

THE SEVENTH ANNUAL PÉREZ GALDÓS LECTURE

“WHAT IS THE STARS?”

GALDÓS AND THE MEASURES OF MANKIND

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In the latter half of 1888 – the exact dates are hard to pin down – Galdós visited Italy, spending some time in Venice.¹ That city’s Shakespearian links were naturally much in his mind; in an article written that December, he reflected on these:

El poeta inglés no estuvo nunca en Venecia, ni sabía el italiano. Sin embargo, se asimila [...] el carácter de aquella raza, y es perfecto veneciano en “Otelo” y en el “Mercader” [...] El tipo del judío es, no obstante, universal, fanático, implacable con el acreedor, vengativo [...] El “Mercader” es más veneciano que “Otelo”; tiene más sabor local; “Otelo” es más universal y más profundamente humano.²

Of the two modes of character-creation which Galdós is contrasting here, one is obviously close to the priorities of much nineteenth-century realism. It involves presenting characters who illustrate what people become in specified contexts: *human types* within a given typological scheme. Galdós actually uses one of the key terms of such typology: “aquella raza”, applied to the inhabitants of Venice, only really makes sense as an element in Taine’s three-part formula, so much taken to heart by French Naturalist writing: “la race, le milieu et le moment”. Shakespeare is being commended for doing with his Venetians what Zola and Galdós, with vastly greater scope for first-hand observation, did with Parisians and *madrileños*. Yet it is the other kind of characterization, here associated with *Othello* and with Shylock, which seems to be valued more highly. It is deemed “more universal” and “more deeply human”.

What does Galdós mean by that? About Shylock, one thing he clearly does not mean is that all Jews, universally, behave that way. We know this because he himself presents explicitly Jewish characters like Daniel Morton, the hero of his early novel *Gloria*, and Almudena, the visionary blind beggar of his later *Misericordia*, as behaving quite differently. Rather, the claim is being made that characters like Shylock and Othello and Iago are *types of humanity* – examples of human potential (typically of extreme responses to extreme situations) which can arise in any context of heredity or history or social

formation. We even have a hint, in the memoirs which Galdós dictated in his old age, that during that visit to Venice, he actually saw, “pasando por la puente Rialto” somebody who struck him as being a contemporary Shylock.³ Be that as it may, such types, in that sense “universal”, can seem to have more to tell us about ourselves and about a human nature that is more or less independent of context. That impression, indeed, is what many people take away with them from many of the characters created by Shakespeare (or indeed by Galdós, among others). As a way of articulating our response to them it has its uses. As a logical construction it presents some problems.

The terms in which we identify characters of this second sort tend – as in Galdós’s description of Shylock – to be ethical or psychological. They refer to qualities, not to contexts. But that does not render them context-free, with regard either to their origins in our own ethical or psychological schemes or to their application. Widely relevant they may be: we do not have to think them universally relevant. Characters like this may seem to us capable of appearing across an unexpectedly broad range of human contexts; it is not plausible to think that they must occur in each and every such context. Experience tells us plainly that their salient and defining features are not present in every human being. We can argue, if we wish, that they must, after all, be there in some minimal, or perhaps merely potential way. But that kind of argument derives such strength as it has from the depth of the impression made on us by the character in question; it has no logical force. The human nature which these characters illustrate, then, amounts to no more than a mental space in which Shylock’s angry avarice, say, or Othello’s jealous rage, can notionally be located alongside more familiar characteristics of our own. We then find it appropriate to reflect, experimentally as it were, about that “alongsideness”.

Even that linkage, though is less securely grounded than we might think. All too conveniently for ourselves, we can still manipulate an ethical or a psychological typology. We can exploit contextual features that tend to distance the more disturbing extremes of behaviour from ourselves or from anything of ours: Shylock as Jew, Othello as African, Galdós’s own Torquemada as lower-middle class vulgarian. Disconcertingly in all these cases, the texts themselves offer us some basis for doing this, and present otherwise reputable characters as acting on that basis. And even without that, we always retain the option of locating ourselves in another area of the typology, defining the avaricious or the jealous man as whatever we are not. Conversely, we can take some more innocent or

admirable figure as the type of what we really are. Such types of otherness or selfhood – we might call them, respectively, allotypes and autotypes – are universalising, but hardly universal. Any understanding of the human to which they take us is only a function of our self-understanding, deeply compromised by context as that is.

Yet it is part of our experience of these characters that they do seem to carry us beyond that, and to challenge such possibilities of manipulative reading. Strangely, this challenge can be at its most effective when the manipulative uses of otherness are plainest in view. In Shylock's case, certainly, the point where this happens is unmistakable: it comes in Act III, Scene 1:

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

Here Shylock appeals to a human nature which is not subject to contextual distancing, but is ours and his whether he or we want it or not. It is largely biological, but broadly grounded too in a shared situation and a common repertoire of possible relationships. In these latter aspects it can spill over into the socially contingent. Shylock's invocation of revenge as a component of the human is, in this sense, a category-mistake which, rather than any ethical shortcoming, will bring him to grief. But the whole speech challenges us to accept a disconcerting kinship with the speaker, and to see where that takes us. Of this, the more substantial part of Shylock's claim to human universality, Galdós in his Venetian jottings had nothing to say. But in *Torquemada en la hoguera*, the short novel which he began in February 1889, that theme wells up from his subconscious mind. The tale of Fanciso Torquemada, miser and moneylender, and of what he did when his much-loved son, the mathematical prodigy Valentín, was dying of meningitis, is an extended imaginative gloss on "Hath not a Jew eyes?"

The link was rendered more natural by the fact that in the nineteenth-century when Torquemada was operating and Galdós writing, the word *judío* was used with the general meaning of "usurer" or "miser": on two occasions in the novel, it is so used of Torquemada himself.⁴ No direct reference is made to Shylock, but the explicit placing of

Torquemada in relation to misers of the past (*TH*, II) has a whole range of literary echoes. Some of the detail comes close to that pornography of greed which formed, for a time, the staple reading of Mr Boffin in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*:

Aquellos avaros de antiguo cuño, que afanaban riquezas y vivían como mendigos y se morían como perros en un camastro lleno de pulgas y de billetes de banco metidos entre la paja...

