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## Paris, the End of the Party in Alberto Blest Gana's *Los Trasplantados*

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### Abstract

*Los Trasplantados* [the Transplanted; the Uprooted] (1904) relates the saga of the Canalejas, a Hispanic American family that travels to France to educate their children. With the sole purpose of entering the ranks of the European aristocracy, they ultimately sacrifice one of their daughters by way of marriage. The family patriarch's entrepreneurial vocation for social climbing, which served him well as he successfully rose into the ranks of the provincial elite in his country of origin, collapses in Paris. The Canalejas' initial expectations of a journey give way to aspirations to integrate into Parisian high society. The narration develops as a moral narrative of the social, ethical and cultural wreckage endured by those who not only aspire to enjoy Europe at the end of the nineteenth century but also to integrate their lives into a city whose image they forged in Latin America. They sacrifice everything that connects them to their countries of origin, except for their ambition to advance socially and be recognised in their new communities and at home. Above all, the children are worse off, losing their places in a nineteenth-century vision of national aspiration.

### Keywords

Paris, immigration, family, marriage, social climbing

### Disciplines

Family, Life Course, and Society | Migration Studies | Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature

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## Research Article

Alvaro Kaempfer\*

# Paris, the End of the Party in Alberto Blest Gana's *Los Trasplantados*

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**Abstract:** *Los Trasplantados* [the Transplanted; the Uprooted] (1904) relates the saga of the Canalejas, a Hispanic American family that travels to France to educate their children. With the sole purpose of entering the ranks of the European aristocracy, they ultimately sacrifice one of their daughters by way of marriage. The family patriarch's entrepreneurial vocation for social climbing, which served him well as he successfully rose into the ranks of the provincial elite in his country of origin, collapses in Paris. The Canalejas' initial expectations of a journey give way to aspirations to integrate into Parisian high society. The narration develops as a moral narrative of the social, ethical and cultural wreckage endured by those who not only aspire to enjoy Europe at the end of the nineteenth century but also to integrate their lives into a city whose image they forged in Latin America. They sacrifice everything that connects them to their countries of origin, except for their ambition to advance socially and be recognised in their new communities and at home. Above all, the children are worse off, losing their places in a nineteenth-century vision of national aspiration.

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*Los Trasplantados* (1904) by Alberto Blest Gana (1830–1920) narrates the fortunes and misfortunes of a Hispanic American family who have settled, towards the end of the nineteenth century, in a luminous Paris that is imagined as the centre of the world. When don Graciano Canalejas started to feel “la comezón de ir a gozar Europa” [the itch to go enjoy Europe],<sup>1</sup> we know that the appeal of profits from sources, such as rents, mines, and so on, was instrumental in the elected *regidor*'s decision to undertake a journey (Blest Gana, *Los Trasplantados* I: 24–25).<sup>2</sup> His desire to travel was ignited by stories from friends who, upon returning from Europe, told him of their marvellous experiences, creating in his feverish imagination a dream of educating his children in France (I: 31). His children's education, says Pablo Berchenko, was rather a pretext for Graciano's trip (71). There were other issues at stake. Graciano Canalejas did not want any lawyers in his family and felt that his country was in need of engineers: “Juan Gregorio será ingeniero civil, y si Nicolasito sale aficionado a la química, lo haré ingeniero de minas” [Juan Gregorio will become a civil engineer, and if Nicolasito is a fan of chemistry, I will make him a mining engineer] (Blest Gana, I: 25). Once in Paris, Graciano continued dreaming, thinking that his daughters would assist him with entering the upper-most echelons of Parisian society (I: 43). Graciano assumed the following: “hijos, criados aquí con seres de otra

<sup>1</sup> Translation mine. All translations from Spanish to English are mine, unless otherwise indicated. Quotations of Blest Gana are given in Spanish and English.

<sup>2</sup> *Regidor* in Chile was the equivalent of a contemporary council person. Overall, Graciano Canalejas is able to obtain some profit from his service as a local politician.

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clase, no pueden tener las aspiraciones de su origen, sino de las de la sociedad en que viven” [children, raised here with people from another class, cannot retain the aspirations of their place of origin, but will assume those of the society in which they live] (II: 53). Graciano’s thoughts could be summarized by what Gabriel Salazar had pointed out as “long voyages for educational and pleasurable purposes to Paris and London” (355). These excursions to Europe were perceived, adds Carlos Sanhuesa, as “a secular pilgrimage to the centre of culture and civilisation” (252). After spending years in France, the Canalejas family’s expectations changed. Graciano’s children grew up, and any thought of returning to their country of origin became increasingly undesirable. At the same time, the Canalejas’ full incorporation into the European aristocracy became impossible.

