case of the two sisters what becomes problematic is not so much the recognition and acknowledgement of the world – but of its ambiguities. What both Lolita and Paquita affectively learn and understand in their respective ways (Lolita, through bitterness; Paquita through resignation) is – and this is a paradox and ambiguity very much in line with the Gothic – that they cannot learn and/or understand that world they have been thrown in; that they do not belong in it; that this is not their habitat – speaking in animalistic terms, and consequently they will not know how to behave in such environment and will be ostracised from it. Lolita will become a prostitute, which as seen above in the case of Noemi in *Crimen legal* is a convenient category for women who cannot be categorised otherwise. Paquita, on a different note, becomes progressively integrated in the middle class aspirational idiom – thanks to her illness. In falling ill with consumption, she is almost “sporting” or “donning” an illness which redeems her and atones for her absence from social or public life in a way that her self-imposed incarceration could not otherwise justify. It could be said that tuberculosis normalises her, integrates her into a representational idiom without which she could not attain the emotional lucidity of her last days. Eventually, when her situation becomes normalised her character is to die in order to avoid the incongruence of her survival within the internal logic of the novel. Both sisters will always be “odd women” to use the title of the novel of an English naturalist novelist, George Gissing. When facing the development of their destinies, the sisters can relate to the concept of “affective mapping” (see Flatley, 2008). Whereas Flatley's volume deals specifically with melancholia within a modernist context²⁸⁶ the concept of “affective mapping” does not need to be restricted to any period or aesthetic. In affective mapping a political problem a) becomes visible and b) the problem is being made to experience by a

²⁸⁶ Flatley specifically explores the works of Henry James (*The Turn of the Screw*, 1898); W.E.B. Du Bois (*Souls of Black Folk*, 1903) and Andrei Platonov (*Chevengur*, 1928).

whole community²⁸⁷. In this case, the “whole community” are the children of the first generation of bourgeoisie. This is why Sawa (himself the son of a bourgeois) ventriloquizes his characters in order to uncover (i.e. map) a historical problem which translates into a given affect: melancholia, rage or wrath which combines the purely biological (i.e. the violent bodily manifestations of his characters – and of himself who had a reputation for a quick fiery temper) and the social. This affectual tension is actually reinforced by the affect-imbued spaces Lolita and Paquita find themselves in: in a society where a certain sense of social identity was constructed as an Orteguian dialectical synthesis between their selves and that symbol of domesticity that the home is, the most emotive space of all, a space where the bi-facial structure of the affect (the social and the physic-biological) coalesce. Affects can be contagious and dynamic – they can transfer onto objects or onto other subjects to the same extent that certain objects, subjects – or even certain spaces (see Brennan as quoted in Thrift, 2008, p. 222) – can be affectively imbued. If that is actually the case, it naturally follows that affects can be (are) historically engineered – i.e. they can actively be projected upon objects or spaces at will – and consequently they have a political dimension. Sawa manages to navigate the dialectical “twin sources of Realism” (Jameson, 2015, chapters 1 and 2) by nuancing the emphasis on corporeality and corporeal processes which had been characteristic of his previous works. Both sisters, Lolita and Paquita, being overprotected (almost to the point of reclusion), have no opportunity to socialise and mingle with the opposite sex (or even with other girls of their same age) other than in the “tertulia” of Don José Gutiérrez, Don Francisco’s boss in the railroad company. This is a very specific context where social inadequacy translates itself into instances of Gothic panic: “Luego, al tocar Don Francisco la campanilla de la puerta, hubo dentro del pecho de las niñas la angustia dolorosa

²⁸⁷ “Affective mapping” is the name I am giving to the aesthetic technology – in the older, more basic sense of a *techne* – that represents the historicity of one’s affective experience. In mapping out one’s affective life and its historicity, a political problem (such as racism or revolution) that may have been previously invisible, opaque, difficult, abstract and above all depressing may be transformed into one that is interesting, that solicits and rewards one’s attention. This transformation can take place, I argue, not only because the affective map gives one a new sense of one’s relationship to broad historical forces but also inasmuch as it shows one how one’s situation is experienced collectively by a community, a heretofore unarticulated community of melancholics” (Flatley, 2008, p. 4).

de animales tímidos que se ven forzados a darle cara a un peligro y hasta a batirse con él si llega al caso²⁸⁸ (*Noche*, p.131). It is precisely in this “tertulia” that the match-making wife of the host introduces Lolita to the man who will dishonour her. Sawa blames this on the repressive emotional and sexual religious education her parents impose on her – and by extension on her sister. Thus, Lolita’s demise starts when physically separated from her sister in the party. It is at that stage that the destinies of both sisters are determined and sealed and with theirs, the family’s also, understood both as a whole and as the sum of its parts.

This is not only on the mere metaphorical level, but in the case of Lolita, the dramatic arrival at the “tertulia” will seal her destiny – a destiny which is shaped precisely in her sexual involvement with her love interest and subsequent rape by her confessor. Her social death and subsequent invisibility (she will vanish from the novel for good) is articulated through her body. After being raped Lolita collapses only to wake up in a charity hospital:

Cuando salió del hospital y se vio en medio del arroyo, notó en su sangre, notó en sus entrañas que no había ya salvación posible para su alma ni para su cuerpo; que estaba hundida para siempre; que lo había perdido todo, honor, hogar, afectos, familia (...) y que puesto que su padre se había negado a recibirla, era que la sociedad también la rechazaba²⁸⁹ (*Noche*, p.173).

Lolita’s loss of identity is closely linked to her corporeal affects: she knows (literally, according to Sawa) “in her blood” and “in her gut” that there is no redemption for her body or soul. Her actual loss of identity is in fact the loss of those cornerstones which configure the middle classes sense of identity: honour, home and family. On losing those, her social existence comes to an end and consequently turns to the other identity available for a woman in her circumstances, the above-mentioned prostitution – an identity characterised by certain

²⁸⁸ Trans: “When Don Francisco rang the doorbell, the girls felt a painful anxiety rising in their chests, the anxiety of shy animals which are forced to face danger and even fight it if needed”.

²⁸⁹ Trans: “When she left hospital and saw herself as a derelict, she felt in her blood, in her gut, that there was no redemption possible for her body or soul anymore; that she had hit rock bottom; that she had lost everything: honour, home, sympathy, family (...) and since her own father did not even want to see her, it was society itself who was rejecting her”.

use of the body within a very specific economic context. She has been ejected not only from her family, but from society also: one is modelled after the other. Nineteenth century Spanish society cannot be, unless it is structured upon the model of the traditional family. Likewise, the traditional family looks towards society at large for its own identity signs: the father is but the ruler of the nation that his family is, whereas the other members of the family are the denizens of the family-state. In fact, Sawa makes this explicit in the quote above: Lolita's father does not even want to see her, ergo society does not want to see her.

Lolita's sense of destiny is ineludibly linked not so much to her milieu or other attributions Zola was keen on (social maladies, such as alcoholism or killing tendencies) but strict physicality. In the paragraph of her presentation readers learn that she was at the tender age of ten already bound to be a beautiful woman: "A los diez años ya se le señalaba tímidamente bajo el cuerpecillo del vestido, la ligera ondulación de los senos y el arranque precoz de las caderas²⁹⁰" (*Noche*, p.102). This conception of the corporeal as a way of characterising is very modern – to the extent that transcends for example traditional Lombrosian physiognomics, where social maladies would be inscribed in the body beforehand. On the other hand, it is true that Lola's beauty is bound to doom her also, as if Sawa wanted to counterbalance this component of beauty in order to deliberately build his own "ugly novel".

With Lolita's fall from grace, the whole family/household meets its decadence:

aquella casa parecía como herida por los inexorables rencores de una divinidad muy fuerte, y a su presencia surgía el recuerdo del viejo hogar romano sellado por la cólera de Júpiter, y de cuyos fríos aposentos penates y lares habían huido sin dejar otra cosa en los sitios calentados antes por su influencia, que maldiciones y ayes²⁹¹ (*Noche*, p.175-176).

²⁹⁰ Trans: "At only ten years of age, her body could already be seen under her dress, the soft curve of the breasts, the early shape of her hips".

²⁹¹ Trans: "(...) that home seemed as if injured by the unstoppable wrath of a strong God; it evoked an old roman household, sealed by the anger of Jupiter, where the domestic deities had fled from, leaving behind curses and grieving".

