
Space in “La fuerza de la sangre”

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y interest in “La fuerza de la sangre” relates to those aspects of our engagement of space that involve fundamental issues of orientation and identity. Generally, the function of space in this novella has been approached in terms of various overarching interests. In his classic study of the *Novelas ejemplares*, Joaquín Casaldueiro sees in “La fuerza” a replay of the human drama of sin and redemption. While attending with his customary perspicacity to form and narrative rhythm, he underlines in the tale’s development the thrust of Christian eschatology and subsumes all issues of space to this movement. Rodolfo’s trip to Italy, for instance, which clears the way for Leocadia’s recognition of the various spaces of her sundering (inner space of the self, room as the locus of the rape, disordered social space of family and town), is understood as merely part of a social tradition: the formative voyage undertaken by young noblemen. The crucifix which Leocadia takes with her as a marker of space and identity (Rodolfo’s) is seen by Casaldueiro with its full symbolic weight. Such a near-allegorical reading makes “space” a mere ground for

the enactment of a symbolic sacrifice and undervalues the care with which location is deployed in the novella.

Ruth El Saffar tells us at the outset of her commentary on the novella that “neither the plot nor the characters are to be evaluated by realistic or naturalistic standards” (128). She assigns the novella to Cervantes’s later works because of its “recourse to character types to present the universal problems of sin and salvation, its use of religious symbolism, its absence of historical or social detail, and its careful structuring of scenes” (129). In this context most references to space acquire a moral connotation: the family’s climb toward the city and the young men’s descent are seen as a move toward and away from civilization. The crucifix itself is a symbol of Leocadia’s restoration, rather than a simple marker of place. While El Saffar’s reading is perceptive and enlightening in many ways, it bypasses the issue of bodily agency within “place” as well as issues of orientation that underpin Leocadia’s and doña Estefanía’s reordering of fractured or disordered space.

In his study of “the literal and the figurative levels of meaning” (154), Edward Friedman navigates between the real and the symbolic in a reading that allows space, at most, an ancillary role. Leocadia’s careful survey of the room where she is raped, an inventory that powerfully calls attention to itself, is principally the place where “she seems to intuit the recourse that will lead to justice” (130). The foundation of Friedman’s reading is implicitly hermeneutical in that he sees the novella’s ending—the projection of a just recovered harmony into the future—as a rhetorical move by the narrator that calls attention to the contrast between the plot as signified and the narrator’s discourse as signifier. This efficient explanation suggestively frames ambiguities of plot and character development as well as the tale’s thrust toward the symbolic. Issues of space, however, are necessarily secondary to Friedman’s interest. His approach, on the other hand, goes directly to the source of the tension that has preoccupied so many readers of the novel and led them to elevate it toward the transcendent (as does Casaldueiro, and also Alban Forcione, who sees it principally as a miracle story) or to focus on its qualities as an esthetic object (de Rentiis). He suggests that “the relation between the literal and the generative

levels of meaning is self-consciously ambiguous" (154), and that, while expected norms appear to win out (as does "la fuerza de la sangre" ultimately), the uneasy relationship between the narrative and its discourse allows for an ironic, counter-conventional (counter-romance) reading.

In Chapter 6 of his book on the *Novelas*, "La fuerza de la sangre': Redemption and Identity," William Clamurro focuses on the endangerment and regaining of selfhood, a process which, in itself, is synecdochal for the endangerment and restoration of familial and social harmony. While not altogether embracing the transcendentalizing readings of Casaldueiro, El Saffar, and Forcione, Clamurro does refer to Leocadia's and Rodolfo's "recognitions" and marriage as mutual and miraculous redemptions. Clamurro, however, is mainly interested in the matter of identity, its loss and restoration. For instance, he sees Rodolfo's final speech (on beauty) and his discovery of a true love for Leocadia as the young man's passage from anonymity to fully formed selfhood; this transformation makes the marriage possible and represents, for Leocadia, the crowning of a long and arduous journey from a partial loss of self (the rape) to its full recovery in marriage.

Marcia Welles also concerns herself with identity in "Violence Disguised: Representation of Rape in Cervantes' 'La fuerza de la sangre'" by focusing on the text's "gender markings" (245). It is because the rape does not fully silence Leocadia that she can rise from her status as victim and that, with the help of doña Estefanía, she can manage to "[negotiate] a bond of mutual love—and pleasure—with her husband" (250). Welles is very clear in locating the development of the plot in the women's hands: "It is the bonding between women (Leocadia and doña Estefanía) that enables the plot to unfold, for they resist the cultural assumption of female passivity" (247). However, Leocadia's power of speech is ultimately related to her ability to reconfigure the locus of her agency, so that one can say that her speech, and that of doña Estefanía, can effect a positive outcome because it has formed and assumed responsibility for the space of its enactment.