Don Graciano and doña Quiteria, his wife, their daughters Milagros, Dolores, Mercedes and Benjamina, their sons Juan Gregorio and Nicolás, doña Regis (the grandmother), and Rufina, the nanny, arrived in Paris confident of their monetary solvency. They had left the eldest son, Pedro Esteban, in charge of managing the accounts of the family estates, which at the time consisted of numerous properties (Blest Gana, I: 26). Unfortunately for don Graciano, the conscientious son communicated with his father with “annoying frequency,” telling Graciano things he did not want to hear. Pedro Esteban dutifully informed his father “de malas cosechas, de arrendatarios que no pagaban, de pestes en el ganado” [of bad harvests, of unpaying tenants, of pests in livestock]. He also mentioned that he had become frightened by the family’s expenses, warning don Graciano that their fortunes should be reserved for other purposes, “las negras nubes con que algún viento de desgracia podía entoldar el cielo de sus placeres” [the black clouds which some wind of misfortune could happily use to obscure the heavens] (I: 48). Overall, the son warned of the family’s need to control their expenses because, he wrote to his father, if they continued on the same path they would all be ruined (I: 112). Graciano was well aware of the family’s financial volatility “por el telégrafo, este vigilante anunciador de las palpitaciones del mundo” [by way of the telegraph, the vigilant announcer of the world’s palpitations]. In this regard, Pedro Esteban’s letters simply reiterated and provided details of what Graciano already knew (II: 1). Even so, the family did not cut any type of expense in their daily lives in a Paris that, as Aileen El-Kadi points out, had become “a metaphor for an endless spectrum of cultural and political desires for a certain social group” (247). The City of Lights, says Jaime Hanneken, was an obligatory reference point for the social aspirations of the Hispanic American elite *de provincia* to which the Canalejas belonged (373). These were, as Hanneken suggests, desires and ambitions forged from Latin America and from people’s local realities (382). In this sense, Guillermo Gotschlich underlines that the novel was clear about “the specific recipients” envisioned by the narration (79). The sobering financial news, and his eldest son’s calls for frugality in the family’s spending, did not prevent Graciano from resigning himself to going into even more debt to acquire a level of visibility in Paris that would dazzle both his compatriots in Paris as well as those in his country of origin.

Straddling one century that is ending and another that is soon to begin, the nineteenth-century narrator of *The Trasplantados* imagined a global Paris as a closed and unique world. His strolls through the city composed a novel crossed by “moralising intent,” as Ricardo Latcham indicates. A common question links each one of the characters’ stories and is formulated by one of their own characters (48). Patricio Fuentealba, who observed Parisian society across an ice rink, wondered:

¿Qué hacía él en París gastando en el ocio el tiempo [...], en vez de ir a recoger en su patria, con su trabajo, el fruto de los grandes sacrificios pecuniarios de sus padres por darle una carrera científica? (Blest Gana, I: 4).

[What was he doing in Paris wasting his time on leisure [...], instead of returning to his home country to work and reap the benefit of his parents’ tremendous financial sacrifices in support of his scientific career?]

The contrast between a remote reality ordered by work and an immediate reality built on leisure traces a global order mapped out from Paris itself, which for Fuentealba, has its vanishing point in Mercedes Canalejas. This fact makes one wonder, again: “¿Qué hacía él en París, viéndola a hurtadillas, sin poder presentarse, humilde ingeniero apenas recibido, en el suntuoso hotel de la familia Canalejas?” [What was he doing? in Paris, seeing her on the sly, himself a brand-new humble engineer, incapable of visiting the sumptuous mansion of the Canalejas family?] (I: 4–5). Patricio questioned his place in that world and gave