Her sister Paquita will be one of the first members of the family to suffer the consequences of her sister's social death. Terribly scared as Paquita is of the dangers that await for her beyond the walls of the house she is happy to partake in her own seclusion: "La catástrofe de su hermana le había hecho cobrar horror inmenso al mundo, que se lo figuraba poblado de bandidos exclusivamente, cubierto de precipicios, y con una pareja de demonios en cada esquina de las calles²⁹²" (*Noche*, p.177). It is significant that Foucault himself in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality (The Will to Knowledge – Foucault, 1998 [1976])* used the "evils" metaphor on at least two occasions: "Claiming to speak the truth (...) it [refers to how sex had been codified for the last two centuries] ascribed an imaginary dynasty of evils destined to be passed on for generations" (Foucault, 1998 [1976], p. 53). The second usage of "evil" is also almost personified, as in those "fiends" awaiting for Paquita "on every corner": "Thus sex gradually became an object of great suspicion (...) the point of weakness where evil portents reach through us" (Foucault, 1998 [1976], p. 69). In these two quotes, Foucault touches on aspects that are key to the novelistic endeavour which is *Noche* and to Sawa's understanding and (miss)reading of Zola's theory also. The first one is Foucault's use of concepts such as "dynasty" and "generations" – which frame the discourse on sex within the master lines of family and reproduction which were characteristic of the bourgeoisie ethos of the nineteenth century. The second aspect is that of threat which became one with sex in the popular imaginary of the Spanish middle classes. This situation would have been exacerbated in comparison with Spain's European counterparts due to the power of the Catholic church, which as Foucault explains in his volume was capital in shaping and stablishing truth-creating and truth-extracting discourses, especially through the sacrament of confession (see Foucault, 1998 [1976], p. 58-67). I believe however, that the most valuable input of Foucault in this specific instance is to be sought in the passages he devotes to the self-repression hypothesis. Contrary to traditional interpretations by which repression would have been aimed at the working classes in order to manage and control production forces and physical manpower,

²⁹² Trans: "The catastrophe that had befallen upon her sister made her horrified of the outer world, a world she imagined populated with evil men, full of chances for sin, fiends on every corner".

Foucault argues that the actual goal of the knowledge technologies built around sex in the nineteenth century are actually a way of managing the bourgeoisie body. This would explain the willingness with which – at first – Paquita participates in her own incarceration and sets her own terms of vigilance: “The primary concern was not repression of the sex of the classes to be exploited, but rather the body, vigor [sic], longevity, progeniture and descent of the classes that “ruled” (Foucault, 1998 [1976], p. 123). It could be argued that the extent to which the family protagonist could be regarded as belonging to the “ruling class” is limited – or in any case, subject to discussion. This is however a family in transition, in the threshold of their economic development – clearly symbolised firstly by the move from the provinces to the capital; and secondly, by the panic attacks both girls suffer precisely before stepping into the party while waiting at the door. A wise choice of liaison and a clever use of their socio-physical capital once they cross that door and their economic and social fortunes will change for ever. One wrong turn however (as Lolita herself takes) and prostitution and economic demise await for the individual and their own whole family and subsequent fall from grace. Thus, the fact that Lolita – a lower middle class youth at the beginning of the novel – eventually falls in the trap of street prostitution could be interpreted – under the light of Foucault’s thesis – as a liberation from the discourse that would condemn her to a reproductive sexual-affective life and consequently, as further evidence of her economic demise. The rules with regards to her sexual behaviour relax because she is not a member of the middle classes anymore: “(...) the most rigorous techniques were formed, and more particularly, applied first, with the greatest intensity, in the economically privileged and politically dominant classes” (Foucault, 1998 [1976], p. 122). Lolita’s is a family in transition, one in which their own petty bourgeoisie sense of identity is starting to blur and fray at the edges. In fact, Villa reaches a similar conclusion, in that she interprets Lolita’s fall as a liberation from “an old social and moral and religious order” (Villa, 2013, p. 232).

Paquita’s illness as a metaphor – of a melancholic affect or rather as the physical manifestation characteristic of affects – fuels her sacrificial disposition and perpetuates her

image of a martyr who immolates her well-being for the commonwealth of the familial household – turning her physical demise into an exemplary tribute to unconditional fidelity to the family ideal. Such would have been a very dear image to the powers that be and the status quo of the late nineteenth century. Her redemption will come eventually when precisely in mapping her melancholic affects she contests her situation and places it within a wider historical context, questioning not only her own situation but coincidentally that of the daughters of the aspiring middle classes. Whereas Sianne Ngai focuses mainly on what she terms “ugly feelings” (i.e. “emotional negativity”) the political component of affects it is an aspect of the theory upon which Ngai has also placed a considerable emphasis. Whereas it could be argued that the political dimension of the theory of affects is also an obvious and capital component of Flatley’s work, what makes Ngai’s work remarkable is the way she specifically ties all three: her theory of affects, the political and the aesthetic forms:

The evidence here would suggest that the very effort of thinking the aesthetic and political together – a task whose urgency seems to increase in proportion to its difficulty in an increasingly anti-utopian and functionally differentiated society – is a prime occasion for ugly feelings (Ngai, 2007, p. 3).

There is also a very dear motif to the Gothic in all of this and it is the way the two sisters’ destinies mirror each other; to the same extent that Lolita’s fall into prostitution can be interpreted as a transgression against the sexual technologies surrounding the behaviour that dictates her class identity, the same could be said of her sister. Paquita adopts a quintessential bourgeoisie (or “ruling class” as Foucault refers to them) concern without actually belonging to the bourgeoisie, but rather swinging between class identities. Paquita mimics and imitates, learns and/or acquires (a) truth about the sexual behaviour she is expected to display (prudish, restrained to the point of fear) trying to learn the ropes of the class she believes to belong to – only to eventually fail. Whereas it would be tempting to read Paquita’s attitude merely as one of very cleverly engineered self-repression (which it arguably is) her fear is more than just that. It is an instance of part of the process by which the bourgeoisie needed to create a distinct

body. This self-repression is symptomatic of Paquita's interiorization of the bourgeois body and the subsequent behaviours according to its norms. Both Paquita and Lolita were always working class girls (seamstresses, prostitutes), Sawa seems to be saying in a practically biological turn which brings to the forefront some of Sawa's most reactionary attitudes.

Paquita spends most of her days at home, sewing to generate some income for the family or going to and from Church. Readers are given to understand that this situation of reclusion and relentless toil is to blame for her deteriorating health: "Se mataba a coser en la máquina para obtener, después de catorce y dieciséis horas de trabajo, un jornal insuficiente, que no bastaba, ni con mucho, a la atención de las necesidades de la casa²⁹³" (*Noche*, p.175). Thus, in the prelude to her own death – as the family is about to culminate its definite disintegration – Paquita summons her mother in her most lucid moment: "¿Sabe usted, madre, que ni usted ni papá han sido buenos con Lolita ni conmigo? (...) ¿Y sabe usted que tampoco han sido buenos para mis demás hermanos?²⁹⁴" (*Noche*, p. 182). The narrator immediately nuances this cry as a form of rebellion against not so much their specific family – despite the very clear accusations against her own parents – but (also) against the (Spanish nineteenth century) family in general: "Maldito si en su alegría de verla tan mejorada, se fijó en que aquel hermoso tono resuelto de la joven expresaba herejías; que negaba la bondad paterna, que socavaba los fundamentos de la familia²⁹⁵" (*Noche*, p. 183; emphasis added). The parallel here with the way Lolita establishes a relationship between her father's authority and society at large (above) is obvious. This is Gothic flesh, flesh which can uncannily be recognised as own and alien at the same time; flesh which belongs to the subject but becomes avulsed from it; a metaphor of belonging to a given family and of the oppressive circumstances of such belonging: despite being essential for life (not only from a strictly biological or physical point

²⁹³ Trans: "She killed herself over the sewing machine just to get, after fourteen and sixteen-hour days, meagre wages that barely covered the needs of the household".

²⁹⁴ Trans: "Mother, do you know that neither you nor father have ever been good to me or to Lolita? (...) Do you also realise that you two have been no good to my brothers either?".