"[...] Such Characters, Wegg, such Characters! [...] It's amazing what places they used to put the guineas in, wrapped up in rags." (III. 6)

Yet the rest is general enough to link with recollections of theatrical tradition from Chremes to Harpagon, with Ebenezer Scrooge, with Félix Grandet, and even with Shylock, as Galdós in the previous autumn had envisaged him. All these fell within the pattern which Galdós, loosely adapting another commonplace from Taine, characterizes as that of "los místicos o metafísicos de la usura." Torquemada's avarice, he declares, "en una época que arranca de la desamortización" took a positivist turn. And in this novel and its three longer sequels he proceeds to show us how, detailing the ways in which Don Francisco and his involvements with money fitted the needs and the customs of contemporary Madrid. He was not, of course, the first novelist to register that sort of effect. Balzac had moved on from the figure of old Grandet – himself to some degree placed in terms of post-Revolutionary provincial society, but still essentially a miser in principle whose money-love is an obstacle to action. His later money-men by contrast, are facilitators in the febrile economy of the *Comédie Humaine*. Nor was Galdós unaware of this precedent: when Torquemada first appears in his fiction – in *El Doctor Centeno* (1883) – his student clients refer to him as "Gobseck", the name of one of these Balzacian moneylenders.

In terms of the modes of characterization which we have been analysing, the shift seems fairly clear: from the miser or usurer as an allotype of avarice to the same figure as a human type, formed in and by a specific context. And indeed, this is a shift which takes us from a metaphysical to a positivist way of imagining: *race*, *milieu*, and *moment* again. We might be tempted to leave it at that, correlating nineteenth-century realism with the positivist outlook in general: progressive and scientific in intention, informative up to a point, but seeming by now rather dated, unwieldy, and restrictive – incapable, certainly, of those enriched subtleties which the modern and postmodern have so abundantly

brought us. There are many reasons, though, why we should not be content to leave the case of Galdós like that.

I have argued elsewhere that positivism is, indeed, important in the *Torquemada* novels, but that Galdós's stance towards it is very far from being naively acquiescent.⁵ As to the specific issue of character, his presentation of Torquemada as a human type by no means exhausts all that might be said or thought or felt about him. Rather, it is a first step towards his authentic realization as a type of humanity. It is that, in the first place, because it cancels his image as a mere allotype – a Bad Man and a Bad Example – without mitigating the fact the things he does and the way he thinks really are deplorable. To that extent the positivist critique of the metaphysical justifies itself, issuing in a form of fiction which has some claim to be objective and even scientific. Yet such claims can only be made good if the same “objective” understanding can be made to apply not just to the object of our observation (the back-street moneylender of 1880s Madrid) but to the privileged observer (Galdós and his readers – ourselves). To that end, if to no other, our response to Torquemada needs to be shaped towards a more challenging and critical humanism, by getting both him and us into that shared mental space which will constitute him as a type of humanity. In the series of novels which bear his name, the social interactions in which Torquemada is caught up – both those which form him as a human type and those through which others attempt to exploit or modify his formation – are laid out before us in detail. And their detail is recognisably that of processes which (certainly in societies like his or ours) also bear upon people like ourselves: compelling evidence, then, that he and we belong together in the same mental space.

But Galdós, as well as documenting Torquemada, was also writing him. In that sense, what assigns Torquemada to the shared human space is not just his involvement in well-attested social processes; it is the uneasy balance between the manifestly unsatisfactory being that he is and the various unacceptable or implausible demands for him to be other than he is. That reminds us of being human in rather different terms – less case-specific; perhaps more deeply felt. In *Torquemada en la hoguera*, however, the thing which works most insistently in this way is Galdós's demonstration that Torquemada, when pricked, does indeed bleed: when his son is gravely ill, he suffers anxiety and panic, and tries – very ineptly, as we might expect – to set up satisfactory relations with a divine providence

of which he has hitherto been barely cognizant. All of that is human enough, not least in its futility: the boy dies, of course.

Yet while all this may point to Torquemada's human status, more was required to corroborate it, to give it a fully-convincing fictional body. That entailed filling out the mental space which we can take ourselves as sharing with him with further human resonances: situations widely representative of humanity, and possible relationships arising out of these (some embraced by Torquemada; others not). Such a process, initiated by the author, invites and incites the reader to carry it further. With that in mind, I want to concentrate here on a single, localized example: the moment when, on the third night of his son's illness, hastening homeward from the unfamiliar exercise of distributing small change to beggars, Torquemada stops to look up at the sky:

Corriendo hacia su casa, en retirada, miraba al cielo, cosa en él muy contraria a la costumbre, pues si alguna vez lo miró para enterarse del tiempo, jamás, hasta aquella noche, lo había contemplado. ¡Cuantísima estrella! Y qué claras y resplandecientes, cada una en su sitio, hermosas y graves, millones de millones de miradas que no aciertan a ver nuestra pequeñez. Lo que más suspendía el ánimo del tacaño era la idea de que todo aquel cielo estuviese indiferente a su gran dolor, o más bien ignorante de él. Por lo demás, como bonitas, ¡vaya si eran bonitas las estrellas! Las había chicas, medianas y grandes; algo así como pesetas, medios duros y duros. Al insigne prestamista le pasó por la cabeza lo siguiente: «Como se ponga bueno me ha de ajustar esta cuenta: si acuñáramos todas las estrellas del cielo, ¿cuánto producirían al 5 por 100 de interés compuesto en los siglos que van desde que todo eso existe?» (*TH*, VIII)

Where this goes to in the story's overall design – and eventually, though Galdós probably did not have it planned at this stage, in that of the whole quartet of novels⁶ – is readily enough stated. Torquemada confronts the immensity and distance of the heavens; his response, wholly inadequate, falls back into the narrow confines of his avarice and his social habit. In the story as a whole he confronts the enormity of Valentín's illness and impending death. But his efforts at doing good, and so winning Gods favour, are similarly crass, and he relapses into his old ways. In his larger social odyssey, he becomes a great financier and a great personage but the attempts of those about him to win him over to a measure of refinement and a respectable piety founder on his stubborn coarseness and his invincible materialism. A concentric array, then, of parallel trajectories, for which (at least in one rather limited view of them) the stars in their courses offer an apt model.