himself the option of not being part of it, of being somewhere else. Nevertheless, he remained subject to that same order and was overwhelmed by the brightness of a Paris whose light shined on every corner of the world. Patricio remembered his adolescent romance with Mercedes “allá en la patria lejana” [there, in the distant homeland]. But he quickly realised that things had changed after he made contact with her again, in Paris: “Fuatealba había encontrado a Mercedes, ya señorita grande, en medio del lujo del hotel Canalejas, a gran distancia de él, estudiante pobre, extranjero al mundo *chic*” [Fuatealba had found Mercedes already to be a young lady, amidst the luxury of the Canalejas’ mansion, far away from him, a poor student, foreign to the world of *chic*] (II: 128). As it was for the Canalejas’ patriarch, Fuatealba’s object of desire moved constantly away from him because this kind of attraction did not focus on one place or another but responded to an unconquerable hierarchy. One option left for Patricio and Mercedes was to escape, to effect some form of escape from what was an integrated, closed world (II: 195–196). However, it became impossible for them to flee that global and closed world: there was no safe place to hide from the eyes of Mercedes’s family (II: 454). This certainty propels the development of the story and causes various characters to be vanquished, but such was not the case with Patricio: “Él no era de la raza de los neurasténicos, que buscan un alivio a los dolores morales en la disolución o en la bebida” [He was not one of the neurasthenic types, who seek relief from moral pain in dissolution or drinking] (II: 276). The narrator would apply that diagnosis to other characters.

The opening of the novel portrays a Parisian society that, on a March afternoon, emerges in a young, bright, dynamic city, homogenised by fashion. Confronted with this spectacle, Patricio seemed dejected as Mercedes was wooed by an aristocratic figure: “un tal príncipe Stephan de Rospingsbrück, hijo segundo de un soberano que rige algún Estado microscópico, allá por los confines del norte de Alemania, o de Dinamarca, o de Slesvig-Holstein” [a certain Prince Stephan of Rospingsbrück, second son of a sovereign who governs some microscopic state, back in the confines of northern Germany, or Denmark, or Slesvig-Holstein] (I: 64). With this description, the narration alerts us that Paris was also a space for recycling declining aristocracies and nobles. With respect to Patricio’s stay in Paris, after finishing his studies, the young man had managed to get an uncle of his, a *diputado*,<sup>3</sup> to appoint him as a working official: assistant to the inspector general of the State railways. This position had enabled him to postpone his return to his country, providing a monthly salary of 500 francs and allowing Patricio to continue his pursuit of Mercedes (I: 56). Unlike the young Alberto Blest Gana who was sent to Europe by his government to study military engineering, as Tatiana Jiménez Bustos emphasises, Patricio Fuenzalida had not only exhausted his family funds but also consumed State funds (88). Mercedes and her family had exhausted their own finances, much of them also subsidised by the State. After arriving in Paris, the Canalejas enrolled their daughters in the *Sacré-Coeur* and Juan Gregorio in a boarding school. From that moment on “don Graciano y doña Quiteria, ‘Madame Canalejas, née Gordanera’, como llegó a llamarse en las tarjetas, arrendaron un gran apartamento amoblado” [Don Graciano and Doña Quiteria, ‘Madame Canalejas, née Gordanera’, as she came to be named on personal cards, rented a large furnished apartment]. That was also the place where doña Regis and old Rufina occupied three stuffy and dimly lit rooms whose windows looked onto the patio (Blest Gana, I: 31). This encompasses “el tiempo de la incubación europea” [the time of European incubation] (I: 28). And, this is where the family’s expectations are changed.

During their incubation period, the colony of propagated families transplanted from Hispanic America, “un elemento de entidad en el mundo parisiense” [an important element in the Parisian world], guided by a spirit of ubiquity, which the narration states is a characteristic of modern societies, gave them a friendly welcome, “abrió su seno amigo a la exótica pareja trasplantada a orillas del Sena” [opened its friendly bosom to the exotic couple transplanted to the banks of the Seine] (I: 31). According to a personal account by Domingo Amunátegui Solar, those who would arrive in Paris from Hispanic America found “the houses of their compatriots wide open [where] they receive[d] a warm welcome and frank protection” (198). In Paris, the narration makes clear, the young *trasplantados* were always in a conundrum,

<sup>3</sup> A *diputado* is an elected member to the Chamber of Deputies in the Chilean political system.

eran [...] representantes de la transformación del hispanoamericano trasplantado joven a París, que raras veces puede desprenderse de su natural exótico y pasa su existencia esforzándose en asimilarse al europeo de alta clase social (I: 14).

[they were [...] representatives of the transformation of young Hispanic-Americans transplanted to Paris, who can seldom shed their exotic natures and spend their existences striving to assimilate with upper-class Europeans.]