²⁹⁵ Trans: "Damned were her mother if she could not realise, happy as she was to see Paquita's improvement, that her resolute stance was but a heresy which negated paternal goodness and the foundations that family represented".

of view but within Spanish nineteenth century mentality, from a social point of view, in that belonging to a family enables civil existence) this mere fact condemns and conditions – almost dooms human beings. Especially so in the nineteenth century when family was the pillar of society and the limits and nuances between the purely biological and socially constructed limits and tenets of society were more or less deliberately blurred. It is thus tempting to read Paquita's isolation in her room as a form of ideological quarantine following the metaphor commonly deployed by critics by which affects are "contagious" (see, for example, Haidt, 2016). Paquita is isolated at the hub of a series of widening concentric circles: within her family, being the only remaining daughter; within the household itself, when falling ill; within the neighbourhood, since she only leaves the house to go to church and within the wider society – in becoming a "cursi", a "solterona"²⁹⁶ ("being single"). The paradox is that her very contagious illness (tuberculosis) is not transmitted to a single member of the family – despite all living in relatively close quarters. Likewise, she is not inoculated herself with a rather different malady which comes from without: her eloping sister's. Both sisters mirror each other's vital odyssey in that both contract maladies which are more or less contained. The sisters do not infect each other: Paquita does not follow in her sister's whoring steps and in turn, Lolita will never contest the haplessness her parents condemn her to. In fact, in Lolita's case, her becoming a prostitute is almost a physical transformation rather than a change on social prospects: "Notó entonces por si misma (...) que las malas pasiones circulan por el cuerpo por cauces infinitos, exactamente igual que la linfa o que la sangre, y que la caída del pelo y el crecimiento de las uñas"²⁹⁷ (*Noche*, p. 183). These maladies, however, take their toll in that both "kill" the sisters: Lolita dies socially in becoming a prostitute and Paquita dies physically, victim to the system that cannot cater for her medical needs.

It is tempting to read Paquita's self-imposed reclusion as a way to cheat her destiny. Mirroring herself in her sister, as a photographic negative of her almost, Paquita opts for that

²⁹⁶ See Vallis, 2002 on the concept of "cursilería".

²⁹⁷ Trans: "She could feel herself that bad feelings flow infinitely around the body, just lymph or blood, just like the hair falls and the nails grow".

antithetical conceptual opposition which articulates Sawa's novelistic: where her sister elopes in love and become a prostitute, she locks herself in and dies a virgin. Again, notice how the idea of the "double", the "other" or the "doppelganger" is very attractive in Gothic aesthetics since it enables a more nuanced exploration of borderline states of being. In any case, Paquita will perish since there are no identities available for her: if not whore, and if not wife, she cannot exist, and as such dies. It is only in death that she can attain the lucidity that enables her to denounce the oppression she shares with the other odd, invisible women of her generation, who are invisible because they cannot exist and vice versa. In a way, what Sawa is doing through Paquita is consistent with the internal logic of *Noche*: a sort of affective mapping (see Flatley, 2008) in which the melancholia triggered by her illness and everything that surrounds it is a way of contesting a situation that transcends her own familial stance. She places her melancholia within a given historical moment and maps it: she gets to know "the historical origins of melancholias (...) and the others with whom these melancholias might be shared (Flatley, 2008, p. 2). Not just the characters, but it is tempting to envisage Sawa going through the same rage and wrath as his characters. Although referring specifically to the "condition-of-England" novel, Moretti mentions in his work on middle classes literature in the nineteenth century how inter-generational conflict is rife among these works. This conflict, he goes on to add, is based on middle class values: "... as the two generations are pitted against each other, *the older one turns out to be much more bourgeoisie than the younger* sterner, narrower, profit-driven; but also independent, uncompromising, impatient of pre-industrial values; 'too proud to be a gentleman', as was said of Cobden" (Moretti, 2013, p.113; emphasis in the original). This is also the case in *Noche*, where the demise of the different siblings is – to a certain extent – based on their reaction to the fierceness with which middle class values (or rather *aspirational* middle class values) are imposed on them. This paradoxically places Sawa's works again in a rather ambiguous position. On the one hand, the middle class values and the couple who represents them in the novel (Don Francisco and Doña Dolores) are the object of a fierce satire and parody and scorn. On the other hand, the rejection of those values ends up in personal tragedy for the siblings of the couple. It is possible

that this ambiguity stemmed from the personal circumstance of Sawa. After all, Sawa himself was an offspring of the middle class (while in Málaga for example, his family inhabited expensive dwellings and had domestic service; see Correa Ramón, 2008, p. 39). In moving to Madrid, he consequently must have suffered the alienation characteristic of the younger generations which Moretti alludes to above – and alienation produced by the friction between the rejection of middle class values and a sense of alienation with regards also to other social groups.

7.5 Evaristo and Nazario: brotherly parallel lives

Whereas the sisters Lolita and Paquita have their bodies sullied respectively by rape and prostitution on the one hand and illness on the other, their male siblings will not bear on their flesh the marks and scars of their own fall from social grace. On the contrary, they will be the ones inflicting harm onto other bodies. The male siblings are the aggressors, not the victims. Nazario becomes the accomplice of a murderer; his brother Evaristo commits a murder himself. Like his sister Lola, he will end up in prison and vanish from the novel and from family life, which is but further evidence of the close imbrication between family and the plot structuring devices it enables. Sawa thus establishes a very clear gender division in his approach to the treatment of corporeality in his novels; a treatment of corporeality which cannot be disentangled from the myriad of medical, political or sociological discourses which make up his novels. In a fictional corpus so heavily characterised by the tribulations of the body of women and children as seen in previous chapters²⁹⁸, the male body is rarely made to suffer the consequences of the male protagonists' vital choices. If it ever does – since there are a few rare occasions when this happens – said body has been subjected to a state of

²⁹⁸ Not only in *Crimen legal* or *Criadero de curas*. Sawa's nouvelle *La sima de Igúzquiza* (1888) for example is based on the Carlist wars. Instead of focusing on the battle deeds – as Unamuno (*Paz en la Guerra* from 1897) or Valle-Inclán did (*Las sonatas* published between 1902 and 1905) Sawa chooses to elaborate on the tortures a Carlist guerrilla inflicts upon their prisoners. Thematically the nouvelle reaches its violent climax in the revengeful collective rape of the former lover of the head of the gang.

neglect and helplessness that suggest infantilization and/or feminisation²⁹⁹. In Gothic terms, it could be said that those male characters of Sawa who are not plain evil, aptly perform the role of ineffectual hero or in a transmogrification of gender, that of the victim herself. Evilness³⁰⁰ very often leaves traces in these men physicality (say, in their countenance, demeanour or gait) but these traces, full of negative connotations as they often are, rarely portray these men in diminishing terms. For example, Nazario is defined as “(...) la bestia humana en toda su desfachatez. Carne, músculos, huesos³⁰¹” (*Noche*, p.185). In its emphatic, affect-charged tone, such description can be read as an exaltation of the traces of animal corporeality (“in all its audacity” or “arrogance”) within the human being. The evocation of animality (“the beast”) especially in reference to the human is what brings up a sense of uncanny threat (a very strong emotion) which translates itself in physical reactions of for example, scorn or contempt but also fear. This is an instance of the way Sawa was, through Radical Naturalism, politically engineering affects, hoping to trigger political action (anticlerical republicanism) through his works. In fact, it is often that such celebration of animal flesh seems to necessarily go hand in hand with a moral or intellectual limitation – hence the disdain expressed for this character. The concept of the human beast was richly exploited in fin-de-siècle aesthetics, especially explored through a Gothic lens. Tales of transformation and regression into mythical creatures or beasts could be easily assimilated to fears of social decomposition. What makes this trope especially effective (and affective) from a Gothic point of view is the ambiguity modern man is condemned to: not a beast tout court – but a human one (i.e. making the body the meeting point of two antithetic concepts, human and animal).

Conversely, this animalisation so dear to the Gothic does rarely conjure ideas of physical strength when applied to the female – at least in Radical Naturalist aesthetics. For the same

²⁹⁹ Examples of this are Manolito, the young protagonist of *Criadero de curas* – see previous chapter; or the end of *Crimen legal* in which the redemption of Rafaela’s father in law resolves in tears and bouts of devout religious displays – which can be interpreted as a sign of feminisation within Sawa’s universe.

³⁰⁰ Note that there is hardly a male character in any of Sawa’s works who distinguishes himself by their sense of morals.

³⁰¹ Trans: “The human beast in all its audacity. Flesh, muscles, bones”.

politico-ideological purposes that the male characters are to be portrayed within a typical narrative of confrontation the almost animal-like physicality of the female characters is rarely celebrated other than in sexual terms. Celebration(s) of the female body is/are in Sawa more often than not linked to unbridled sexuality, a sexuality which finds release outside the normative marriage (either in adultery or prostitution) in what is an obvious contagion of the middle class idiom Sawa allegedly so violently despised. As if female characters could not enjoy a satisfactory sexual life on strictly moral grounds, women's sexuality is regarded with suspicion.

Sawa not only contrasts the female characters against the two brothers, but also contrasts the two brothers' physical descriptions. In fact, Evaristo's physical description is not as expressionistic as his brother Nazario's – other than the mention of his hairstyle being that of a lowlife pimp (see *Noche*, p.227), not much more is said about Evaristo's actual physical appearance. Readers are not to know whether he is corpulent, like his brother and father; or thin, like his sisters, or tall like his other brother, Paco the priest. In Evaristo's characterisation however, as with Nazario's, there are typical elements of the Radical Naturalist aesthetics whose parallels with Gothic aesthetics are obvious. Once again, Sawa resorts to animalisation (in just one page Evaristo is successively referred to as a "parasite", "vermin" and a "hyena" (see *Noche*, p.227). As result, his affective universe is considerably richer than that of Nazario. Evaristo's passions are far more intense, in that they manifest physically to a higher degree which is a success of characterisation.

