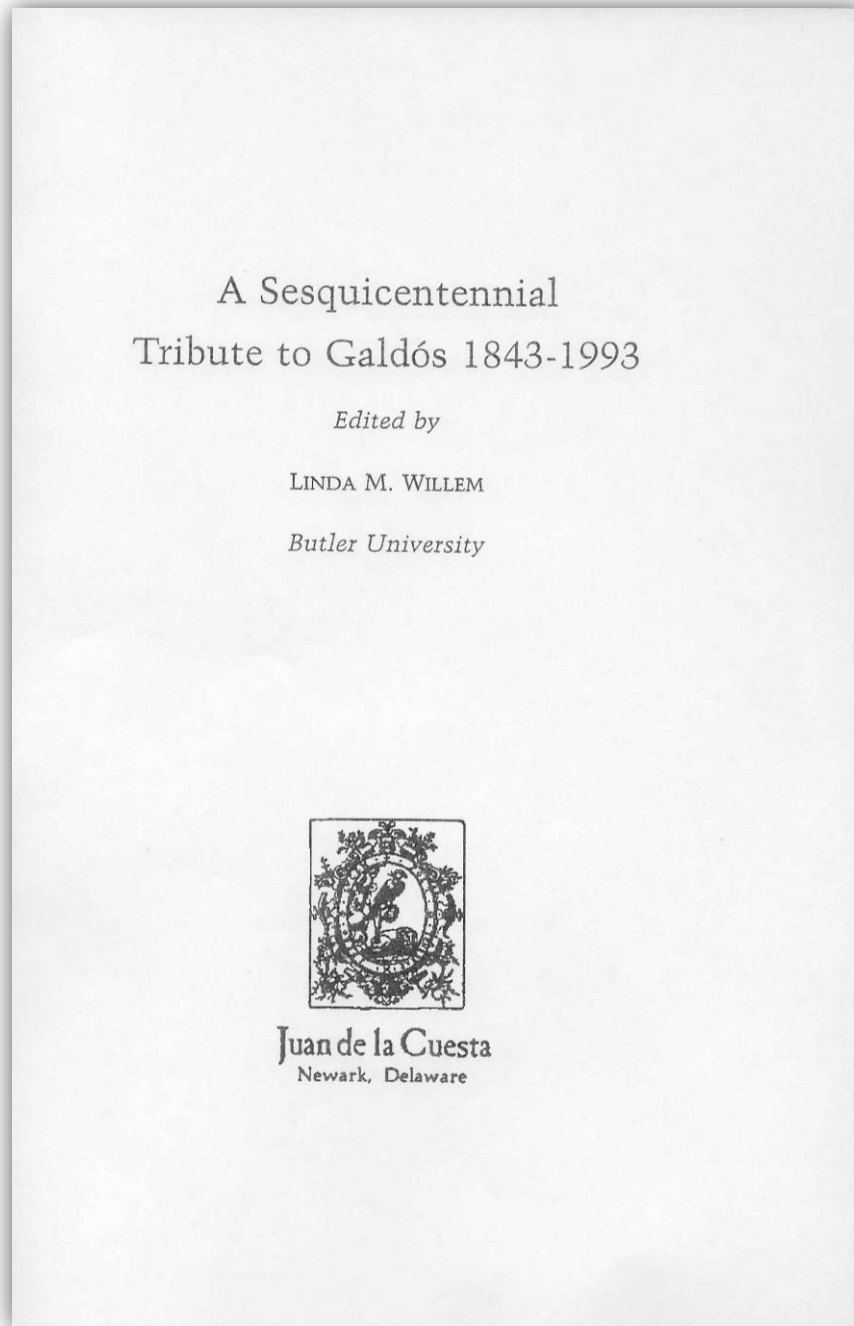


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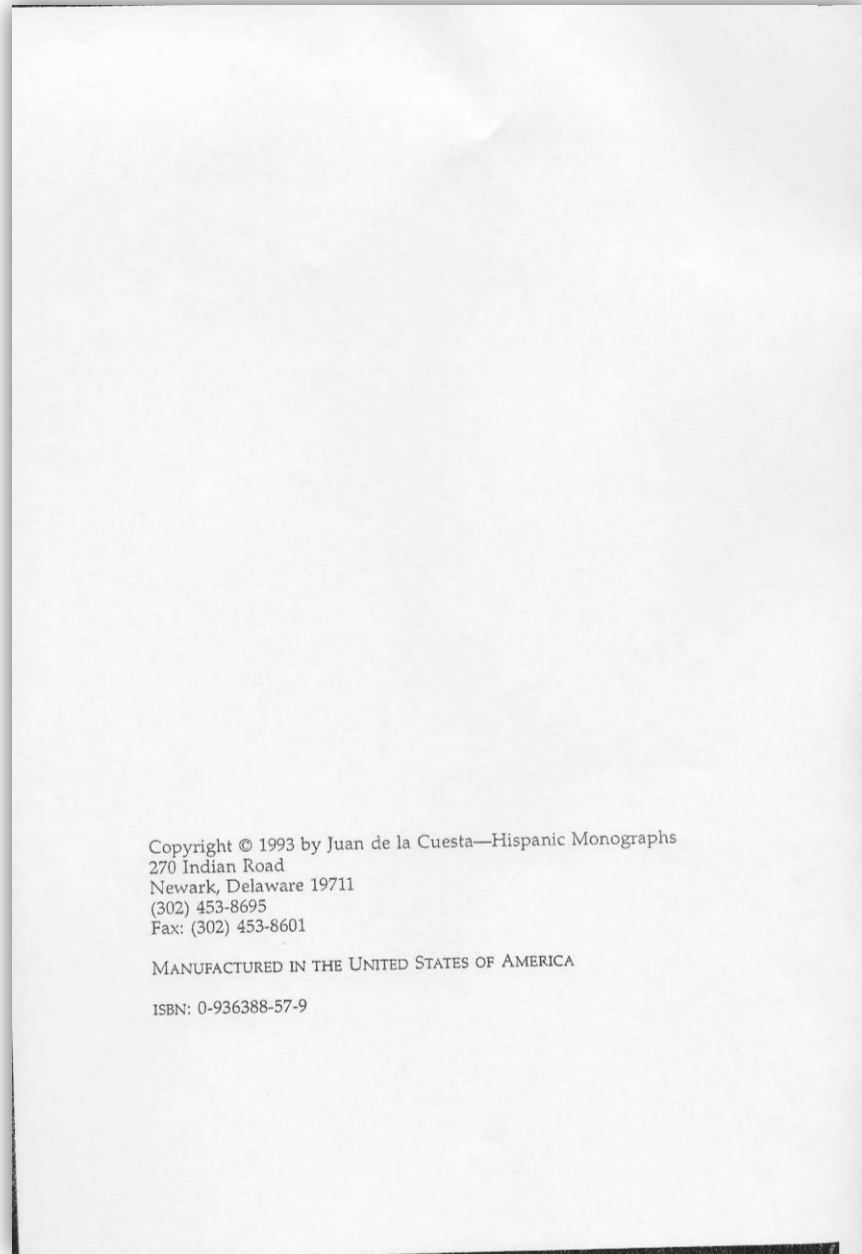
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Therapeutic Figures: The Body and Its Metaphors in *Fortunata y Jacinta*

HAZEL GOLD



IN THE FOURTH BOOK of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, the mild-mannered apothecary Segismundo Ballester professes a love for music and pharmacy, claiming that both these arts offer humankind a cure. Enthusiastically, he explains to Maxi that “En uno y otro arte todo es combinar, combinar,” adding that druggists are nothing less than “los compositores del cuerpo.”¹ The vision of the human body as a composite entity—sometimes harmoniously, more often discordantly constituted—is a frequent motif in Galdós’s masterful novel. Moreover, the body becomes the basis for a cluster of recurrent metaphors, themselves a kind of composite speech in which the literal meanings of words are joined, with varying degrees of “domain incongruence,” to figurative ones.² These bodily metaphors are part of the novel’s commentary on subjects as varied as the sickly Maxi’s search for a cure-all and spiritual purificative (in Lupe’s words, a panacea or “combinación,”

¹ Benito Pérez Galdós, *Fortunata y Jacinta*, *Obras completas*, ed. Federico Carlos Sainz de Robles, 6 vols. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1970) 5: 856. All further quotes to this edition will be included parenthetically in the text.

² Andrew Ortony, “Beyond Literal Similarity,” *Psychological Review* 86 (1979): 161-80. It ought to be noted that metaphors associated with the human body are frequently used to describe metaphor itself, as in the often-discussed category of “dead” (as opposed to “living” or “vivid”) metaphors.