Bypassed in all these commentaries or only referred to with respect to the configurations of power, as in El Saffar's examination

of the initial encounter between Rodolfo and Leocadia, is the surprisingly prominent role given in the novella to the placement of events and to space in general. Although these are the principal questions addressed by the comments that follow, the latter may, on occasion, overlap with aspects of the analyses mentioned earlier. For instance this reading will intersect with Clamurro's in that spatial orientation is a constituent of identity; it will intersect also with Welles because the body in space is a gendered body and therefore the relationship of women to space is different from that of men.

In speaking to such spatial issues, we must begin with the notion that "[s]patiality is a primitive, so primitive that a sense of space must already be given, must already be constituted by us, on our side of things; we are not merely passive receptors of spatial information, we actively constitute the sense of space" (Morris 6). A reading of the novella which is framed by the understanding that we "actively constitute the sense of space" foregrounds the intimate interplay of spatiality and narrative at all of its key moments. It also broadens our notion of spatiality so that it encompasses from the top down, so to speak, cultural/ideological space (country, city), the space of deambulation (city, street, path), the space of habitation (homes, room), and the space "on our side of things." Thus my overall premise is that Leocadia's rape, a disordering and disorienting infraction, represents the breaching of boundaries and the disordering of space on all levels. The novella develops as a gradual reordering of such degraded spaces, principally through the agency of Leocadia and doña Estefanía.

Initially it may seem that a vertical cut down through the various layers of space, as above, may move us from the purely cultural to the purely physical. However, even the most immediate and apparently physical expression of, or engagement with, space already comports cultural and epistemological values (of course the rape itself is both a physical and a "cultural" aggression). Merleau-Ponty reminds us that, even as we engage space around us, and at the most elemental level of such engagement,

[e]very external perception is immediately synonymous with

a certain perception of my body, just as every perception of my body is made explicit in the language of external perception. If, then, as we have seen to be the case, the body is not a transparent object, and is not presented to us in virtue of the law of its constitution, as the circle is to the geometer, if it is an expressive unity which we can learn to know only by actively taking it up, this structure will communicate itself to the sensible world. The theory of the body schema is, implicitly, a theory of perception. (Quoted in Morris 35.)

Rodolfo's rape of Leocadia is both a physical and a socio-cultural aggression. Both components of the event are immediately foregrounded in Leocadia's first words upon recovering her senses:

¿Adónde estoy, desdichada? ¿Qué oscuridad es ésta, qué tinieblas me rodean? ¿Estoy en el limbo de mi inocencia o en el infierno de mis culpas? ¡Jesús!, ¿quién me toca? ¿Yo en cama, yo lastimada? ¿Escúchame, madre y señora mía? ¿Óyesme, querido padre? ¡Ay sin ventura de mí!, que bien advierto que mis padres no me escuchan y que mis enemigos me tocan; venturosa sería yo si esta oscuridad durase para siempre, sin que mis ojos volviesen a ver la luz del mundo, y que este lugar donde ahora estoy, cualquiera que él se fuese, sirviese de sepultura a mi honra, pues es mejor la deshonra que se ignora que la honra que está puesta en opinión de las gentes. (79)

Leocadia's "adónde estoy" is the familiar statement of someone who has lost her bearings, but the verisimilitude of the statement underlines as well the crucial importance of spatial coordinates to the recovery of one's sense of self. The next statement ("¿Qué oscuridad...?") is a hybrid reference both to the actual condition of that space (darkness) and to her own moral condition as the sentence that follows makes clear ("Estoy en el limbo..."). There is an immediate merging of inner and outer spaces, both characterized by disorientation. Once that merging takes place, the sentences that follow gradually expand the spatial references toward the culture in their reference to parents and then to society as a

whole (“mundo,” “honra,” “deshonra”). Almost immediately, Leocadia veers into what can only be described as epistemological wondering, itself also quickly transformed into moral evaluation: “Ya me acuerdo (¡que yo nunca me acordara!) que ha poco que venía en la compañía de mis padres; ya me acuerdo que me saltearon; ya me imagino y veo que no es bien que me vean las gentes” (79). It is important then to connect the “placedness” of the body, the sense of one’s body in space, with notions of depth and ethics. As we saw, according to Morris and Merleau-Ponty, perception arises from the crossing of body and world, and so does the sense of depth within space. Both depend on movement, that is to say, on our engagement with space, our agency within it: “we notice the ethical in depth when we notice that our movement crosses over into what we perceive in depth, that things in depth reflect our responsibility for our perception of them” (Morris 43). That is why Leocadia’s disorientation and her moral dilemma are so clearly presented as a disturbance of her spatial coordinates. Her wound and rupture reverberate outward to her body schema in its interaction with space, or its ability to move within such space: “Disintegrating orientation brings care of movement into view. . . . If our sense of depth is a matter of a care for our being. . . . in our sense of orientation we can detect a care for this care, a care not just for being in place, but a care for the place in which we move and for the way in which we carefully move in place, in our own eyes and the eyes of others” (Morris 158). At this fundamental level, Leocadia’s ability to circulate within the physical/ethical space of the city is hampered.