Torquemada's inbuilt limitations are, of course, real enough. But neither here nor in the fiction at large do they constitute the whole of the matter. At the very least, we are also being shown how they are as they are. From that standpoint, it will be of interest to see where this incident might come from. Our earlier discussion suggests some possible points of departure. Torquemada is nowhere represented as either religiously or ethnically Jewish, but he does have clear links with Shylock, and he is referred to as a *judío*. That might be enough to make us think of Abraham, for whom issues of faith, fatherhood, and counting the stars all come together in a well-known passage from the book of Genesis:

And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him: So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness. (*Genesis*, 15, 5-6)

What the comparison with Abraham makes obvious, though, is that Torquemada – who badly wants something to be “counted to him for righteousness” – entirely fails to bring them together for that kind of purpose.

One significant line of explanation for this failure is present, after a fashion, in the *Merchant of Venice* itself [c.1597] – the very text which seems to have been an immediate prompt for *Torquemada en la hoguera*:

Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still choring to the young-eyed cherubins.
Such harmony is in immortal souls,
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it. (V, 1)

Lorenzo's lines to Jessica declare that the universal music of the spheres cannot be heard by those still entrapped in the material world's “muddy vesture of decay”. That, we might think, is Torquemada's trouble: his “composición homogénea, compacta y dura” (*TH*, II) is simply not spiritual enough. Young Lorenzo, even so, is something of a suspect

witness. The entire night-piece of the lovers at Belmont is ravishingly beautiful and just a little smug: one has the impression, certainly, of a young man keen to show off his knowledge to his girlfriend. What he is actually telling Jessica is that only the soul can hear the heavenly harmonies – and that only once it is out of the body. As between two lovers very well-content with being still in the body, this comes close to the category of useless information. And we would surely not want to conclude that the trouble with Torquemada is that he is not dead yet.

It is true enough, though, that his reaction to the night sky falls short of much that the traditions of Christian spirituality have adopted as central. There is the Psalmist's sense of the heavens as declaring God's glory and the littleness of man.⁷ There is Dante's vision of the stars as the ultimate context, animated by divine love, of all human existence.⁸ And there is the whole vastly influential Christian-Platonist conflation of cosmology with mathematical and musical theory, which seeks to read "Th' Almighty's mysteries... in the large volumes of the skies".⁹ Galdós himself would have been aware of the contrast with these perspectives, and could have expected many readers to recognize it. The Psalms were familiar from their liturgical use. Dante had been another object of interest to Galdós on his Italian travels, and is recalled periodically in the figure of Torquemada's unreliable spiritual guru, the unfrocked priest José Bailón.¹⁰ As for the harmony of the spheres, one source in particular stands out among the immense array of medieval and renaissance writing on that subject as the one Galdós must have expected his readers to recall.

"Noche serena, a D. Oloarte" by the great sixteenth-century meditative poet Luis de León is about just this situation: a man looking up at the stars. It is one of the most famous poems in the Spanish language: even the fragments presented here allow us to glimpse why:

Quando contemplo el cielo
de innumerables luces adornado,
y miro hacia el suelo
de noche rodeado,
en sueño, y en olvido sepultado.
El amor, y la pena
despiertan en mi pecho un ansia ardiente,
despide larga vena,

los ojos hechos fuente
 Oloarte, y digo al fin con voz doliente.
 [...]

Qué mortal desatino
 de la verdad aleja así el sentido,
 que de tu bien divino
 olvidado, perdido
 sigue la vana sombra el bien fingido.
 [...]

Quien mira el gran concierto
 de aquestos resplandores eternos
 su movimiento cierto,
 sus pasos desiguales,
 y en proporción concorde tan iguales.
 [...]

Quién es el que esto mira,
 y precia la bajeza de la tierra,
 y no gime y suspira,
 y rompe lo que encierra
 el alma, y de estos bienes la destierra? (1570/80)

Galdós's debt to it is demonstrated by his highlighting of the key verb *contemplar*, followed at once by his own version – or rather, Torquemada's, for we are in free indirect style here – of the “innumerable luces” and the theme of human littleness. But Torquemada's relation to the poem is essentially ironic. Sleep and forgetfulness are how he habitually relates to the heavens: “la vana sombra, el bien fingido” have been his ruling priorities, and apparently still are. To the question “Who can look on all this and yet remain the slave of earthly baseness?”, the answer that suggests itself is “Well, Torquemada for one”.

Yet it would be misleading to suggest that nothing at all of these larger visions registers with him. He does, like the Psalmist and Fray Luis, react to the stars with awe, and a sense of how incommensurable that vast world above is with the human world below. He does, in common with the traditions of cosmic harmony, perceive an order up there (“cada una en su sitio”), even a hierarchical order (“chicas, medianas y grandes”). He has some apprehension of that ordering as mathematical: that, too, is in the tradition. The banality with which he expresses all this (*bonitas, chicos, todo eso*) is disconcerting, but should it be? Given the disparity of scale between the cosmos and “nuestra pequeñez”,

perhaps the differing levels of refinement in different human responses ought not to count for very much. There are, though, matters of more substance. Most obviously (though his standing with God is of real concern to him at the moment – it is the reason why he has been out giving money to beggars) Torquemada’s contemplation of the stars evokes no thoughts whatever about God. On the contrary, he is convinced that the heavens are indifferent to his plight; indeed, that they can know nothing of it. His immediate counter-strategy to this bewildering and belittling spectacle is to try to bring it under control – a mental and mathematical control, directed (like most of his activities) towards monetary profit. The most that we can say for him, it seems, is that he interprets the heavens in his own way – to which, we might note, his link with Valentín is still integral – and according to his own lights. From the standpoint of a rather traditionally-minded religious orthodoxy, one could still dismiss him as deficient in spirituality, and leave him there.

That might not be the most intelligent of responses. As we shall see more clearly in a moment, it would run the risk of anachronism. And it does less than justice to the diversity among traditional views. Carry the notion of a divine ordering, revealed through the stars, in one direction, and you were in the territory – still reputable in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – of astrological influences. Carry that science a little too far, and you raised issues of determinism, condemned by mainstream religious teaching, but very much in line with how people could experience the world. Characters in Shakespeare and Webster express that clearly:

It is the stars,
The stars above us govern our conditions.
(SHAKESPEARE: *King Lear* [1605/6], IV, 3)

We are merely the stars’ tennis balls, struck and banded
Which way please them.
(WEBSTER: *The Duchess of Malfi* [before 1614], V, 4)

For Marlowe’s Faustus the movement of the stars conveys no providential harmony; it merely brings on his own inexorable damnation:

The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike.
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damned.