Doña Regis, the grandmother, saw only a family breakdown led by her own son Graciano who, while they lived in their country of origin, had taught their children the right ways, like respecting their elders. But now, dazzled by Paris, he no longer cared about his children's education. He had other satisfactions in mind: "Sabía que andaban vestidos con lujo, que tenían carruajes elegantes, que gozaban de todos los placeres de la gran ciudad" [He knew that they were dressed luxuriously, that they had elegant carriages, that they enjoyed all the pleasures of the big city] (I: 104). Under the spell of Europe, the Latin American oligarchy "will begin to forget about patriarchal tradition," as Luis Barros and Ximena Vergara have noted (135). Catharine Niemeyer underlines the role of deception in such a process: "the appearances of a socio-economic modernisation that only ends in crude materialism" (304). Absorbed by the dynamics of a Paris that dazzled them even before they embarked on their voyage, the Canalejas became consumed by the city, even as their pretexts for embarking on the trip disintegrated before their eyes.

Graciano's plans to make an engineer out of his son Juan Gregorio fell to pieces in front of him; deep within, he blamed himself for having neglected his son's education while also admitting that "los placeres de su vida de trasplantado que ha venido a gozar en Europa, no le habían dejado tiempo para pensar en los suyos" [the pleasures of his life as a transplant who has come to enjoy Europe had not allowed him the time to think about his family] (Blest Gana, I: 273). In this lopsided world, Benjamina and Nicolás, the youngest members of the family, were bound to be brought up without much authority, rebellious to any teachings from *mademoiselle*, their governess (I: 38). Graciano came to terms with the fact that people travelled to Paris with the purpose of educating their children but ended up staying there, almost without realising it (II: 263). Deploying the metaphor of an uprooted plant, Raúl Silva Castro states that the Canalejas' children are like "plants from which the nurturing soil has been removed which produces all kinds of dark tragedies," a fact which results in an "irremediable consequence for those who forcefully insist on becoming European" (83–84). In fact, the novel's narration alludes to how the family's transplant had gone array: "La [mutación] moral que el contagio del ejemplo opera en las ideas, en los gustos, en las costumbres, así como la influencia lenta, pero segura, del clima sobre los órganos del cuerpo" [The moral (mutation) that the contagion of example creates in ideas, tastes, *costumbres*, and the slow but sure influence of the climate on the body's organs] had turned the Canalejas into a hybrid type that absorbed two civilisations (Blest Gana, I: 39). This hybridism led Graciano Canalejas to resign himself to and accept the fate of his sons and daughters; for his children, going back home had become impossible:

los hemos trasplantado a este mundo, y aquí echan raíces y se aclimatan de tal suerte, que ya no podrían comprender ni practicar con fruto alguno las ideas y el modo de ser del suelo natal (II: 53).

[we have transplanted them into this world, and here they have taken root and acclimatised in such a way that they could no longer understand or practice with any fruitful results the ideas and ways of being of their native soil.]

The changes experienced by the family occurred at a slow pace. The eldest Canalejas daughters left school earlier than expected and, at an age of "santas ignorancias" [blessed ignorance], the narrator says, they began to attend to other priorities (I: 29). Dolores married Antonio Cuadrilla while Milagros became the wife of Agustín Palomares, two young men who had also transferred to Paris as children (I: 14). These two young women are described as being very unlike their younger sister. Mercedes was not only exceptional but also physically different from her elder sisters that Graciano joked that she looked like the offspring of a white foreigner, "un *gringo* bebedor de cerveza" [a beer drinking gringo] (I: 30). Her older sisters were jealous of Mercedes, "de su cutis blanco, de sus ojos azules" [of her white complexion, her blue eyes], etc., of all the physical attributes that had provided Mercedes with the looks of an aristocrat; they celebrated the fact that she lived in seclusion with her grandmother (I: 57). Skin colour nuances were relevant for the two Canalejas sisters: "las Terrázabal son tan morenas, arguyó Dolorcitas, que a primera vista se conoce que no son

Europeas" [the Terrázabals have such dark skin, argued Dolorcitas, that people know at first glance that they are not European] (II: 227). These were not, by any means, the differences underlined by an isolated Doña Regis, who, in her loneliness, told her beloved granddaughter: "felizmente me quedas tú, y, si consintiesen en dejarme llevarte, inmediatamente me volvería a nuestra tierra" [happily I have you, and, if they would agree to let me take you with me, I would immediately return to our land] (I: 104). The behaviour and aspirations of the displaced grandmother underline Latin American gender divisions. These are displayed in her reaction to her son's manipulation of his daughter. She loved Mercedes profoundly but, mute and numb, accepted her granddaughter's fate. Attached to her Catholic beliefs, she hoped that faith would save the young woman. Mercedes, replicating a profile that was persistent in Blest Gana's stories, occupied the centre of a story that denied her agency but that revolved around an open, growing and fierce dispute over her body.