The darkness into which Leocadia regains consciousness after her rape is first perceptual, the darkness of Rodolfo’s room at night, but it is also, as suggested earlier, the moral darkness into which she feels she has been thrown, and insofar as perception is knowledge, it is also epistemological darkness. That is why her careful and detailed inventory of the room functions as a regrounding of perception, a gradual regaining of knowledge, and as the beginning of her reorientation. She begins to generate a new cognitive map. Now, under normal circumstances, a “[c]ognitive map. . . [r]efers to an individual’s knowledge of spatial and environmental rela-

tions, and the cognitive processes associated with the encoding and retrieval of the information from which it is composed" (Kitchin and Blades 1). With respect to the body schema analyzed by Merleau-Ponty and by Morris, a cognitive map would represent the initial level of abstraction (from physicality) and its associated perception. Such perception allows self-orientation to take place as a cognitive map of one's immediate surroundings, a map that gradually expands as we import into it whatever knowledge we already have or whatever knowledge we garner, of our environs. A cognitive map incorporates our strategies for moving within space, but space is not an empty container. Leocadia's inventory of the room where her rape took place recreates its space in her own terms; as she regenerates the space as a space of cognition, she also begins to regenerate her own shattered self. As well her inventory, and her attention to this interior, recognizes the fact that interiors were more properly then (and still now in many cases) the domains of women. In fact the spaces that Leocadia and doña Estefanía control, and in which their plans come to fruition, are all interiors. Leocadia begins to produce a cognitive map at this moment, in darkness, through the realization of how henceforth she will need to navigate the space of Toledo. Her cognitive map must now take into account the increased outward vulnerability of her gender—it is now night—and the increased inner vulnerability that is a consequence of her rape. A portion of the "night," or veiling, will remain with her and form part of her personal "mapping" of the space of the city. This becomes clear when she asks Rodolfo to take her to the "Plaza del Ayuntamiento," from where she will walk to her home with great caution, making sure that she is not seen. Paradoxically, the city at night is both a more forbidding and more forgiving space for Leocadia. It is more forbidding because more dangerous, both physically and socially to a woman alone; it is more forgiving because she can hide more easily. Also, in a general sense, because of her gender, the cultural space of the city, though it may safeguard her during the day, does so at the expense of significant restrictions to her movement. But, in a specific sense, because of her rape that space will have henceforth radically changed for Leocadia.

Against this general background on the interconnectedness of the body and the space it occupies, I want to show further how Cervantes enacts in the novella the process of narration in relation to the space it deploys. From this perspective the uses of space in description and in the orientation of agency become particularly fruitful areas of inquiry. It is especially useful to examine the correspondence, or interaction, between actual space and social space. Elizabeth Grosz makes some pertinent remarks about gender and the city space; the latter can help to:

1. orient sensory and perceptual information, insofar as it helps produce specific conceptions of spatiality; 2. orient and organize familial, sexual, and social relations insofar as the city, as much as the state, divides cultural life into public and private domains, geographically dividing and defining the particular social positions individuals and groups occupy; ...3. the city structure and layout also provides and organizes the circulation of information; ...4. the city's form and structure provides the context in which social roles and expectations are internalized or habituated in order to ensure social conformity....(109)

Bourdieu, as well, suggests that “the social world can be represented in the form of a (multi-dimensional) space constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation or distribution constituted by the set of properties active in the social universe under consideration, that is able to confer force or power on their possessor in that universe. Agents and groups of agents are thus defined by their *relative positions* in this space” (229–30; italics in original). Ways of thinking about space, ways of interacting with space, are intimately connected with gender construction in the sense that in the Western mode of dualistic thinking “time...is typically coded masculine and space, being absence or lack, as feminine” (Massey 6). Furthermore, as mentioned above, in seventeenth-century Spain, public space both conforms and limits women's capabilities in rather straightforward ways: external space, the space of the city, the national space, are clearly man's domain, and women circulate within it according to set rules and expectations. Interior family

space, however, tends to be more properly women's domain (though still, of course, under the aegis of the patriarchy). Leocadia and doña Estefanía find their efficacy in these spaces and especially in the family's principal gathering space, the dining room. And while Cervantes's novella takes place within a cultural practice where it is assumed "that there are separate public and private social domains, each with its separate concerns, problems, issues—and each with its appropriately gendered group of occupants" (Code 13), the functioning of space in the text seems to point to a clear empowerment of women within the spaces of their efficacy.¹

In a general sense, the plot moves from a space of turbulence (the initial conflictive encounter between Rodolfo and his victim, Leocadia) to a space of harmony (their final encounter in the dining room at the home of Rodolfo's parents). A relationship born in violence (Rodolfo's rape of Leocadia) is gradually brought to conciliation in three steps: 1) the "recognition" by his grandfather of Luisico (born of the rape), whose bloodied form he gathers and brings to his home; this event will initiate a harmonizing development; 2) the beginning integration of the principals by means of this son; 3) the final integration and the mending of the initial break within a harmonized space.