Thus, to the same extent that a parallel can be traced between both sisters in that sex and illness are closely interrelated in the Spanish cultural landscape of the late nineteenth century, it could be said that both Nazario and Evaristo are doomed after following similar paths of moral decay. Theirs is not just an economic-bound decadence but rather a moral decadence brought upon themselves by – interestingly enough – an affect (wrath or anger). It is worth adding though, that economy plays a preponderant part in both instances nonetheless. Common to both brothers is the way a violent passion, mistaken by love or

affection, guides both men to either become instrumental to a murder or commit one. This violence-oriented part of the plot enables Sawa to deploy a number of Gothic motifs. Crime, to begin with arguably is the Gothic motif par excellence. Through the portrayal of violence which is on occasions unavoidably linked to the commission of a crime commission a wide range of anxieties can be exploited through effects of horror and terror. Crime is potentially conducive to death and can be associated to lack of control and temperance, both at a personal and wider (social) level. This, within the context of the nineteenth century has very clear resonances. Lack of control and animalisation lends itself very nicely to affect theory: the biological face of an emotion is an outlet for violence or can be mitigated or articulated through the exercise of violence.

Violence, it seems, does not come easily to Nazario's character, despite his animalistic description/physique. It is Venancia, Nazario's lover, who has to convince him to kill her husband so that they can be together. After a generous meal during a secret rendezvous in a different neighbourhood of the city Venancia convinces Nazario of the need to kill her husband. Despite initial reticence, Nazario is eventually won over by a violent jealous passion. His initial arguments against committing such crime are all pragmatic disguises of his lack of courage. He first suggests elopement as an alternative; in realising the need of money to do so, he instead tries to convince Venancia of the risks associated to the murder:

Nos pueden prender, nos pueden llevar presos... pueden enterarse... puede hablar antes de morir... y delatarnos... y decir quiénes han sido... y ya ves... porque no es esa la más negra, la cárcel, ¡y quien sabe! – sino lo otro, lo de más allá, el infierno por toda una eternidad, como dice mi padre³⁰² (*Noche*, p.196).

What eventually makes Nazario comply with the criminal idea is a strong physical reaction of jealousy: Venancia confesses that before him, she had a relationship with another employee

³⁰² Trans: "We could be imprisoned... what if he [the husband] manages to denounce us before dying? Because prison is not the worst that can happen either...who knows whether, as my father says, there is an eternity of hell awaiting?".

at the store. This finally wins Nazario over, and thus, Venancia kills her own husband with the support of Nazario:

Sin violencia; el corazón sereno, normal el pulso, Iluminada la cabeza con algo de la emoción estética que lleva el artista a su obra, hizo la mujer el asesinato del marido, en un todo de acuerdo con Nazario, luego de haber conjugado mucho, y con gran frialdad y raciocinio, el pro y el contra de cuanto pudiera ocurrirles³⁰³ (*Noche*, p.204).

The reason why jealousy triggers such an intense reaction is to be found in the fact that what is at stake in this case is certain image, certain conception of masculinity characteristic of the misogynistic republican ideal with which Sawa identified. In this case the roles have shifted (Venancia being the most sexually experienced of the two) with what it carries as an affront to Nazario's sense of worth, self-esteem and masculinity. In order to deploy his confused state (grief, shame, jealousy) Sawa will deploy the characteristic physical manifestation of certain affects:

se llevó las manos al pecho, como si realmente estuviera herido. Sollozó trabajosamente, dejó caer la cabeza sobre el pecho, y cuando la levantó, accediendo a los ruegos de Venancia, había congestión y delirio, y pena, hondísima pena en aquella cabeza. ¡Aquel bruto, influído exclusivamente por pasiones animales!³⁰⁴ (*Noche*, p.201).

Note however, how paradoxically, Sawa has chosen to represent Nazario's distress by relying on typically feminine affects (or rather, manifestations of the affect) such as the melodramatic clutching of the chest or the sobbing. What is at stake in this brief passage is lost honour and such loss is framed within a sexual relationship – the characteristic middle class ethos of the late nineteenth century in Spain. Honour did represent such an integral part

³⁰³ Trans: "Quietly; with a calm heart, and a slow pulse, touched by the same aesthetic emotion that guides the artist in creating his work, the wife committed the murder of the husband, in agreement with Nazario, after having carefully thought through the pros and cons".

³⁰⁴ Trans: "He clutched his chest, as if he were actually injured. He sobbed, his head fallen upon his chest, and when he lifted it, after Venancia's insistence, there was a very deep sorrow in him. That beast, carried away by his animal passions!".

of identity that its loss could possibly and potentially be the equivalent of death (either social or physical).

This display of emotional violence, which anticipates the murder of Venancia's husband, is also related to Darwinism and the idea of regression – inherent to Darwinian evolutionary theory. Travis Landry uses this paradigm in order to articulate his interpretation of the relationship between Sawa's aesthetics and society. The antinomies that Jameson resolves in the dialectical tension resulting between "the narrative impulse" and the "presence of the body through affect codification" (see Jameson, 2015, part 1, chapters 1 and 2) find a parallel in Landry's work on *Noche*, where they are conceptualised as not so much the tension between romance and novel, but as a hybrid synthesis of both: "... a continuum defined by extremes of romance and Realism is misleading, since the two modalities are not polar opposites at all. Rather, they have always needed each other, and yet the truth is that we often speak as if the two were entirely separate, contentious entities" (Landry, 2013, p.200). On the other hand, Jameson defines such dialectics as follows:

What we call Realism will thus come into being in the symbiosis of *this pure form of storytelling* with impulses of scenic elaboration, description *and above all affective investment*, which allow it to develop towards a scenic present which in reality, but secretly, abhors the other temporalities which constitute the force of the tale or récit in the first place (Jameson, 2015, p. 11; emphasis added).

Landry proposes a reading of Darwinism by which the natural selection process is in a way corrupted by social aspects (in a way which I personally find reminiscent of certain aspects of Rousseian philosophy): "In this work [*Noche*] a biological vision of corrupted sexual selection heightens the sexual impulses of male characters while martyring their female victims". In highlighting certain normalisation of sexual violence Sawa is – according to Landry – denouncing the societal corruption of the Darwinian thought, to which "ethical agency is central" (Landry, 2013, p.184). If anything, such approach highlights the fact that Sawa was heavily reliant on the idiom of the class he so violently attacked. This is, in my opinion, one of

the aspects which enhances the Gothicism of his works: the ambiguity which permeates his treatment of concepts such as personal or social identity – especially so in *Noche*.

Despite the apparent success of the crime, Nazario's own ambition prevents him from being happy: being the owner of the business does not prove to be as satisfactory as he had hoped. The lovers had planned to sell the business and live on the interest the sum would produce by becoming private money lenders. Their estimation however, was not accurate, and blinded by greed they do not consent to sell for less than the asking price they had set. By the end of the novel both lovers (but more emphatically so Nazario) seem tied to the shop inexorably.

Since the crime is carefully framed within a very clear socio-economic context, the punishment for their nefarious deed, is thus economical. It is difficult to tell apart the real motivations of Nazario to commit his crime, as they so closely intertwine with each other: is it the fulfilment of his passion for his lover or is the ownership of the store he seeks? Nazario's failure in life is thus a double-pronged one: a moral wreck who has managed to step up the socio-economic ladder through nefarious deeds who finds his marriage economically punished and with that, the onset of an unsatisfactory romantic life. Note again how closely intertwined the familial and the economic spheres are in that all different parties (Nazario, Venancia – his lover/wife, the unit they form together as a couple and the shop itself) become amalgamated into one single organic unity/entity. See below on the first night as Venancia's husband:

Y al encontrarse solos, ya muy avanzada la noche, en el fondo de la alcoba conyugal profusamente adornada de flores de trapo y de colgaduras de encaje barato, cambiaron irresistiblemente, sin que se dieran cuenta de la impresión, una larga mirada, en la que no se leía el amor, sino la desconfianza, y así como una

desesperada pregunta al porvenir, formulada con todas las vaguedades de la inconsciencia³⁰⁵ (*Noche*, p.216).