As the story progressed, any attempt to escape from this world, from this story and from this social order was minimised. Fuentealba entered into such a dispute when Genaro Gordanera, flanked by Campaña, told Graciano that, "el amigo en cuyo nombre venía a solicitar la mano de Merceditas, se iría con ella a su tierra a ejercer ahí su profesión y a darle hijos a su patria" [the friend in whose name I have come to request the hand of Merceditas, would go back with her to his country of birth to practice his profession there and give children to his homeland] (I: 162). In this way, the narrator's use of the marriage contract as a device to resolve differences or conflicts, aimed at producing and reproducing citizenships in the nineteenth century, collided with family expectations of accessing a different place in the social order (Sommer 17–18). Mercedes, under the care of doña Regis, seemed to still inhabit a previous era when she confessed to her friend Rosaura that all she wanted to do was marry Patricio and go back to her country of origin (Blest Gana, II: 232). Graciano, however, would not allow Mercedes to marry a person that he considered to be beneath his family's social status: "un ingenierillo pobre, que no es siquiera de las buenas familias de nuestra tierra" [a poor little engineer, who does not even come from one of the good families of our land] (II: 52). This dispute over Mercedes's body not only orders the novel but also aligns the different family members around it and highlights the family's own unique transformations during their years of residence in Paris.

As a resident of Paris, doña Quiteria avoided the Louvre and preferred the venues of seamstresses and dressmakers, justifying her choice not to visit the prestigious museum by saying that there were just a bunch of old frames there, with some of them worn and cracked from age (I: 26). For his part, don Graciano exhibited the discontentment of a person caught between finding everything in Paris to be below par when compared to his country of origin and resisting from ever returning to his homeland. Eventually don Graciano started seeing the city's plusses, and in such "gran feria de las vanidades cosmopolitas" [extensive display of cosmopolitan vanities], he found his path (I: 27–28). Both husband and wife portray the image of Rubén Darío's *bárbaro*, who chronicles individuals who arrive in Paris to be conquered (Colombi 18). They are not the criollos described by Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, who lived between worlds (97), but rather, they were figures of a provincial elite eager for recognition. This yearning for recognition and frank social advancement had already been experienced by Graciano in his country of origin: "desde temprano se había puesto a resolver con la inexperta serenidad de la juventud, el azaroso problema de casarse pobre" [from early on he had set about to solve with the inexperienced serenity of youth, the hazardous problem of getting married poor] (Blest Gana, I: 24). In Paris, his own youth was no longer the bargaining chip for social promotion, but rather his daughter Mercedes, whom he imagined as a crowned princess, as he told his own mother: "¡quién me hubiera dicho a mí, cuando barría la tienda de mi padre, que una de mis hijas sería princesa reinante, en un principado de Europa!" [Who would have said to me, when I would sweep my father's shop, that one of my daughters would be a reigning princess, in a principality of Europe!] (II: 49). Doña Regis was her granddaughter's fiercest defender and told her son that he was committing an impious act by having Mercedes enter into a marriage for sheer ambition, reminding Graciano that he had already arranged marriages for his other two daughters "por interés de la riqueza" [in the interest of wealth] (II: 51). Despite her reasoning, doña Regis could do little to dissuade her son who was delighted at the turn of events: "comparaba orgullosamente la humildad de su cuna con la grandeza que le abría sus doradas puertas, en el gran mundo europeo, al empleadillo de una escribanía de aquella lejana tierra de Hispano-

América” [proudly compared the humility of his cradle with the greatness that was opening its golden doors, in the great European world, to the obscure clerk from a notary’s office in that distant land of Hispanic America] (II: 173). Paris appeared to him as a world as luminous as it was accessible (Schwartz 12). Graciano was becoming delirious by the prospect, coming up with formulas similar to those that had allowed him to climb socially in his country of origin.