The novella takes place within the virtual space of seventeenth-century Spain. This is the socio-cultural structure of the national space, a structure that allows or disallows certain practices, that generates certain boundaries, a structure of which Toledo is a representation. I say *virtual space* because it is implied and not described. This is the space that the text presupposes but does not show. The space, however, is not truly absent. The narrative functions as part to whole within it: its very thrust identifies and selects social components of that total space that contribute to its own formation. This wide, enclosing space is not in the novella a physical but rather an ideological reality, characterized, for instance, by social ranking and the patriarchal construction of courtship and marriage. In fact, one may say that the novella,

¹ Although the prevailing family model is patriarchal, the "patriarchs"—Leocadia's and Rodolfo's fathers—play intermediary rather than direct roles in the action; in the denouement the balance of power clearly shifts toward the women.

through its plot, selects these representations of Early Modern Spain. The consciousness and behavior of the characters express this reality (rejecting or embracing its expectations), and the plot converges toward what appears to be the ultimate satisfaction of social convention, though, as is frequent in Cervantes, in a somewhat oblique manner. The expectation of a minimum of security necessary for the survival of a civil society and maintained by *justicia* is another implicit component of the wider Peninsular space that enters into play. Such *justicia* is necessary so that the transactions required by the patriarchy may be carried out in a legitimate and predictable manner. The novella illustrates an occasion when these expectations first break down and then appear to be reaffirmed: space is first made chaotic and then reordered. In effect, the essential component of the tale is the transfer of Leocadia from her father's home to that of her future husband. The plot thus enacts a fundamental pattern of the space of seventeenth-century Spain (subject of many plays and narratives of the period). In this space, youth is a dangerous time when it comes to matrimonial arrangements for its impulses endanger the prescribed order (O'Connor, *passim*).

The notion of "cognitive mapping" pertains here because it suggests that spatial and agential issues are intimately intertwined. In the present instance, the fact that such cognitive mapping is also inextricably linked to gender issues gives the novella special relevance. Cognitive mapping internalizes external space and enables our daily engagements with the environment. Such external space is not manipulable, cannot be encompassed from a single viewpoint, and requires movement in order to be experienced—such is the space of rooms, for instance, or even neighborhoods or cities. From the point of view of the *mimesis* of space, cognitive mapping refers to the characters' behaviors as they "are based on representations of space, and other types of knowledge or beliefs that might be represented spatially but which do not necessarily depend on spatial representations" (Kitchin and Blades 2). For instance, individuals may relate to certain spaces positively or negatively, according to a cognitive map that was formed by past experiences. Also, individuals may respond positively or negatively to certain

spaces on the basis of possible or imagined experiences in those spaces. In the present case, these reactions would include the socio-cultural realities of Early Modern Spain that bear upon its patriarchal gender constructions and imbue certain spaces with significance and symbolic properties. After her rape, Leocadia persuades Rodolfo to leave her in the "plaza que llaman del Ayuntamiento.... Quedó sola Leocadia, quitó la venda, reconoció el lugar donde la dejaron. Miró a todas partes; no vio a persona; pero sospechosa que desde lejos la siguiesen, a cada paso se detenía, dándolos hacia su casa, que no muy lejos de allí estaba" (83). Her condition as an inhabitant of Toledo allows her to recognize familiar space—"reconoció el lugar"—, but her new cognitive map, traumatically imprinted by her recent experience, is the result of a breakdown in the patriarchal compact. This compact also controls the notion of rank, and it is this notion that enables the unruliness and brutality of Rodolfo. Indeed, such patriarchal permissiveness is hinted at within Rodolfo's family proper. His father gathers up the wounded Luisico because, upon seeing the child, "le pareció que había visto el rostro de un hijo suyo, a quien él quería tiernamente" (86); the son is, of course, Rodolfo.

Leocadia's fear of being seen at night (which would entail a public taint upon her *honra*) manifests the failure of the patriarchal covenant and of *justicia*, as does the fear of being attacked again because the space has been totally destabilized and made to seem dangerous by her recent experience. Leocadia's successful navigation of the city's night time is the representation—in a relation of whole to part—of that earlier space of violence, Rodolfo's room. Furthermore her "way-finding" in the city is the metaphorical anticipation of her later "way finding" and negotiation of events when she reenters the space of Rodolfo's family.