Faustus, of course, had sold his soul to the Devil, but Blaise Pascal (1623-62), who had not, was hardly more convinced of the benevolent concern of whatever was out there, famously complaining that “Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m’effraie”. Worldly-wise, despairing, or spiritually strenuous, all these were thinkable alternatives to the more traditional stance. And alternatives were going to be needed. The earth-centred cosmos of Christian-Platonic world-harmony was rapidly being displaced – it had begun with Copernicus, some years before Luis de León put pen to paper – by a different model of the universe altogether. What rescued the religious perspective on the heavens, and kept it in place for the best part of another century, was the discipline to which Torquemada, in his rather less convincing fashion, has recourse: mathematics. A universe operating regularly, according to Newtonian mathematical principles, could offer visible proofs of a natural theology, proclaiming the majesty, mastery, and caring rationality of its creator. That had been a great part of Newton’s own motivation, and it carried conviction in that sense for a very long time.

By the early nineteenth century, though, this settled way of thinking was beginning to unravel. What Schopenhauer, writing a few years later, had to say about Newton illustrates the problem well:

No science impresses the masses more than *astronomy*. The almost idolatrous veneration in which *Newton* is held [...] passes belief [...] Now this ludicrous degree of veneration accorded to the great master of arithmetic comes from the fact that people take as the measure of his deserts the magnitude of the masses the laws of whose motions he determined and traced back to the natural force causing them. (“Zur Philosophie und Wissenschaft der Natur”, *Parerga und Paralipomena* [1851], II, vi)

This seems, at first, to attest, rather impatiently it is true, to Newton’s continuing authority. But the widespread popular veneration which it reports was no longer an awed reverence for the God of natural theology. Rather, it was directed towards Newton himself – a function of the power of his mind, and still more of the scale on which that power had been applied to the material universe. In an age when that kind of outlook had come to prevail, to look up at the stars, to be awed by their vast distances and great number, but not to be visited by any thoughts of God, was less a proof of spiritual deficiency than a wholly normal reaction. It could even be seen as coming more naturally

to Torquemada, the father of a mathematically gifted child who had more than once been hailed as Newton reincarnate.¹¹ The calculation which he imagines Valentín as undertaking is appropriately massive, along Newtonian lines, with the difference – itself in tune with later nineteenth-century developments – that it involves applied, rather than pure science. And the plans which he has already formed for Valentín to follow the profession of a civil engineer (*TH*, II) would carry him yet further in the direction of knowledge pursued for the sake of financial gain.

That would appear to define all too well the narrow scope of Torquemada’s response to the stars. Yet it is also relevant that he thinks of Valentín as capable of achieving such a calculation, and as willing to undertake it at his father’s request – more relevant still, perhaps, that his thoughts go to Valentín at all. If God is absent from his reaction to that spiritually potent scene, the human being he most cares about is centrally there. We can call this “spiritual” or not, as we choose. But it is clearly aligned with other definite shifts in nineteenth-century ways of thought: a more assertive individualism, and the Romantic habit of privileging states of personal feeling. Romantic sensibility, confronted with the stars in the night sky, tended to read there not their theological implications, but their potential meaning in terms of individual human loves.

There are differences of emphasis here too, of course. Such reflections are commonly prompted less by the immensity of otherness of the heavens than by their sheer beauty; Torquemada’s priorities follow the older pattern. And when he is preoccupied by the fate of a much-loved child, the Romantic emphasis is predominantly on erotic love. As an element in the setting for such love, the stars can come to bear a fairly conventional aspect. They are present, for example, in poems by Shelley and Longfellow:

I arise from dreams of thee
 In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
 And the stars are shining bright
(SHELLEY: “The Indian Serenade” [early 1820])

Stars of the summer night!
Far in yon azure deeps,
Hide, hide your golden light
She sleeps!

My lady sleeps!

Sleeps!

(LONGFELLOW: "Serenade" from *The Spanish Student* [1840])

But that is because these items happen to be serenades – night pieces. And it seems part of the rather arbitrary nature of such references that the Longfellow poem actually asks the “stars of the summer night” to turn themselves off for a bit. Romantic subjectivity does not have to be as cursory as that. Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, who wrote when Galdós was a young man, exploits the tension between feelings of distance from the stars and feelings of closeness to them, to express an intensely personal, part-aesthetic, part-erotic mysticism:

Cuando miro de noche en el fondo
oscuro del cielo
las estrellas temblar como ardientes
pupilas de fuego,
me parece posible a dó brillan
subir en un vuelo
y anegarme en su luz, y con ellas,
en lumbre encendido
fundirme en un beso.

(*Rimas*, VIII; no. 25 in original ordering [mid 1860s])

For the most part, though, the stars were mere amatory furnishings, available even to Edward Lear’s Owl – who also brought along a guitar (as Shelley had been known to do) and, being the kind of prudent bourgeois lover who would surely have had Torquemada’s approval, “took [...] plenty of money, wrapped up in a five-pound note” [1871]. These stellar commonplaces invite parody and, in what must surely rank among the worst poems of the Spanish nineteenth century, “Una cita en el cielo” [1858], Ramón de Campoamor duly provides it. Two lovers vow to gaze, when parted, on the same star that they once gazed upon together, but the young man cannot fulfil his vow – he was in London at the time, and it was raining. Torquemada’s stargazing ends in its own kind of bathos, but it is never as pointless as that.