Sawa once again embraces in his narrative the cultural ethos of those middle classes he allegedly so much despises: bad deeds cannot go unpunished, he naively seems to suggest, leaving however the punishment in ambiguous hands, somewhere in-between the forces of fate and human agency, such is the internal logic of the market forces which prevent Nazario from striking a good deal on the shop which he has now acquired through marriage. From a strictly economic point of view, the effort he has gone through as an accomplice to a murder, just to attain a loveless marriage and a shop that does not yield the expected profit, has certainly not been a sound investment: it might have been, however, if the shop had yielded the expected profit. Sawa's intended moral is at fault in this precise instance by his strong dependence on the bourgeoisie representational idiom. In presenting the moral of the story under an economic guise, the anti-bourgeoisie message is seriously flawed in that paradoxically it is articulated around a middle class logic, a middle class view of the world: had Nazario and his lover/wife managed to sell the shop at the price they wanted, theirs would be a success story with the strictly moral aspect of the episode (once devoid of the economic) being left to discreetly loom in the background. Nazario's real downfall, from a moral point of view and within the logic of the novel, reaches its climax not in becoming party to a murder; not in marrying the widow of his victim and certainly not in acquiring the possessions of his victim – and again he gains a family (a spouse) and commodities (the shop) as part of the same "lot" – but rather, in rejecting, or to be more precise, in not being able to provide for his ailing sister. It could be argued that in conceptually merging moral behaviour with economic success Sawa is embracing some of the most salient middle class or bourgeoisie tenets. After all, Nazario is not the material perpetrator of the crime. This is yet another example of the sexist masculinity that Sawa attributes to his character and that could possibly be influenced

³⁰⁵ Trans: "When they were finally left alone, late at night, in their newly-weds' bedroom, profusely decorated with flowers made of cloth and cheap bunting, they could not but help exchange a long look, which was not so much about love but rather, in their vague subconscious, a mistrust and a desperate enquiry about their future to come".

by the misogyny of the republican anticlerical idiom, also characteristic of some sectors of the burgeoning middle classes.

As with the episodes related to the sisters' downfall, some of the Gothic motifs dispersed along Nazario's life history are key to the articulation of the affective fabric of the novel. There is however, no single motif around which all others revolve, but rather a thick amalgamation that prevents apprehending them separately. The crime cannot be understood if not in relation to the possibilities of social climbing it allows; at the same time, social-climbing is framed within a context of violent lust and lack of sexual control that ties in closely with feelings of animalistic regression and the dark psychoanalytic recesses of the subconscious. All in all, they configure elements of a time past which will haunt Nazario for good.

Don Francisco will not be able to enlist Evaristo's economic help for medical supplies either, since he is arrested, in his parents' house, while visiting shortly after committing his crime. In introducing this character (Evaristo), Sawa is aware of a series of key identity terms (almost a sort of shibboleths) which build the genuine middle class ethos and thus constructs his character around opposite conceptual pairs: "¿Se le había negado la libertad? ¡Pues al libertinaje! ¿El movimiento? ¡Pues al vagabundeo! ¿La risa? ¡Pues a reír a gritos hasta que se desencajen las mandíbulas y tenga que intervenir la policía como en una cuestión de orden público!³⁰⁶" (Noche, p.221). In this regard, Italian scholar Franco Moretti points out how certain words contributed to the construction of the bourgeoisie identity – see below in this regard the use of the term "keywords" after Williams and Koselleck. Eventually however, Julia – Evaristo's lover – decides to abandon him. As with his brother Nazario, a given emotional situation, in this case Evaristo's feelings of heartbrokenness, becomes assimilated to an economic exchange which shapes it and lends it its idiom. Evaristo first meets his lover as a client (it is also implied in the novel that on occasions he might be also pimping her, which would obviously emphasize the economic nature of their relationship).

³⁰⁶ Trans: "Had freedom been denied to him? Debauchery, then! Had his freedom being restricted? He would roam and wander! His laughter curtailed? He would laugh the merrier!"

In both cases (Nazario and Evaristo's), there is an implicit blame on the paternal lack of vigilance and education for their dramatic ends; or, in any case, on a misguided sense of what paternal vigilance and education should be. Obsessive (and excessive) religious vigilance comes at the expense of a most solid education and lack of interest in other cultural and educational endeavours. Besides, purely economic criteria closely linked to religious beliefs, are decisive in deciding the educational future of the male children of the family. Nazario is almost literally dropped at the store where he will meet his fate. His parents have not bothered to persevere on his education – that privilege having been bestowed on his brother Paco, a priest-to-be, see below – and in encouraging him to take an apprenticeship they are trying not so much to guarantee a better future for him, but rather to get rid of him and the expenses associated to the maintenance of a member of the household: “Mira: yo te destinaría de buena gana, como a Paquito, a la carrera eclesiástica; a ti y a Evaristo; pero tú tienes la cabeza un poco dura, y a mi hace ya tiempo que no me suenan los cuartos en el bolsillo³⁰⁷” (*Noche*, p. 186; emphasis added). Likewise, in Evaristo's case, the lack of parental control is to a certain extent the explanation for his exploits:

La cesantía de Don Francisco había sido una catástrofe, un hundimiento, y allá fueron, envueltas entre los escombros, algunas ideas y muchas preocupaciones que antes del hundimiento formaban invariablemente parte de las construcciones de vida del beato (...) Evaristo se encontró de repente en ese mundo de ruinas y supo aprovecharlo admirablemente para volar por los grandes espacios azules que su imaginación le prometía³⁰⁸ (*Noche*, p. 220).

³⁰⁷ Trans: “Look, I would have happily encouraged both you and Evaristo to embrace the priesthood, but you are not the sharpest, and I have not got enough money”.

³⁰⁸ Trans: “Don Francisco's unemployment turned into a catastrophe, a downfall; off they went, among the debris of this collapse the ideas and concerns that were his life stock (...) Evaristo found himself in the midst of this ruin and made the most of it, flying leisurely into the open blue spaces of his imagination”.

7.6 Paco: a single, ungendered set

There are two priests in the novel and it is undeniable that both are portrayed in heavily Gothic undertones. First of all, there is Don Gregorio, the family's "friend" and confessor, almost the oracle of the family. He is in fact the one who finds the family dwellings in Madrid and helps them organise the move from the provinces to the capital. He is also the one who, on Lolita's disappearance, takes upon himself finding her. His is an animalistic figure, a pornographer who gets aroused in the confessional by enquiring into the privacy of Lolita's (and possibly his other penitents') habits. Thus, the confessional is a "hiding place set in darkness" and the confessor "inspires fear" in Lolita (*Noche*, p. 115). His is a "poisonous word" and he is a "man cladded in black" (*Noche*, p. 117). Paco, on the other hand, the son who takes up the robe, reappears at the end of the novel. Likewise, he is a figure cast in the Gothic mould: "(...) apareció en la sala una figura lúgubre, un jovencito alto, pálido, vestido con una sotana negra, que avanzaba hacia Don Francisco gravemente, con los ojos bajos, en actitud de orar³⁰⁹" (*Noche*, p. 262). The dramatism of their portrayal but enhances the importance they carry within the novel. As if bookending the narration, Don Gregorio, Lolita's rapist, will on the one hand be the one to trigger the emotional storm which destroys the family. On the other hand, the family's demise culminates just at the point when Paco – another priest – denies his economic help to his own father and, as he walks away back to his monk's cell, turns around asking Don Francisco to be forgotten and consequently, die for the family and for society: "Y no olvide usted, para ahora en adelante, que mis estatutos me prohíben tener familia. (...) Yo no conozco a usted de nada³¹⁰" (*Noche*, p. 262). Once again, family and society coalesce into a single unit. Characters who elude a clear classification within any of those two are consequently expelled from the other and condemned to some sort of death or banishment. Such classification is – in the specific case of Radical Naturalists and clearly so

³⁰⁹ Trans: "A lugubrious figure walked into the room, dressed in a black robe, moving seriously towards Don Francisco, gazing to the floor, as if praying".

³¹⁰ Trans: "Do not forget, father, that from now on, my vows do not let me have a family (...) I do not even know you".

in Sawa's *Noche* – based on a biological categorisation which impinges on the social. It has been seen with regards to respectively the male and female characters of the book, and how their deaths and/or disappearances (i.e. their “social” deaths) are mediated by their gender. In that sense compare a heavily sexualised character like Don Gregorio and his active presence in the developments of the plot against a secluded, ungendered priest like Paco and his alienation from the travails suffered by his family.

Paco – Sawa implies – belongs in an alternative society (in alienating himself from his family, he is alienating himself from society). Like a parallel nation within the nation, the Catholic Church has its own rules and regulations. The theme and motif of the conspiracy, the alternative or secret society conniving to take over power is very dear to the Gothic which enhances the threatening potential of the priests. Their circle of influence is not restricted to the family (which was one of the most urging fears of the anticlerical republicans) but in targeting the family, the priesthood is consequently targeting the whole of society. At the same time, the other implication of such conniving society is lack of integration: priests alienate themselves from a normalised society to which they do not contribute. Even if they do not actively conspire to rule, priests are dead weights which are slowing down the nation's progress in the republican anticlerical affective universe.