In general terms, individuals negotiate the space of their deambulations according to their personal "cognitive mapping": "Cognitive maps provide insights into the relationship between people's environmental representation and their behavior in the environment. People can only operate on the basis of their own knowledge, and their plans and decisions are based on their cognitive maps" (Kitchin and Blades 7). The encounter with which

"La fuerza" opens may be described as the confrontation of two cognitive maps, those of Rodolfo and his friends, and those of Leocadia and her family. The latter act according to a cognitive map that guides them, at the strict level of physical space, up the slope from the river, and within an implicit social space that leads them to believe that they can do so in safety because, even though they are not strictly within the confines of the city, and night is falling, still some aspect of "justice" is expected to be in force. The former have equally internalized the physical space they are traversing—they are riding down the path—as well as an interpretation of the socio-cultural space of Toledo (and Spain, implicitly) whereby their class and youth exempt them from the order that should otherwise prevail.²

From an esthetic point of view, an implicit hierarchy exists in the way that narrative treats the items of its attention. In this hierarchy, modes of existence (animate—principally human—*versus* inanimate) are articulated by means of dimensions of existence (time *versus* space) through forms of storytelling (narration—or action—*versus* description) (Yacobi 460–62). Thus, the human subject is narrated in time while objects are described in space. On such a scale, superiority in one domain leads to privileged treatment in another. For instance, agents are dynamic, they move, think, interact; they elicit, indeed one might say they justify, the attention of narrative at the expense, or in front of, their surrounding space and the objects that populate it. In this context, a further hierarchy is suggested: male agents through their introduction in the narrative are time oriented, or rather, express their agency specifically through key events in the novella. Rodolfo rapes Leocadia in the dark in conditions that underplay the event's spatial disposition; Rodolfo's father retrieves his grandson in a setting that, though in full daylight, is marked by a concatenation of events—race, injury, instinctive recognition, retrieval. The central female characters reinsert the consequences of these events into their configurations

² "The old man and his family walk uphill toward the city. Rodolfo and his friends ride their horses downhill away from the city. The opposition has symbolic significance, since ascent connotes hard work toward meritorious goals while descent suggests the facile movement toward degradation" (El Saffar 130).

of space: Leocadia internalizes the space of her injury and takes from it a marker of such recognition, a crucifix; doña Estefanía is the principal agent of her son's reentering the convivial space (prepared dining room) where his own "retrieval" into familial space is accomplished. Thus, customary hierarchies (men as agents, women as "patients") are reversed as space is given the ultimate responsibility for achieving recognition and affording the necessary reconciliation. It supersedes time as the ultimate force in the narrative, promoting the role of women as *génies du lieu*.³ Such a reversal of narrative "values" turns the women into the prime movers. Male intervention or action in time infringes on "space," or "place," rendering it chaotic, while female agency, once attained (in the case of Leocadia), or assumed (in the case of doña Estefanía), undertakes the task of recovery. The principal male character, Rodolfo, may be seen as the mere instrument whereby the principal female character, Leocadia, learns to access the space of her agency. Rodolfo's and Leocadia's fathers are equally adjacent to the thrust of events. As patriarchs, their role is conciliatory but not decisive. Both seek to mend the breaches caused by younger, heedless males (Rodolfo, the racing "caballeros") and in this are closer to the women. Rodolfo's father retrieves wounded Luisico from the street while Leocadia's father convinces her to bide her time. Furthermore, the patriarchs bear an implicit responsibility for the events: Rodolfo's father because he has failed to rein in his son; Leocadia's father because he has put her and his family in harm's way by returning to the city too late.

Because cognitive maps are internal orientations that incorporate spatial and social realities, they guide us in our negotiations with our surroundings. They also enable agency in the sense that their internal reproduction of space incorporates as well its social structure; they are the result of "an ongoing reciprocal interaction between perceiver and environmental structure. It is not the case that actions precede the information, nor that the information elicits the action.... What is being described is a continuous loop of perceiving and acting" (Heft 122). At the tale's opening, the

³ Marcia Welles emphasizes the role of the female characters in achieving a harmonious conclusion.

cognitive map according to which Leocadia and her family were proceeding from the banks of the river up to Toledo, which included an assumption of safety, disintegrated under the assault of Rodolfo and his friends. In other words, the manifestation of unbridled lust disrupts the fragile equilibrium of the civil compact, either because *justicia* does not reach out to this boundary space between the river and the city, or because this same civil compact also incorporates a class system that indulges certain exercises of power. In this latter case, the relative position of the two groups on the slope would be a spatial representation of such unequal power: Rodolfo, offspring of the higher nobility, and his friends, mounted, above a family of lesser rank climbing on foot.

The space of Toledo is a middle ground between the national space and the interiors described in the narrative. It is represented (whereas the total space is merely present implicitly) as the area of authority and order that is infringed: Leocadia and her family were walking home “[c]on la seguridad que promete la mucha justicia y bien inclinada gente de aquella ciudad” (77). In a sense, one could say that the plot of the novel involves the mending of the infraction to such *justicia*. The broken order, in a series of embeddings, will reach down from the total social space, through the space of the city, disturbed, disordered, through the space of Rodolfo’s room, space of ravishment, to the egregious instance of Leocadia’s violated body and her infringed inner self. All these breaks require a final mending.