Since their arrival, the Canalejas saw that in Paris “todas las nacionalidades estaban ahí representadas con los rasgos característicos de la fisonomía de cada raza; pero todas con el traje nivelador de la moda reinante, la tirana igualitaria” [all nationalities were represented there with the characteristic features of the physiognomy of each race; but all with the levelling suit of the reigning fashion, the egalitarian tyrant] (Blest Gana, I: 2). This homogeneity of “the upper echelons of fashionable Paris,” says Juan Durán Luzio, allowed for the Canalejas type to acquire social mobility: “despite their *criollo* origins, they lead active social lives, which after much effort on their part leads them into quite exclusive circles within the European nobility” (915). Graciano became convinced that everyone should take on that adventure: “deberían venir a Europa a cubrirse con ese barniz de refinamiento, atributo de los pueblos adelantados, a rozarse con esa civilización de gran tono, con esa cortesía artificial, que le parecía la elegancia suprema” [they should come to Europe to cover themselves with that veneer of refinement, an attribute of advanced societies, to rub shoulders with that highly refined civilisation, with that artificial courtesy, which seemed to him to exemplify supreme elegance] (Blest Gana, I: 274). Unfortunately for them, as much as Graciano and Quiteria had tried, they could never quite belong:

Por más que [...] se alentasen mutuamente a mostrar aplomo, afectando la tranquilidad de los que se encuentran en un medio social al que están acostumbrados, una desazón de inferioridad irritante los mortificaba (I: 273).

[Even if they [...] encouraged each other to show poise, affecting the serenity of those who find themselves in a social environment to which they are accustomed, an unease of irritating inferiority mortified them.]

Both of them felt like mere strangers during social gatherings among people “de otra raza, de otros modales, de otro modo de ser del que les era familiar en su tierra y que conservaban sin saberlo” [of another race, of other manners, of another way of being from what was familiar to them in their land and that had lingered in them without their being aware of it] (I: 273–274). Their daughter Mercedes was the only one they saw breaking these restrictions, crossing spaces, environments and social relationships; her exceptionality exceeded that of her sisters, although don Graciano and doña Quiteria believed that their elder daughters were much better equipped than Mercedes to handle the social codes of Paris.

Regarding *Los trasplantados, Criollos en París* (1933) by Joaquín Edwards Bello and *La vida falsa* (1943) by Martín Aldao, Latcham observes the turns of events of the transplanted characters and perceives “the disenchantments of three successive generations of Hispanic Americans who transform themselves into *metecos* as they become entangled in webs they have spun themselves” (51). In these experiences within the immigrant community, visions, judgments and prejudices converged behind a cultural equation that gave them the opportunity to become part of Parisian society. Just as Milagros and Dolores ethnically and even racially prosecuted their own immigrant community, the narration says that, with “esa fuerza de la belleza complaciente, las dos jóvenes consiguieron poner sus piecitos minúsculos de hispanoamericanas en algunos hoteles de la *plutocracia* israelita” [that force emanating from a complacent beauty, the two young women managed to put their tiny little Hispanic American feet in some mansions of the Israeli *plutocracy*]. They sought to relate to a *plutocracy* that, in the narrator’s opinion, “es a la nobleza cristiana lo que el plaqué es a la plata: una composición con tantas capas de fino, que llega a tener todas las apariencias del metal verdadero” [is to Christian nobility what *plaqué* is to silver: a metal composition with so many fine layers, that it comes to have all the appearances of the true metal] (Blest Gana, I: 50). Graciano, in a similar manner, declared himself fearful of “algún usurero judío que querrá estrujarme” [some Jewish usurer who will want to squeeze me] (I: 115). Stephan, the German prince, inhabited that very same commonplace when he belittled his creditors as, “¡los pícaros judíos! Son inconcebibles” [those rogue Jews! They are inconceivable] (I: 192). These are visions not only drawn by Hispanic Americans, but they are also part of a language linked to a long European tradition that took shape in a France of the Third Republic, under the



impact of the Alfred Dreyfus affair which broke out in 1894 and lasted until 1906 (Wilson 734). In this sense, a homogeneity sealed by fashion extended itself to judgments about peoples, societies and territories, observed from a hierarchy imagined from Paris, and projected on a global scale.<sup>4</sup>