The point which it does have stems from the other, more radical, development in nineteenth-century thinking: the loss of any sense of assured transcendence deriving from the natural world. Part of the problem was that natural theology had done its work

all too well: the universe as a perfectly functioning mechanism left little scope for any fresh interaction with its maker – and how real was a God with whom no interaction was possible? Partly, again, the extension of scientific enquiry into new areas of the natural and human world seemed actually to contradict much that religion had traditionally taught about them. Darwinism was to provide the classic instance, but the process was in train long before that. Wordsworth was a fervent believer in the transcendent inspirations to be had from nature. Yet in lines which were probably written before 1800, he can register only the most tenuous of links between the stars and providential purpose:

And he had trudged through Yorkshire dales,
Among the rocks and winding scars;
Where deep and low the hamlets lie
Beneath their little patch of sky
And little lot of stars.
(*Peter Bell* [1798; published 1819])

The “little lot of stars” is perhaps distributed by design to every hamlet – but again, quite possibly not. Leopardi, a generation or so later, can take the immensity of the cosmos as a measure of human insignificance, much as the Psalmist or Luis de León had done, but with no hint of any God who might be mindful of mankind thus placed, or to whom human thought, inspired by that sight, might leap up:

[...] e quando miro
quegli ancor più senz' alcun fin remoti
nodi quasi di stelle
ch'a noi paion qual nebbia, a cui non l'uomo
e non la terra sol ma tutte in uno
del numero infinite e della mole
con l'aureo sole insiem, le nostre stelle
o son ignote, o così paion come
essi alla terra, un punto
di luce nebulosa; al pensier mio
che sembri allora, o prole
dell' uomo?
(“La ginestra” [1836])

That bleakly tragic vision stands at an opposite literary pole from the parodic collapse of Jane Taylor's already residual version of natural theology, at the hands first of an Oxford mathematician of the 1860s, and then (I suspect) of someone from Cambridge:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky!
(JANE TAYLOR: "The Star" [1806])

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat
How I wonder what you're at!
Up above the world so high
Like a tea-tray in the sky!
(LEWIS CARROLL [1865])

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
I don't wonder what you are.
You're the cooling down of gases
Forming into solid masses.
(ANON, early 20th-century)¹²

But together they convey one message: we may still wonder at the stars, but we cannot any longer wonder at them in the old way. The New England Quaker, John Greenleaf Whittier gets close to the root of the matter:

Doubts to the world's child-heart unknown
Question us now from star and stone.
(*The Meeting* [1868])

The heavens, like the rest of the natural world, now provide more questions than answers. They may be evidences of the divine as Tennyson's pantheist rather wistfully proposes, or they may be reminders that we are cut off from the divine:

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains –
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?
Is not the Vision He? tho' He be not that which He seems?
Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?
Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,

Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?
("The Higher Pantheism" [1869])

Nineteenth-century poets, then – and even such prosaic characters as Galdós's Torquemada – had increasingly to make whatever sense they could of the stars – or rather, since astronomy already made an all too comprehensive sense of them, of what the human encounter with them might mean. The outcome was a widening diversity of response, against whose background Torquemada's own bossed shot takes on a rather different profile. It remains, as Galdós clearly intended, seriously inadequate: context-bound and contradictory. But the nature of the case – how to derive human meanings from that massive encounter with what was so evidently larger and other than human – made adequate responses of any sort harder to achieve. It was no good pretending otherwise.

Pretending otherwise is what a poem like George Meredith's "Lucifer in Starlight" [1883] still tries to do. There, the whole panoply of natural theology is evoked in an arbitrary and brassy rhetoric, to confound an allegorized Prince of Darkness:

On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend [...]
He reached a middle height, and at the stars.
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.

The Galdosian scenario, having at its centre a realistically-imagined human type, was never at risk of being rigged like that. But the issue is not precisely one of authorial sincerity. There was nothing insincere about Walt Whitman in this vein:

As I watch the bright stars swing, I think a thought of the clef of the universes and of the future.
A vast similitude interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets [...]
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe or any globe,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them and always has spanned,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.
(*Leaves of Grass* [1856])

Yet the more insistently he amplifies his claim, the more aware one grows that this similitude (never any more closely defined) depends entirely on “As I watch the bright stars swing, I think a thought...” That is enough for Whitman, no doubt, but possibly not for the rest of us. Torquemadas’s own reactions are not much vaguer, not much more peremptory. At an opposite extreme, Thomas Hardy can appear scrupulously concerned not to coerce the stars into meaning. Having read and absorbed his natural science, he knows (or believes that he knows) the limited meanings that they are able to bear:

A star looks down at me
And says: “Here I and you
Stand each in our degree:
What do you mean to do –
 Mean to do?
I say: “For all I know,
Wait, and let Time go by,
Till my change come.” – “Just so,”
The star says: “So mean I: –
So mean I.”
 (“Waiting Both” in *Human Shows* [1925])

Within that prior assumption, though, he can still feel entitled to mediate his imagined dialogue with a star through a single voice. This is Hardy talking to Hardy, conscious that the only meaning he will find in the universe is the kind which he, being the sort of person he is, can put there. Which, again, is very much what Torquemada manages to find there – though manifestly a less rational, less reflective, less self-aware human being. Even Browning’s Caliban can do it after his fashion, “Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech”:

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!
“Thinketh He dwelleth i’ the cold o’ the moon.
“Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match
But not the stars; the stars came otherwise.
 (“Caliban upon Setebos” [1864])

His bizarre vision of things still takes residual and oblique account of the sheer strangeness of the stars, which “came otherwise”. But “Caliban upon Setebos” has

another kind of relevance for us. Its subtitle, “Natural Theology in the Island” offers a metaphor for much that was happening in nineteenth-century culture. In an age of sharpened individualism, everyone inhabits his or her own island, fashioning such natural theologies as its restricted horizon allows: for the money-man, a night sky that speaks of money, because these are the only terms in which he finds it knowable.

And indeed, Torquemada’s knowledge in general is restricted in just this way. His vague beliefs about a God who is also “Humanity” may have been shaped by José Bailón’s cloudy pantheism, but his notion of how this God acts is grounded in his business experience. He imagines another businessman – harsh, like himself, and for the moment hostile, but offering a straightforward bargain: let Torquemada build up a credit-balance of good works, and Valentín will live. On this crudely transactional view he proceeds to act; when it fails to work he feels cheated and aggrieved. Small wonder, then, that he gets the stars all wrong. Yet one of the century’s most authentic reassertions of a believing response to them – the Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins’s “The Starlight Night” [1877] – seems to hint that he might not be so wrong after all:

Ah well! It is all a purchase, all is a prize.
Buy, then! bid, then! – What? – Prayer, patience, alms, vows.