The narrative voice originates in what we have termed the total, socio-cultural space of Spain and conveys precisely the framework of authority that the events first break away from and then rejoin. Total space may be understood as “that spatial information which exists beyond the boundaries of the actual presented space. . . . Apart from the question of specific location, total space also has to do with the assumptions of the text about the nature of the world in general” (Zoran 329–30). As we mentioned, the total space of Spain is a putative space of justice and order where the transfer of young, nubile women from one household to another may take place, and where the excesses of youth, always a danger to the patriarchal covenant, may be contained. The narrative voice presents the open-

ing area of action as Toledo, including the hill up from the river. Within this space of action, we can identify a field of vision (Zoran 126–27). In general terms, a field of vision may be defined as what is *here* as opposed to *there*. During the initial events, the field of vision is gradually tightened from 1) a very general circle (the city): "aquella ciudad" (77); to 2) a specific topography (the hill): "venían de recrearse del río en Toledo"; to 3) the interactions that take place thereon: "Rodolfo...con otros cuatro amigos...bajaba la misma cuesta que el hidalgo subía"; "Rodolfo y sus camaradas, cubiertos los rostros, miraron los de la madre, y de la hija; ...la mucha hermosura del rostro de Leocadia...comenzó...a imprimírsele en la memoria" (77); to 4) the very focus of Rodolfo's desire when he steals Leocadia, who "desmayada y sin sentido no vio quién la llevaba, ni adónde la llevaban" (78).

The layering of fields functions according to blindness and vision on physical and moral levels: the young men's faces are veiled, and Rodolfo is morally blinded by the visible desirability of Leocadia. She, in turn, faints and is blind to the events (not only has she fainted, but also Rodolfo covers her eyes with a kerchief). She will remain unconscious until after the rape. Rodolfo, as well as Leocadia and her family, is likewise blind to his fate. The relationship between blindness and vision, darkness and light, will find its confirmation at the end of the story with Leocadia's appearance before Rodolfo. The space of disorder is confusing or not easily seen; the space of order is clear, bright with light.⁴

The controlling trope of the novella is synecdoche: "the meaning of the word *room* includes the possibilities for additional rooms, a house, a place of settlement, and so forth. Any spatial object may also be perceived as a synecdoche for a more comprehensive space" (Zoran 329). Thus, the dark locked room in which Leocadia finds herself after the rape stands in a synecdochal relationship to the darkness of the enclosing space in actuality—it is night in Toledo—and symbolically, since the "mucha justicia" that characterizes the city has been wanting. The room's darkness is the physical manifestation of broken order. In this darkness, Leocadia begins to create

⁴ Alban Forcione also remarks on the light-darkness contrasts in the tale, though in the context of the miraculous (356–57, 364, 369).

her own ordered space. She begins to generate a “cognitive map” that integrates the new physical space and the new social reality, first by resisting Rodolfo’s second attack, then by persuading him to let her go and not to mention the event to anyone. Once alone—Rodolfo has left to consult with his friends on what to do next—Leocadia orients herself within the room physically, first through movement and touch: “levantándose del lecho anduvo todo el aposento, tentando las paredes con las manos, por ver si hallaba puerta por do irse o ventana por do arrojar. Halló la puerta, pero bien cerrada” (81); then with tentative sight:

topó una ventana, que pudo abrir, por donde entró el resplandor de la luna, tan claro, que pudo distinguir Leocadia las colores de unos damascos que el aposento adornaban. Vio que era dorada la cama, y tan ricamente compuesta, que más parecía lecho de príncipe que de algún particular caballero. Contó la sillas y los escritorios; notó la parte donde la puerta estaba, y aunque vio pendientes de las paredes algunas tablas, no pudo alcanzar a ver las pinturas que contenían. (81–82)

She finds a crucifix that she takes, “no por devoción ni por hurto, si no llevada de un discreto designio suyo” (82).⁵ Furthermore, Leocadia’s observation of the room may be described as a “gendering” of its space, a feminine coding characteristic of patriarchal settings. In such settings, as we mentioned, time, history, action, are generally coded as masculine. This is precisely the way in which Rodolfo’s transgression functions. Leocadia does not seek to rescue space from this position. Rather, she puts it into play and tries to use it to her advantage given prevalent social relations. Thus, her inventory of the room will come into play as she seeks to recover the wholeness of her sundered self.

Leocadia’s reorientation in this darkened space is the first mo-

⁵ I agree with Harry Sieber, who, while not denying its religious significance and its role in a religious interpretation of the novella (Casalduero, Forcione), sees the crucifix principally as “la prueba de la identidad del violador” (14); later he adds “es testigo ocular de un estupro y su función se ve precisamente como evidencia presencial” (16).

ment of her journey to recovery. By and large, our interaction with space, our self-positioning within it, is the underlying condition of agency. That is why what is usually described as "disorientation" is a metaphor for confusion and the inability to act in a directed or fruitful manner. It is, in fact, a loss of agency. Here Leocadia, by means of her senses and of her thinking, goes through a very careful, detailed reacquisition of the alien space of Rodolfo's room as the first stage in regaining her lost self. Actually, her reorientation begins as soon as she wakes up and reflects on her condition in what may be described as self-narration: "¿Adónde estoy, desdichada? ¿Qué oscuridad es ésta, qué tinieblas me rodean?" (79).⁶ In a general sense, self-narration accompanies us in our deambulations, when we evaluate our situation as we contemplate our choices. Leocadia's exploration of the room is a pursuance of such orienting self-narration, and the crucifix, the final object of her itemization, initiates her self-recovery as a project, "un secreto designio suyo." The passage shows precisely how Leocadia turns the room into a cognitive space. She first realizes the space as a mere physical reality and then gives it direction or significance for further action. It becomes the locus of planned (future) agency centering on the crucifix as its instrument. Leocadia reenters the night of Toledo and carefully makes her way home after Rodolfo leaves her, at her request, in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento, whose darkness is metonymic for its absent justice.