Paco's importance for the novel is of a different type from Don Gregorio's: his is not a character which is capital in the development of the plot, but rather in the intensification of the affective landscape. By the time his father meets him, Paquita is practically dead and the family's destinies have already been sealed, in that the fall of the other siblings has materialised already. Paco is thus not essential for the closure of the plot; however, his brief intervention adds the right tone with which to end a very pessimistic novel.

Of the two priests, it is remarkable however that only one of them is portrayed under heavily gendered conventions. With these two figures Sawa is tapping into the anticlerical stock of caricatures: priests would on the one hand, oscillate between the lust-thirsty beast who threatens the stability of the middle class family, being a sexual predator of daughters

and wives alike in the solitude of the confessional and spreading conservative ideas among the females in order to corrupt familial harmony. On the other hand, the priests' representation could also swing towards the other end of the spectrum: that of the ungendered, unnatural male, who in his lack of sexual desire inhabits an indeterminate state, a true "no man's land". It is on this last figure that I would like to focus my attention. Sawa decides, after focusing respectively onto two heavily gendered male characters, with their displays of gratuitous violence and lust, and two heavily gendered females – feeble, fragile, weak – to move the spotlight onto yet another sibling who defies categorisations and is not any of those: a priest. Another consequence of his characteristic lack of gender qualities are not only that his sexual pulsions are mitigated or ignored within the logic of the narration, but also that he is not portrayed in animalistic undertones, like most of the characters of the work. As such, it is paradoxical that the range of his affective display is so limited, bearing in mind how characteristic is of humans and how Paco seems to be the least "animalistic" of the characters. The most characteristic feature of the brief apparition of this significant character is his affective restraint which contributes to alienate him even more from the close micro-society which Sawa has created with the González family.

7.7 Concluding Remarks

The sisters display such an affective landscape that it eventually threatens their thinly-acquired middle class status: Lolita is seduced and ends up in prostitution. Her affect is in a way contesting the status quo: she is in love, she sexually consummates her relationship, she is repudiated. Paquita affectively questions her societal role also: on her deathbed she attains the lucidity that enables her to politicise her problem. Both sisters become social outcasts (prostitute and recluse respectively) and as such they die prematurely, dramatically, without the chance of having fulfilled their lives.

This intense affective display means that the sisters are doomed and will not be able to transcend their milieu or the laws of inheritance, the traits received from their parents. There are no existential alternatives to these girls: they cannot leave behind their aspirational middle class values because there is nothing outside those. Thus, society will deal with these aberrations in a way that the alternative is not suitable proposition and will further alienate the members of the family: prostitution; illness and death. In a way, it could be said that the Evaristo and Nazario become social outcasts also. The younger brother kills a man whereas Nazario has to bear the moral and emotional brunt of being an accomplice to a gratuitous murder. Consequently, they are dealt with in also a Gothicised manner – just like their sisters: they actualise their criminality. Finally, and in the case of Paco, it is tempting to read his embracing of the Church principles and outcasting himself as a priest– according to Sawa, naturally – as yet another instance of alienation, comparable to prostitution, mortal illness or crime commission.

Although it is true that Gothicism is a way of articulating social fears, in order to be successful, it needs to tap into the ultimate personal fear: death, disappearance, disintegration. There is nothing more fearfully Gothic than that. It seems then inevitable that the family perishes in a most physical way, just as the structures which sustain it disappear also. The very title of the novel (“night” in English) will become, in the last brief chapter, a metaphor of the physical and emotional decadence brought upon the spouses by respectively old age and the disintegration of family bonds, which condemn the spouses of the family to bitter loneliness:

Y resalta de él como lo más triste, como lo más directamente condenado por la maldición inmensa, como los exclusivos iniciados en el secreto de la colosal tragedia, dos árboles, dos pobres árboles escuetos, levantando grotescamente sus ramas al

cielo en actitud de pedir consuelo, sin verdores, sin retoños, sin pájaros y sin hojas, con el tronco negro por la vejez y el rayo³¹¹ (*Noche*, p.263).

There is almost a sense of *schadenfreude* in the fact that both parents to a certain extent have generated – literally – the family's demise. Such demise lies with the parental religious creed the children have been brought up with, which is emphasised by the fact that one of the sons becomes precisely a priest. As it will be seen below in more detail, Don Francisco's plea for help is rejected by his children on ideological grounds which are based precisely on the principles characteristic of the aspirational middle classes he holds so dear – and that implicitly, they might have learned or inherited from him. Nazario, guided by his greed chooses not to lend him any money; and Paco is imbued with a sense of religiosity which is purely aesthetic and that fails his father when faced with real practical issues (such as his family's economic situation) or moral dilemmas.

However, on this occasion, Sawa's Gothicism started to look forwards, towards the bohemian decadentism which aesthetically he would find so appealing after his return from Paris and not so much backwards towards certain forms of Gothicism which were already starting to feel somehow *passé* by the turn of the century (that of the *fouilleton* and the mysteries novel; see Zavala, 1971, p.175). The last chapter of the novel attests then to the definite disintegration of the family. This is a very brief text completely different in tone from the rest of the novel. Thus, diverging from the attempts at crude Zolaesque Realism of the rest of *Noche*, this passage results in a marked symbolist text *à la* Baudelaire, where two old trees (clear references to the aging parents of the family) perish in the midst of a nightmarish wasteland ruled by mythical creatures of evil, such as demons and witches. What is more, one of the main characteristics of this novel reaches its zenith at this passage setting thus the difference with regards to previous works: the physical corporeal language transcends the

³¹¹ Trans: And the saddest thing [in this landscape], the most doomed, is the two trees, those poor dying trees, lifting their branches up to the sky, asking for comfort, with their age and lightning blackened trunks, bare of leaves, birds or greenery".

physical activities and becomes applied not only to actions but also to feelings and emotions. As Fredric Jameson explains in his *Antinomies of Realism*, this “reduction to the body” is characteristic of the contemporary bourgeoisie experience: “I believe that the contemporary or postmodern “perpetual present” is better characterised as a “reduction to the body”, inasmuch as the body is all that remains in any tendential reduction of experience to the present as such” (Jameson, 2015, p. 28). In misreading Zola’s theory, it could be argued that the Radical Naturalists produced a more modern understanding or comprehension of Zola than the one that has been prevalent for the last few decades³¹². Sawa rarely made his theoretical tenets explicit³¹³ – unlike López Bago, who would often use the prologues to his own novels to lay down his aesthetic programme (see Fernández, 1995, chapter 2). However, if his novelistic practice is to be understood as a declaration of aesthetic principles, it could be argued that “the characteristically modern (or modernist) concern with the impact of modernization on everyday life” which Harrow finds symptomatic of Zola’s modernity is also present in Sawa: “attention to the processes of marginality and migration; dual focus on the alienation and exhilaration triggered by living in the modern world and the capturing of the pace of modern existence in the rhythms of prose” (Harrow, 2010, p. 4). Thus, both physical death (as in the mortal illness of Paquita and its literary symbolic nemesis, killing, as in Nazario and Evaristo’s respective crimes); and civil death (the falling from grace of Lolita doomed into prostitution and the imprisonment of her brother Evaristo) are ways of pushing this new corporeality to the extremes in order to better research and analyse the affects they are manifestations of. In using a metaphor which would be very dear to the (radical) naturalists, it is as if the ill tissue in its abnormality was easier to single out and apprehend than the healthy one, making it thus more preferable for research: against the healthier, normal tissue of “costumbrismo” from earlier literary generations (i.e. la “novela bonita”, see above) the Radical Naturalists offer their

³¹² “Reading Zola’s modernity across the centuries ‘divide is a crossing which literary critics, however, have been reluctant to make” (Harrow, 2010, p. 7; emphasis in the original).

³¹³ Apart from “Impresiones de un lector” the appendix he produced for López Bago’s *El cura* (c. 1885) most of Sawa’s opinions on literature would be consigned to his opus posthumous, *Iluminaciones en la sombra* (1910). See Lozano Marco, 1983, p. 350 – 351, who refers to Sawa (with regards to Sawa’s own conception of the novel) as “combative” and “anti-bourgeois”.

own blend of “ugly novel”: the ill flesh of the Radical Naturalism. “Affective mapping” provides the theoretical tool with which to frame these bodily occurrences within a wider context, a context which transcends the personal and socio-economic and enables the historicizing of affects and amalgamates the personal-corporeal with the social-political.