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the characters and between the narrator and his readers. Beyond the traits that they all share (linguistic competence, cultural information, interpretive abilities), there exists a special familiarity that is facilitated by the common use of a tradition of metaphor: "the utterance of a metaphor may be viewed as a signal that the speaker takes his hearers to belong to a [privileged] subset distinguished by a bond of intimacy."²⁰ The narrator's easy conformity with the environment and values of Villalonga, Juanito, and others in their circle is underscored by their non-problematic use and understanding of a stock of figures of corporeality to describe the circumstances of daily living. The use of these same metaphors presupposes a shared attitude of intimacy (sometimes genuine, sometimes merely conventional) between the narrator and his readers in Restoration Spain.

Finally, the metaphorical expression of the body in *Fortunata y Jacinta* fulfills a therapeutic function. When, as Jacinta observes on her honeymoon, women factory workers are at risk of turning into "máquinas" and characters such as doña Lupe are distinguished by an "alma de reloj"—in other words, when the cosmography of society becomes based on analogies with the machine—then the reliance upon metaphors of corporeality stands as an act of rhetorical boldness that suggests a desire to upend the power relations of the symbolic order. When the social and political forces governing Spain in the 1870s and 1880s reduce individuals to mere cogs and gears in a complex system based on authority and social consensus, the recurring tropology of the body forcefully reminds readers of the human shape of human beings. Galdós amply demonstrates in *Fortunata y Jacinta* that our experience of the world is inevitably channelled through the body, which is inscribed upon culture and viceversa. The point of all this body talk in the novel is not that physiology is all-powerful and deterministic. It is rather that meaning, especially as conveyed by metaphor, is in the end a human creation, invented by individuals not unlike Fortunata who, in the face of convention, manage to assert the primacy of their own expression and moral conduct in society.

EMORY UNIVERSITY

²⁰ David E. Cooper, *Metaphor*, Aristotelian Society Series 5 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) 158.