While vision was impeded or impaired on the occasion of disorder, it begins to acquire social significance as the tale moves into its upward swing. Luisico, Rodolfo and Leocadia's son, unwitting initiator of this change, is the visible anticipation of future, bright concord: "Cuando iba por la calle llovían sobre él millares de bendiciones; unos bendecían su hermosura, otros la madre que lo había parido, estos el padre que le engendró, aquéllos a quien tan bien criado le criaba" (85). Luisico is the center of the next key deployment of space, which occurs in broad daylight and on a wide street: "Sucedió... que un día que el niño fue con un recaudo de su

⁶ Self-narration is the inner narrative that we carry on within ourselves as we negotiate reality and, as we move or travel, put in action our cognitive map. In the present case, self-narration mediates between disorientation and orientation.

abuela a una parienta suya, acertó a pasar por una calle donde había carrera de caballeros" (85–86). In order to see better, Luisico crosses the street and is run over; he lies in the street "derramando mucha sangre de la cabeza" (86). An elderly gentleman—Rodolfo's father—picks up the child and takes him home because, as he later explains to Leocadia's parents, "cuando vio al niño caído y atropellado, le pareció que había visto el rostro de un hijo suyo, a quien él quería tiernamente" (86).

The story's positive turn hinges on this fortuitous encounter, a coincidence realized through space. Generally speaking, space is a dimension of the action. Events happen in both space and time. But, in this instance, the space in question, rather than merely containing the action, promotes it for it is this space that makes possible the coincidence, copresence of Luisico, his grandfather, and the racing tumult. The tumult, the spectacle, is a disordering of Toledan space and an echo of that earlier disordering and the breaking of rules of conduct expected of civil, Toledan "paseantes" with which the novel opens. In this echoed disorder, its distant yet implicitly responsible cause, Rodolfo's permissive father, accepts the ultimate result of that infraction, Luisico. Thus, the coincidence joins two moments of disordered space in which the youngest and oldest members of their respective families come together to become acknowledged later as grandfather and grandson of a newly constituted social unit. Actually, the "sangre derramada," which recalls the novella's very title and is the spatialization of Luisico's injury, is also the spatialization of the rape and its symbolic/metaphorical replay.

At another level, the event is marked by aspects of light and darkness seeing and veiling: 1) seeing in the physical sense as the accident occurs in broad daylight and, through a synecdochal effect, in that a pattern of recognition emerges—the "sangre derramada" that attracts the grandfather's eyes and "re-presents" the spilt blood of the rape—, which is the child's resemblance to Rodolfo; 2) blindness or veiling in that Luisico crosses the street in order to *see* better and in that the race through the streets of Toledo is an instance of disorder because the city's thoroughfares are put to a dangerous use. Yet, in this instance of chaotic space, an

incipient order takes form.

The bed where Luisico lies is the same bed in the same room in which Leocadia was raped, and it is here that the mending of this injury needs to begin. Now in daylight, she proceeds to an inventory of recognition:

...conoció que aquella era la estancia donde se había dado fin a su honra y principio a su desventura. Y aunque no estaba adornada de los damascos que entonces tenía, conoció la disposición della, vio la ventana de la reja que caía al jardín...pero lo que más conoció fue que aquella era la misma cama que tenía por tumba de su sepultura; y más, que el propio escritorio sobre el cual estaba la imagen que había traído se estaba en el mismo lugar. (87)

Whereas her previous exploration of the room was marked by verbs of the senses, principally "tentó," and "vio," in the present one the controlling verb is "conoció." In Thomistic terms, we note a movement from *vis memorativa*, or sensitive memory, which is merely a recognition of space, to intellectual memory, which the verb "conoció" transmits. Sensitive memory *identifies* the space, intellectual memory places the self in relation to space. Intellectual memory generates a "cognitive map," one that relates to agency. We see a repetition of the previous pattern, but with an immediate transposition from recognition to cognition. The description concludes with a reference to the desk on which Leocadia found the crucifix and connects the present moment to that earlier "diseño," fully integrating the space within Leocadia's intellectual plan. The interiorization of the space of rupture, now becoming a space of juncture represented by Luisico's healing, is a step in Leocadia's own healing as well, her transit toward wholeness. Such wholeness is anticipated and translated into renewed beauty later when she appears in front of Rodolfo, illuminated by two candelabra.