Give or take the question of patience, is that not what Torquemada too is trying to do? Up to a point only, it seems, for Hopkins’s poem also implies important differences. There is nothing in Torquemada’s awed perception of the stars to match the extraordinary apprehension of them as a visible City of God, with which *The Starlight Night* begins:

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
O look at all the fire-folk, sitting in the air!
The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!

The sterile hierarchy of a currency system belongs to another order altogether. Besides, Hopkins’s language of the market is inflected by the context in which it is set: the poem moves on into images of God-given abundance and grace:

These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
The shocks. This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse
Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.

The Jesuit idea of salvation as a *negotium* could find room for that. But in the world in which Torquemada does his business, there is no such thing as a free lunch. All this is consistent with his failure to link his thoughts on looking up at the starry sky with any framework of moral obligation – certainly not a web of social obligations; not even, on this occasion, his current clumsy efforts to buy divine favour. What he can know of any such framework is totally constricted by what he knows too well already: his business sense and his ingrained individualism.

These things cut him off, too, from what an entirely secular sensibility was by now capable of achieving. In a poem of the early 1880s Rosalía de Castro had recorded, as part of a very differently imagined fiction, just that experience of littleness before the immensity of space and the innumerable stars which was also Torquemada's deepest impression:

Los astros son innúmeros, al cielo
no se le encuentra fin,
y este pequeño mundo que habitamos
y que parece un punto en el espacio
inmenso es para mí.

With characteristically searing honesty, she mitigated that impression with no system of belief whatever: what she did oppose to it was the emotional conviction, arising from that same experience, that the human world was, in its own way too, immense: in the number of those who, in their precarious mortal existence passed through it; in the intensity with which they could come to matter to one another:

Después... tantos y tantos,
cual las arenas del profundo mar,
seres que nacen a la vida, y seres
que sin parar su rápida carrera,
incierto siempre, vienen o se van.

Que se van o se mueren, esta duda
es en verdad cruel;
pero ello es que nos vamos o nos dejan
sin saber si después de separarnos

volveremos a hallarnos otra vez.
(*En las orillas del Sar* [1884])

This too represents a way of affirmation not taken by Torquemada. Yet there is one human commitment – one only – which he cannot keep out of his reaction to the stars: the “great grief” for his Valentín, of which they are so strangely oblivious. Again he is seized of only half the matter; again his narrowly individual focus impoverishes his vision. So it will not really do to think of Torquemada simply as not having the right religious beliefs. Rather, whatever he might believe – or need to believe – his prior social formation cuts him off from growth in that way. And, as his later history will show, Madrid in its early phase of modern capitalism – no heavenly city, and no fellowship of human grief – needs him to be what it has made him. As he takes on a more prominent role in its life, there are those who would wish him to be less embarrassingly, less single-mindedly like that. But, however rich Torquemada’s array of faults, double-mindedness is not his way: he remains, annoyingly, himself. For these and other ironies, his embarrassing half-achievements in *Torquemada en la hoguera* create a necessary foundation. And embarrassment is what one does feel when he contemplates what the stars might bring in at five per cent since the beginning of the world. It becomes possible to feel it because of the way the mental space in which we are invited to consider him as human along with ourselves has been filled out in so many different relationships. Some are associative, others contrastive; some are specific to a given cultural inheritance, or to Torquemada’s own nineteenth-century moment; others again are as generally human as the sense that a particular formation in the here and now makes it hard or impossible to achieve the fullness of what we might also be. That at least is something most of us have in common with him.

Let us be clear, though, about the argument so far. Torquemada himself is someone who has read little and understood less. That, of course, does not exempt him from the cultural patterns which we have been exploring; it merely makes him unaware of their operations. As for Galdós, there are some texts among those we have looked at – Shakespeare, the Bible, Luis de León – which he certainly knew, and almost certainly recalled here. Others, like the Bécquer and Rosalía de Castro poems, he may well have known. But the bulk of our examples – particularly the non-Spanish ones – would not have been known to him. They serve, none the less, to evoke the range of attitudes and responses which were possible in that time and in others – a range which, for Galdós,

would have been documented in other ways: partly, for example, from Romantic writing in French or Spanish; partly from the experience of actually living in nineteenth-century Madrid. From the intensive work of cross-reference among all these evidences – a work which for much of the time would barely have entered the novelist’s consciousness (that had other things to do) – comes the incentive to readers to embark on their own parallel work (much of it similarly unconscious). And from the conjunction of the two comes the novelist’s own kind of truth-telling. Like other forms of human communication, then it is achieved through work on both sides. Nor is there any sense in which the reader’s part in that work can or should stop at the moment in time at which the writer produces his or her text. That moment matters – February 1889 matters for our present purposes – and truth-telling will be distorted if we take no cognisance of how it matters. But our understanding of Torquemada as a type of humanity, in his relation to the vast number, distance, and difference of the stars, will be stunted in other ways if we take no account of other witnesses, closer to our time.

In one obvious sense these continue in the line of our nineteenth-century instances: there is less and less consensus among them. It is not merely that theological and providential accounts have lost authority. The yearning, so often poignantly expressed in earlier writers, to recover that authoritative vision, itself wanes with time. Even Miguel de Unamuno, with his deep roots in nineteenth-century religious doubt, seems concerned less to reinstate belief than to remake it in his own way. Through his questions to the stars, he seeks to make the mortality which he shares with them the basis of a kinship, projecting onto them his own anguished consciousness of death:

¿Sois hermandad? ¿Te duele,
dime, el dolor de Sirio,
Aldebarán?
¿Marcháis todos a un punto?
¿Oyes al sol?
¿Me oyes a mí?
¿Sabes que aliento y sufro en esta tierra,
– mota de polvo –
rubí encendido en la divina frente,
Aldebarán?
[...]
¿No eres acaso, estrella misteriosa,

gota de sangre viva
en las venas de Dios?
¿No es su cuerpo el espacio tenebroso?
Y cuando tú te mueras,
¿qué hará de ti ese cuerpo?
(“Aldebarán” [1908]; published 1923 in *Rimas de dentro*)

It is an attempt to humanize the universe by universalising the human. That, indeed, might also be said of Torquemada’s aspiration to construe the heavens in a calculation of profit – or more credibly, of the cosmic application of mathematics which this presupposes for Valentín. It certainly ought to be true of science, which now supplies us with our paradigmatic accounts of the universe and our place within it. These accounts, after all, are made possible by bringing to bear a distinctively human rationality on the vastnesses of the non-human. Yet very few people, even in an age of global capitalism, can feel Torquemada’s monetary concerns as something intimate and integral to their humanity. Many scientists, of course, can and do feel that way about mathematics or cosmology. But the abstraction of these modes of thought from more widely-shared experience has made it harder for non-specialists to feel with them. We believe, as factual information, what scientists tell us; we do not experience it imaginatively as our truth about ourselves.