To the same extent that took a century to rescue Zola from the (limiting) realist-naturalist categorisation and return him back to the modernity he belongs to (see Harrow, 2010 and Jameson, 2015 above) it seems as if Sawa himself, or even his contemporaries, were not at the time aware of exactly where the modernity of Sawa’s novels was to be found. In associating modernity with modernist aesthetics, Sawa’s innovations were clouded by a critical misreading of his works and by the caricature of the old bohemian he became, and which was immortalized in the works of his contemporaries. In freely interpreting Zola’s theories until the original naturalist message was completely distorted and in adopting a sense of corporeality that stemmed directly from Gothic popular culture, Sawa created a brand new literary idiom. Thus, if naturalism is to be understood as Zola’s own formulation of nineteenth century realism, Radical Naturalism was anything but. However, what Sawa’s Radical Naturalism can actually be understood as, is as a new formulation of the corporeal which places literary representation of affects in the foreground.

8. Conclusion

It seems as if Alejandro Sawa was destined to become a literary character even before his demise. The writer Rafael Cansinos-Assens (1882-1964) left in his autobiographical novel *Bohemia* a most vivid sketch of Sawa during the early 1900s in which Sawa is often referred to as “the great” or “the magnificent”. Paradoxically, Sawa’s novels (produced over fifteen years before) were at that time already forgotten. Their titles are not even mentioned in *Bohemia* and the other (real life) characters in that work, the writers of the fin-de-siècle, refer to Sawa as a “poet” despite the fact that Sawa never published or even wrote a single line of verse. In fact, what was drawing these young bohemian modernists towards Sawa was not so much his work, but his personal charisma; the same charisma that served him to inspire Valle-Inclán’s Max Estrella.

I argue however, that it is in those novels precisely, and not so much in the press articles he produced at the end of his career, where the modernity (and to a certain extent, the modernism) of Sawa’s oeuvre is to be found. In being read as the “exaggerated Zolaesque naturalist”³¹⁴ that he claimed to have been, those aspects of his writing that sat at odds with his alleged naturalistic aesthetic creed were (and have been) ignored or eschewed. It was not so much Zolaesque influence however, but certain conceptions of what Zola’s aesthetics were supposed to mean, that impregnates the work of Sawa. In particular Sawa appears to be shaped by what Zola represented within the Spanish literary thought of the late nineteenth century (obscenity, gratuitous provocation) – and not so much by what Zola’s aesthetics actually were. In fact, Zola’s was a drive for total, quasi-documental realism, as evidenced by his ambition to apply the scientific method to the novel and made explicit in some of his

³¹⁴ Circa 1904 he confessed precisely to Cansinos-Assens: “Hay que renovarse o morir, según el lema d’annunziano... Ya ve usted, yo también he cambiado... En mi primera época hacía novelas truculentas, de un realismo zolesco exagerado, por el estilo de Zuhonero, el de La Carnaza, y Ubaldo Romero de Quiñones, el del Lobumano, cosas de que hoy me avergüenzo...” (Rafael Cansinos-Assens, 1961, pp. 22-23). Trans: “Renewal or death, after D’annunzio... You see, I have also changed. When I first started I used to write dark novels of an exaggerated Zolaesque realism, a bit like Zuhonero and Ubaldo Quinones, of which I am ashamed these days.”

theoretical works³¹⁵. On the other hand, Sawa's are very subjective works heavily mediated by the author's point of view. This is an important contribution of this thesis which has gone amiss among many previous interpretations of Sawa's work such as Correa Ramón (1993, p.11 and 2012); Gutiérrez Carbajo (1999, p. 31 and 2009, p. 40) and Puebla Isla's (2006, p. 56). All three scholars have in fact highlighted the supposed aesthetic affinity between both authors, thus perpetuating a decidedly passé image of Zola which consequently has impinged on modern readings of Sawa (and by extension of the radical naturalists). Despite the "radical naturalist" sobriquet, Sawa's works are far more influenced by a post-romantic sensibility than by the push for realism characteristic of the second half of the nineteenth century – regardless of the tangential elements characteristic of naturalism that can be found in his works.

In answering my research questions (below), my work in fact identifies a series of features of plot and characterisation in all Sawa's novels studied which show a very clear Gothic sensitivity, in line with the post-romanticism which accounts for Sawa's almost intrusive presence within his narrations.

- What are the characteristics of the "Gothic corporeality" in Sawa's novels?
- How does this corporeality relate to other literary discourses of the 19th century?
- What are the continuities and discontinuities as regards other "literary bodies" to be found in literary movements and/or genres contemporary to Sawa?

Before expanding on Gothic corporeality, however, I will briefly touch upon Gothic elements which my research has identified and which have a strong bearing on corporeality. The plots of all three novels for example, result ambiguous in their conclusion, since they can be interpreted as both reactionary and revolutionary at the same time. The plot conclusion can be as reactionary, in their harsh criticism of the evils which assail society, as revolutionary, in

³¹⁵ "For three years I have been *assembling the documents* of this grandiose work (...) this work, which will be made up of numerous episodes, is therefore to my mind *The Natural and Social History of a Family under the Second Empire*" (Zola, 1967, [1871], p. 161; emphasis added).

their defiance of literary good taste. This ambiguity, is characteristic of most Gothic works. For example, *Crimen legal*'s plot is a harsh denunciation of the men who frequent prostitutes in detriment of the rigours of family life. However, when such denunciation is placed within the specific context of the Spanish nineteenth century middle classes it is easy to see how it transcends the mere moral warning to become almost a political manifesto which taps into middle class anxieties. Prostitution was a malady with multiple ramifications, which would affect not only family life but a whole way of understanding the status quo. Paradoxically, such a fervent defence of middle class values is framed within a tale where the Gothic raw physicality of the medical procedures described would instantly alienate those with whom the message could find a stronger affinity: the petite bourgeoisie. In that sense, parallelisms with the second novel studied, *Criadero de curas* can instantly be traced. *Criadero de curas* is an impassionate defence of a (very) traditional familial model which operates also as an economic unit against the threats posed by Church interference. The paradox here is that the core message of the novel gets subverted by a ruthless criticism of the Spanish Catholic Church, arguably the main stalwarts of such family model. This tension makes the novel navigate between the brutal anticlericalism which culminated in the slaughtering of Church members half a century later, during the Spanish Civil War, and the most traditional/conservative bourgeoisie tradition by which the traditional family is at the hub of the economic system. Along these same lines, the final novel studied in this thesis and the most elaborated one produced by Sawa, *Noche* turns out to be a lament, an elegy, a swan song for a model of family which feels threatened at the time Sawa is writing his works. Such a family (revolving around the father figure; numerous; educated in middle class values of religiosity and material ambition) would paradoxically have been the flagship of the social class Sawa so vehemently despised. To this date not one single Sawa scholar has identified the fact that despite the Sawa's stance against middle class ethos and values, his commendations run in parallel to precisely those middle classes ethos and values. In my thesis I show how Sawa's novels are not counter-reactionary documents, but in fact, ardent defences of the traditional family.

I also show in my thesis how these same plots are heavily influenced by the narratives of the *feuilleton* where strong affective narrative effects are accentuated on the detriment of realism – another characteristic of Gothic aesthetics. Theory of affects impact on Spanish scholarly is still very limited³¹⁶, and certainly, never before applied to the research into Sawa.

Invariably, the most emotional instances of all three Sawa's novels studied are framed within episodes of physical pain and illness, a most obvious invitation to be read under the Gothic lens. Rafaela's social death and abulia in *Crimen legal* cannot be understood without the terribly painful abortion which precedes and frames them. The change of economic fortunes of the seminar (a source of joy for the priest who rule the institution) is in *Criadero de curas* contingent to Manolito's death – a death which is preceded by intense physical suffering whilst entrapped in a dungeon. Likewise, the change of economic fortunes of the family protagonist in *Noche* (and the despair which accompanies it) is triggered by an illness which makes the youngest daughter literally cough her lungs away. I demonstrate thus that characteristic also of a Gothic sensitivity is the way the construction of characters puts a heavy emphasis on corporeality. The settings are also characteristic of both the most traditional and the most modern formulations of the Gothic novel: from the classic dungeon infested by rats and cockroaches (*Criadero de curas*) to the progressively-crumbling familial middle class dwellings (*Noche*) and the gilded-cage entrapment of the middle class home (*Crimen legal*). Whereas other scholars have focused on corporeality in Sawa such as Paolini (1979, 1984a, 1984b and 1986) and Puebla Isla (2006) they have done so in relation to a theory of (literary) naturalism which as I have demonstrated is flawed from its very inception. Thus, none of them connect Sawa's use of corporeality in his novels to socio-political developments as for example the incidence of republican nationalism in Sawa's fiction. What I propose in my thesis is that the way Sawa engages with the human body is in fact a way of engaging with pressing identitarian issues (gender, class, nation), and not a mere vehicle for "épater le bourgeois".