The veiling and unveiling, or vision and darkness dialectic that has characterized significant spaces in the novel, reaches its final stage through doña Estefanía's maneuvers to bring about Rodolfo's marriage to Leocadia. Rodolfo is persuaded to return from Italy

with the promise of an ideal consort, whom they describe as “una mujer hermosa sobremanera” (89). Rodolfo returns posthaste “con la golosina de gozar tan hermosa mujer” (89). Once home, doña Estefanía shows Rodolfo the portrait of a lady who is rather unprepossessing and not at all to Rodolfo’s taste.⁷ He makes clear that he cannot marry such a woman because he prizes beauty above all: “la hermosura busco, la belleza quiero” (91). Doña Estefanía, unperturbed, tells Rodolfo that the arrangement can easily be undone, and the family sits at dinner. At this moment, Leocadia makes her entrance. She is beautifully dressed and bejewelled and advances bathed in light:

Era Leocadia de gentil disposición y brío. Traía de la mano a su hijo, y delante della venían dos doncellas alumbrándola con dos velas de cera en dos candelabros de plata. Levantáronse todos a hacerle reverencia, como si fuera alguna cosa del cielo que allí milagrosamente se había aparecido. Ninguno de los que aquí estaban embebecidos mirándola parece que, de atónitos, no acertaron a decirle palabra. (92)

The contrast with the portrait he has just seen makes Leocadia appear all the more beautiful to Rodolfo: “se le iba entrando por los ojos a tomar posesión de su alma la hermosa imagen de Leocadia” (92–93). All darkness and uncertainty have now been lightened as blindness leaves Rodolfo’s eyes. The ambit of reconciliation is the dining room, also the space of familial gathering and conviviality. Leocadia’s beauty, by penetrating to Rodolfo’s soul through his eyes, wins him over. At the beginning he was veiled, physically, and then blinded by lust, now his sight and his sense are restored by beauty.

In a tale controlled by synecdoche, the space of the narrative is a specific instance of, and points to, a wider context. The moral breakdown represented here points to the fragility of the overarching social space of Toledo and of seventeenth-century Spain. That is why the return to sanctioned “normalcy” at the end of the novel

⁷ “Es otra máscara para engañar al que ocultó su propio rostro al principio de la novela” (Sieber 15).

is so important. In this scheme, Leocadia's beauty is itself a representation of that space, whose positive order, translated into comeliness, wins Rodolfo back into its encompassing, if delicate, harmony. The novel's last words on the family's prominence are a necessary confirmation of this spatial-moral reordering:

Fuéronse a acostar todos, quedó toda la casa en silencio, en el cual no quedará la verdad deste cuento, pues no lo consentirán los muchos hijos y la ilustre descendencia que en Toledo dejaron, y agora viven, estos dos venturosos desposados, que muchos y felices años gozaron de sí mismos, de sus hijos, y de sus nietos. (95)

While such a conclusion seems to confirm an acquiescence with the cultural system that first failed and then was reinstated, one may also see the disposition of the tale as a critique of that system.⁸ In effect, the entire social construct is given a turn in that:

1. The same individual (Rodolfo) who infringes the patriarchal compact is essential to its reinstatement. The instability of this covenant is implied by the fact that it enables what it seeks to control. This layering of responsibility is underlined by the further fact that the patriarchy proper—as represented by both families' oldest representatives, the fathers—is responsible as well for the instability of its covenant; both fathers show laxness. Leocadia's father endangers his family by guiding it back home after dark; Rodolfo's father has been altogether too indulgent of his son.

2. The harm done at the level of personhood (Leocadia) calls for reparation, but such reparation is achieved almost exclusively by the person who has suffered it with the assistance of another member of the same sex (doña Estefanía).

3. There is an emphasis on the difference in rank of the

⁸ I converge with Edward Friedman in my final remarks.

families—the initial encounter is metonymic of this fact (Rodolfo descending, Leocadia and her family ascending). This clash, itself an early representation of the rape, is first cause of the spilled blood—Luisico’s—which combines that of the two families. One can deduce that this marriage between individuals of different social rank can only take place through violence. I see this as a critique of those social conditions.

4. The lack of characterization of Rodolfo conforms precisely to his being both a threat to, and instrument of, the patriarchy. The other two “patriarchs” are equally instrumentalized: Leocadia’s father, though he appears wise in his counsel to Leocadia (he tells her that she will gain only opprobrium by trying to force the issue) acquiesces to the situation. Rodolfo’s father, ultimately responsible for his son’s unruliness, becomes instrumental in the recovery by bringing Luisico to his home, but his role is exhausted by this act. The actual accomplishment of the final reparation belongs to Leocadia and doña Estefanía.

5. The tale ends happily, though only because violence has been done. This conclusion is therefore subversive and critical of the conditions that allow it.

When looked at in terms of the representation of space, the tale becomes a critique of the patriarchal covenant. In effect, the space which the covenant is intended to control and facilitate is rendered entirely unstable, and it is women who are called upon to restabilize it.

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