When it comes, then, to our coexistence with the stars, it is hardly surprising that twentieth-century writers should often put forward models which owe little to the current mainstream of Western science. Some of these models are prestigious in other contexts: thus Borges revives the ancient imagery of cyclical return:

Lo supieron los arduos alumnos de Pitágoras
Los astros y los hombres vuelven cíclicamente;
Los átomos fatales repetirán la urgente
Afrodita de oro, los tebanos, las ágoras
(“La noche cíclica” [1940])

and Ernesto Cardenal: commands the wholly different sense of belonging in the universe which he attributes to the ancient Maya:

No tuvieron ciencias aplicadas. No eran prácticos.
Su progreso fue en la religión, las artes, las matemáticas,

la astronomía. No podían pesar.
Adoraban el tiempo, ese misterioso fluir
y fluir del tiempo.
El tiempo era sagrado. Los días eran dioses.
("Ciudades perdidas" [1969])

Such reactions are a timely reminder that other traditions do exist: our human universals are always the human *as we know it*. Other writers again are unashamedly subjective, enlisting the stars for whatever ludic or poetic purpose they may happen to have in mind:

Toda la turba sideral parece
que se confunde atónita y que espía
las huellas de mis pasos en la playa.
("ALONSO QUESADA": "Oración de media noche" [1915])

Son sensibles al tacto las estrellas.
No sé escribir sin ellas.
Ellas lo saben todo
graduar el mar febril
y refrescar mi sangre con su nieve infantil.
(GERARDO DIEGO: "Nocturno" [1922])

Torquemada, though caught up in his own kind of subjectivity, would, one suspects, have found all this merely confusing. But he would surely have recognized the mood of those others who take on, frontally, the simplest and bleakest element of the science-based picture: the stars offer us no meaning, no assurances, no witness even.

That, after all, is how it is for him: "todo aquel cielo estuviese indiferente a su gran dolor, o más bien ignorante de él". We can certainly relate his frame of mind to the comic panic that permeates Ted Hughes's "That Star" [1975]:

And they surround us. And far into infinity.
These are the armies of the night.
There is no escape.
Not one of them is good, or friendly, or corruptible.
One chance remains: KEEP ON DIGGING THAT HOLE
KEEP ON DIGGING AWAY AT THAT HOLE.

The frantic digging and the dream of busy calculation make about as much sense as one another. The materialist product of a materialist age – albeit one in which a good deal of formal religion is still around – Torquemada is cut off from any religious meaning which the stars might earlier have sustained. But he never arrives either – for reasons that seem to be partly historical and partly temperamental – at the materialist imperative to create human meanings, either from the experience of their not being made available in traditional places, or from elsewhere altogether. Auden in his Marxist phase puts it in typically schematic fashion:

The stars are dead. The animals will not look.
We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and
History to the defeated
May say Alas but cannot help or pardon.
("Spain" [1937])

Hugh MacDiarmid in his pre-Marxist days had claimed rather more:

Mars is braw in crammasy,
Venus in a green silk gown,
The auld mune shak's her gowden feathers,
Their starry talk's a wheen o' blethers,
Nane for thee a thochtie sparin'
Earth, thou bonnie broukit bairn!
But greet, an' in your tears ye'll droun
The hail clanjamfrie!
("The bonnie broukit bairn" [1924])

For all the self-evident hyperbole, to find in the tears of the abused human earth enough by way of value and meaning to cancel out the whole celestial clanjamfrie would be some kind of a start. But can we think Torquemada capable of making such a start? How much less could we imagine him getting anywhere near that fusion of the cosmic and the intensely local, the scientist's sense of interstellar time and the human consciousness of lived time, that marks the conclusion of Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts*.

Orion strides over Farne.
Seals shuffle and bark,
terns shift on their ledges,

watching Capella steer for the zenith,
 and Procyon starts his climb.
 Furthest, fairest things, stars, free of our humbug,
 each his own, the longer known the more alone,
 wrapt in emphatic fire roaring out to a black flue.
 Each spark trills on a tone beyond chronological compass,
 yet in a sextant's bubble present and firm
 places a surveyor's stone or steadies a tiller.
 Then is now. The star you steer by is gone... (*Part V* [1966])

No, Torquemada confronting the stars is no exemplar: his status as a type of humanity is not of that kind. Nor is he an *exemplum* in the medieval sense: an embodiment of qualities that we might want – or, as in his case, not want – to share. He is no more nor less than an example: a not very bright, not very admirable, not very attractive human specimen, who has “eyes....hands, organs dimensions, senses, affections, passions”, who stands in a place where many others have stood, and reacts in some ways that will bear comparison with theirs, in others that will not. He is, in short, a fully fictionalized individual, who is made to matter to us because of all that we are brought to understand of his simultaneous kinships and differences. The centuries-old, emblematic story of a confrontation with the stars is a distinctive story in his case because what he really has to come to terms with is the measure of littleness and isolation that is his own – in Robert Frost's phrase, his own “desert places”.¹³ It is because he is so fully and convincingly fictionalised that we can engage with that, within the well-peopled mental space in which we recognize him as human.

From that point of view, the modern instances of the “stars” topic which are most relevant to his case are, arguably, those which are themselves embedded in fictions. I have chosen just three. The first, “Los contadores de estrellas” [1921], a poem by Dámaso Alonso, is of interest because its central motif of a child counting the stars, and its setting in a city that is almost certainly Madrid seem to recycle memories of Galdós's novel into a moment of Dámaso's own self reflection:

Yo estoy cansado.
 Miro
 esta ciudad
 – una ciudad cualquiera –
 donde ha veinte años vivo.

Todo está igual.
Un niño
inútilmente cuenta las estrellas
en el balcón vecino.