³¹⁶ There are some notable exceptions though see in the bibliography Haidt, 2016 and the volume where her essays is included: Delgado, Fernández and Labanyi, (eds.) 2016.

It is through the body that the criticism of society is articulated. The very plots of the different novels are built around physiology: reproduction and/or illness being key on all three novels. It is mainly the human body (as a marker of gender identity, age, physical and, paradoxical as it may seem, mental fragility) that the different character traits are built upon. Finally, is the human body the one that must directly suffer the consequences of inhabiting the spaces characteristic of the Gothic novel, to the extent that eventually the human body becomes the Gothic haunting, the trapping itself.

Traditional readings of *Crimen legal* such as Correa Ramón (2012) and Mbarga (1999), fail to see that beyond the ferocious anticlericalism of the work lays in fact a deep concern with identity issues which relates to social anxieties about gender. Not by coincidence the identity of the female protagonist (Rafaela) is built around her (aborted) pregnancy. By framing the novel within Gothic aesthetics and through the combined use of different post-structuralist approaches the figure of Rafaela transcends her peripeteia. Her abjected body becomes, under the scrutiny of the male gaze, the site of contention of conflicting aspects of the middle classes discourse: suspended in Gothic ambiguity, between virginity and motherhood, there is no place for the New Woman in the Spanish imagery of the petit bourgeoisie and when confronted with this contradiction that New Woman has to die.

Likewise, *Criadero de curas*, despite its parallelisms with romance and its wealth of Gothic motifs, has never been read in depth as a Gothic work. Against interpretations which favour a reading of *Criadero de curas* as a mere precursor of the boarding school novel (Ezpeleta Aguilar, 2012) and its concomitances with the bildungsroman (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 1999) I suggest an interpretation which in its alliance to its political message eschews the avowed realism of Zola's dictum. As I argue in this thesis, the determinism by which Manolito joins the seminar is far more connected to the Gothic curse than to scientific inheritance laws. The "child" is, besides, the unfinished character par excellence, a project, ambiguous in its indetermination, not yet sexually mature, but condemned to reprise sexual roles in his day to day playing, for example. As such, it is possible to trace parallelisms between the child figure

and the woman, the two figures for which there is not room left in the imagery of the republican nationalism. As such, Manolito's death, just like Rafaela's is full of symbolism about societal identitarian struggles. Studies like Gutiérrez Carbajo's for example interpret the novel as an indictment against religious fanaticism (Gutiérrez Carbajo, 1999, p. 62). Gutiérrez Carbajo however, does not place Sawa's novel within the specific context of Spanish nationalistic republicanism. In doing so, I have nuanced the terms of Sawa's criticism of religious institutions considerably, in that Sawa's novel is about national identity, as much as it is about Catholic Church abuses.

Equally concerned with societal representational issues, *Noche* is a far more nuanced effort than the works that precede it. I argue that *Noche* is the novel where the influence of Zola actually materialises in a most palpable way. I do introduce a caveat, however. The reading of Zola which influences Sawa is not the reading of the Spanish nineteenth century which has been perpetuated until recently. The real influence of Zola does not (entirely) lie in the use of plot driven determinism or in the milieu as a character building resource. What Sawa in fact learned from Zola is closer in spirit to modern interpretations of the French master, such as Jameson (2015) and Harrow's (2010). Sawa conveys through his literary language in *Noche* a decidedly modern affective universe. Through such affective representation, Sawa portrays the tensions characteristic of the Spanish fin-de-siècle: namely fear of social inadequacy.

This thesis argues that Sawa's work cannot be read along the master lines of late nineteenth century realist/naturalist theories and dialectics – or rather not *just* along these lines. In order to dissect the complexity of his literary language and understand its meaning, it is capital to bring up multiple other idioms and discourses which configure his narrative voice: the different types and varieties of the popular novel (such as the feuilleton, the crime novel, the anticlerical novel, the Gothic romance); the anticlerical idiom of the Spanish nationalistic republicanism or the French Romantic canon. All these coalesce in Sawa's very personal approach to corporeality, a sense of the corporeal which is better understood through the

Gothic lens. Sawa's Gothic bodies are like those middle classes he was so concerned about: changing and dynamic. It is true that his novels are completely devoid of supernatural occurrences, but that does not necessarily mean that they are not rich in Gothic elements. Bodies in Sawa are often imprisoned, maimed, controlled, observed... there is certainly a morbid delectation in all these instances, in how obsessively pervasive they become. Here is precisely where the Gothicism of Sawa lies: in exploring societal issues through Gothic corporeality he opens up new avenues for the investigation of many other identitarian issues. The body bears the marks of the different identities one has to bear: as a member of a given family, class, society or nation. The human body is the threat and the locus of that threat, hence a narrative organised around a set of Gothic tropes. In Sawa's works, society leaves in a quasi-permanent state of paranoia: the body, the foundational cornerstone of such social organisation, is at its most exposed and threatened. In warning his readers about the vulnerability of the body, he is adopting and internalising a master image of a self-composed body as a reference which would have been very dear to the middle classes.

Whereas Alejandro Sawa might have construed himself after the radical republican men of letters of the French Republic, a careful reading of the ambiguous Gothicism of his works evidences a strong alliance to the bourgeoisie conservative idiom he allegedly so much despised. The way he engages with identitarian issues within the middle classes shows how deeply rooted his concerns are. His acerbic criticism hides in fact a very real preoccupation with the maladies that assail the middle class and could potentially distort or destroy it. Class permeability, church and clerical meddling into domestic affairs, the economic legitimacy of the familial fabric... they are all exploited through the Gothic lens in Sawa's novels; they are all interpreted as threats to the familial (and consequently social and national) stability. After all, the Gothic is but an exploration of the social fears and anxieties – fears and anxieties in which Sawa partook. Sawa's is not the Cervantine tone of Galdós, the kind, humorous and satiric criticism of the middle classes, but the apocalyptic tone that actually masks a very real fear about the sustainability of such class. Rather than criticizing Spanish petty bourgeoisie,

Sawa appears to be the whistle blower of the whole generation. All novels studies can be interpreted as a stern warning against the evils that await for the middle classes. Brothels and liaisons with prostitutes can potentially weaken legitimacy is the subtext of *Crimen legal*. Likewise, *Criadero de curas* implication is that letting the Catholic Church and its priests meddle with familial affairs can potentially weaken middle class institutional representation. Finally, a man who protects the honour of his children – Sawa seems to be saying in *Noche* – ensures economic (and class) continuity.

Such an interpretation runs contrary to previous readings of Sawa's novels, precisely because in approaching such novels, his apparent allegiance to the anti-bourgeoise discourse (an allegiance he himself was happy to proclaim) was taken at face value. However, reading the profusion of the corporeal in his novels along the wealth of theory that Gothic aesthetics have generated in the last few decades showcases Sawa as an author who is at struggle between his position within society and the literary canon on the one hand and his own literary voice on the other. If, on the one hand, radical naturalism was an aesthetic project aimed at superseding old forms of realism (namely Zola's), on the other, it was all part of an ideological project which could be framed within the anticlerical nation building project of certain republican ideologies (Sanabria, 2009) and which fed from many other sources such as Gothicism, and a series of discourses on corporeality. The fact that radical naturalists' very own personal use of Gothic tropes co-habits with the avowed will of constructing a new realist/realistic narrative tradition within the Spanish nineteenth century canon cannot be ignored or eschewed though. If anything, it can be argued that if the great realist tradition of the late nineteenth century (Zola, Tolstoy, Galdós or George Eliot among others in Jameson's *The Antinomies of Realism*) is built upon the, in broad terms, show/tell antinomy, the Radical Naturalism of Sawa could then be read and understood in terms of an imbalance of such tension. The corporeal affect takes over and disrupts the narrative impulse and Gothicises the narrative, projecting it into a new realm further to be explored by the formal experimentation of the next generations (to which Sawa felt a strong allegiance in his later years and whose

origin, in the guise of Gothicism, can be glimpsed in his novels). Sawa's novels point the way towards new representational developments. The caricature on the one hand and the actual author that Sawa once was on the other, have both now become more nuanced. The furious anticlerical, anti-bourgeois author turns out in fact to be a novelist who generously partakes in the idiom of those classes he so much despises. Conversely, here is an author with a decisive modern outlook when it comes to the corporeal, an author who has learned from Zola new forms of representation which in combination with Gothic aesthetics, have enabled him to nuance yet even more the panoramic vision of the Spanish society and literature of the fin-de-siècle.

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