Yo me pongo también...
Pero él va más de prisa: no consigo
alcanzarle:

Una, dos, tres, cuatro,
cinco...

No consigo
alcanzarle: Una, dos...
tres...

cuatro...
cinco...

The other two examples bring us closer to some of the things Galdós himself was doing. One of them is an incident in Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* [1958]. The hero and his family, in flight from the turmoil of revolution, arrive at a house somewhere in Siberia. On their first evening there Zhivago and his father-in-law, Alexander Alexandrovich are together on the veranda; out of nowhere, the latter says "What a lot of stars!" Just that. Nothing seems to prompt the remark (though it allows us to infer that there are in fact a lot of stars); nothing in the rest of the narrative flows from it.¹⁴ It does not even elicit a reply. All that it does is to hint fleetingly at how the big sky above that empty country registers in the mind of that direct, candid, in the best of senses simple man. What marks Alexander Alexandrovich's response to the stars is his quality – so poignantly unavailable to his son-in-law – of unmediated innocence. Not at all innocent, by contrast is Captain Jack Boyle, the peacock-husband of O'Casey's long-suffering Juno, drunkenly strutting his peacock stuff in his role as far-travelled sea-dog, egged on by his sidekick Joxer:

Boyle [...] Ofen an'ofen, when I was fixed to the wheel with a marlinspike, an' the win's blowin' fierce an' the waves lashin' an' lashin', till you'd think every minute was goin' to be your last, an' it blowed, an' blowed – blew is the right word, Joxer, but blowed is what the sailors use...

Joxer: Aw, it's a darlin' word, a daarin' word.

Boyle An', as it blowed and blowed, I ofen looked up at the sky an' assed meself the question – what is the stars, what is the stars?

Voice of Coal Vendor: Any blocks, coal blocks; blocks, coal blocks!

Joxer: Ah, that's the question, that's the question – what is the stars?
(*Juno and the Paycock* [1924], Act I)

Do we know for certain that any of this is true: the ship, the storm, the skipper lashed to the wheel? If he ever did look up at the sky and ask “What is the stars?”, we may be sure he never stayed for an answer. They might as well be the “coal blocks” that the vendor’s ironic interruption (and possibly the science of the 1920s) would make them. They are “daarlin’ words”, that is all: part of Boyle’s monstrously comic self-serving.

So, then, how do we read Torquemada? Does his bafflement at a universe larger, stranger, and colder towards him than he ever knew before qualify as a kind of innocence? Does the self-serving habit which limits and distorts his efforts to comprehend either the stars or the threatened death of his child define him otherwise? The answers are complex, because the expression of his bafflement is bound up with his greedy individualism, and the expression of his selfish, limited personality has a directness that we could still call innocent. And yet the answer is simple. Galdós has gathered so much, and invites his readers to gather so much, into the realization – the making real – of Torquemada’s humanity that we recognize him as both innocent and self-serving. Both at the same time; both within the one response. As which of us is not?*

¹ BERKOWITZ (1948), p. 188: “Galdós spent two months in Italy in the fall of 1888”; cf. ORTIZ ARMENGOL (1995), p. 430: “Pero antes, en el verano de este año [1888], tiene lugar el viaje a Italia [...] viaje que el anciano ciego – que dicta de memoria – situaría [...] en otro año.”

² *La Prensa*, 3/2/1889; dated Madrid, 27/12/1888, in SHOEMAKER (1973), p. 334.

³ PÉREZ GALDÓS: *Memorias de un desmemoriado* [1916], in *OC*, VI, p. 1683.

⁴ PÉREZ GALDÓS: *Torquemada en la hoguera*, VI: “y he aquí que al judío le da como una corazonada”; VIII: “¡No dirán ahora que soy tirano y judío [...]!” (All quotations from this novel are taken from the electronic edition shortly to appear from the Humanities Research Institute Online Press (Sheffield), with chapter references given in the form “*TH*, II” etc.) SCHYFTER (1978), pp. 55-77 injudiciously concludes from these and other indications that Torquemada is imagined as being of Jewish descent, but cf. *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, 1884: “judío (*fig*) 'Avaro, usurero'.” See also ROUND (1981).

⁵ ROUND (2003), pp. 128-29; also ROUND (2000).

⁶ See DAVIES (2003), pp. 49-50; also DAVIES (1999).

* The dates given for passages cited in the text are those of earliest performance or publication (in a very few cases, composition), wherever I have been able to ascertain these. As a result, they differ in many instances from the publication dates given for reference purposes in the bibliography which follows.

⁷ “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; /What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (*Psalms*, 8, 3-4); “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork” (*Psalms*, 19, 1).

⁸ Dante had ended each book of his *Divina Commedia* on the word *stelle*. “e quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle” (*Inferno*, 24, 139); “Puro e disposto a salire alle stelle” (*Purgatorio*, 23, 145); “L’Amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle” (*Paradiso*, 23, 145).

⁹ WILLIAM HABINGTON, *Castara, The Third Part* [1640] in GARDNER (1957), p. 153. For the wider background see SPITZER (1963).

¹⁰ Cf. *TH*, III: “[...] no tenía cara de cura, ni de fraile ni de torero. Era más bien un Dante echado á perder”; also *TH*, VI: “Y sin embargo de estas prosas, el muy arrastrado se parecía al Dante [...]”.

¹¹ Cf. *TH*, II: “Es Newton resucitado, Sr. D. Francisco; una organización excepcional para las matemáticas...”; also *TH*, III: “Su niño de usted [...] debe de haber sido antes el propio Newton, o Galileo, o Euclides.”

¹² This last cited from memory. A more recent elaboration (“Twinkle, twinkle, little star./ I don’t wonder what you are / For by spectroscopic ken / I know that you are hydrogen”) is attributed to D. Bush [1950].

¹³ See ROBERT FROST, “Desert Places” in *A Further Range* [1936]: “They cannot scare me with their empty spaces / Between stars – on stars where no human race is. / I have it in me so much nearer home / To scare myself with my own desert places.”

¹⁴ Professor William Leatherbarrow has pointed out to me that there are links with the poems of Yuri Zhivago which appear as an appendix to the novel; the question of their status as part of the fiction is one which need not bear upon the argument here.