Following their European incubation period, after renting a place in the city, the whole family managed a move to a sumptuous mansion, which made Dolores and Milagros happy because they no longer had to live “como transeúntes” [as transients] (Blest Gana, I: 33). The change underlined that they were no longer passing through, but it also showed that the Canalejas were part of the immigrant community, transplanted in Paris. The mansion would later become a loan guarantee for a mortgage that don Graciano obtained from Rosa Montestruc, through the business intervention of Ignacio Sagraves, a man of English descent transplanted in Paris and destroyed by his addiction to gambling (I: 116). Sagraves, who circulated large sums of money among those who used his services and from which his own family never saw any benefit, managed to lose at the racetrack some of the money that Graciano had entrusted to him for the alleged dowry of Stephan's sister (II: 326). One of Sagraves's daughters was killed by falling from a window, a tragedy that triggered Sagraves, his second daughter and his wife to escape from their miserable world through a family suicide on the Seine (II: 349). Although motivated by different reasons, this tragedy was a kind of prelude to Mercedes's own fate choosing to escape by suicide. From their new premises, the Canalejas redefined their relationship with the immigrant community, where they received:

la flor y nata hispanoamericana en París, algunas españolas, esposas e hijas de carlistas desterrados, algunas cubanas arruinadas por la baja de los azúcares, algunas portuguesas y brasileñas color de café tostado (I: 34).

[the Hispanic American cream of the crop in Paris, some Spaniards, wives and daughters of exiled Carlists, some Cubans ruined by the drop in sugar prices, some Portuguese and Brazilians, displaying a roasted-coffee-skin-like colouring.]

Married to men transplanted like themselves, Dolores and Milagros were described as “tempranas flores de ambición y de positivismo, exageradas en su desarrollo como la atmósfera artificial que las alimentaba” [early flowers of ambition and positivism, exaggerated in their development like the artificial atmosphere that fed them] (I: 29–30). Besides other social benefits for the family, Mercedes's marriage to a decadent figure of the European aristocracy could establish firm roots for the family in Paris. Canalejas happily announced to his wife that marrying into the aristocracy would permanently cement their stay in Paris (II: 207). A yearning fuelled by travellers returning from Europe gave way in Graciano to a desire to become part of the European aristocracy as a necessary step not to return.

The expectations opened by Mercedes's marriage prospect encouraged her parents, excited Dolores and Milagros, and even impacted the cynicism of Juan Gregorio; but they found resistance from Mercedes's grandmother. Doña Regis, “anciana de tez morena, vestida de negro, con un manto de igual color de la cabeza a la cintura” [a dark-complected elderly woman, dressed in black, with a cloak of the same colour from head to waist], not only missed her country and its customs, but she also looked different: “al salir todos los días a oír misa en la más vecina iglesia, suscitaba por su aspecto, entre los transeúntes, la curiosidad con que se mira a los locos y a los maniáticos” [when she went out every day to hear mass in the nearest church, because of her appearance, she aroused among passers-by the type of curiosity with which one looks at madmen and maniacs] (I: 31). Whereas Mercedes's exceptionality condemned her to becoming a bargaining chip, that of her grandmother caused her to be harassed daily by smirking boys wanting to play practical jokes on her (I: 32). If the “commercialised vision of the flâneur is part of a bourgeois project to domesticate the city's public spaces,” as claimed by Dorde Cuvardic García, doña Regis is the flâneur's counterpart as a spectacle of a harassed body in a hostile and uniform space ruled by fashion (22). It is not the “loneliness inherent in urban gigantism” noted by Claudio Maíz (36). The

<sup>4</sup> The narration also shines a light on the characters' antisemitic language and stereotypes when the ladies of the immigrant community talk casually over tea “de la minuciosa crítica sobre la poca exactitud de las costureras y sobre la judaica exageración de sus cuentas” [giving detailed criticism of the seamstresses' inaccuracy and their Jewish-like overstatement of their account balances] (I: 34–35).

narrator's depiction of the old lady is devastating: "en su cerebro de cultura escasa, sentía el desquiciamiento de las viejas nociones de la vida, las nociones clasificadas, ensambladas metódicamente por la educación de otros días en la callada acción de los años" [in her brain of scarce culture, she felt the deranging of her old notions about life, those classified notions, methodically assembled by the education of yesteryear in the quiet action of the passing of years]. And, as a direct consequence of her upbringing and beliefs, she experienced daily the collapse of her world, "la fábrica vetusta con sus vestigios coloniales de virtudes primitivas, arrancadas de las almas por las exigentes complicaciones de la vida moderna" [the ancient factory with its colonial vestiges of primitive virtues, torn from souls by the demanding complications of modern life] (Blest Gana, II: 48). Rosaura Fuenteviva, a friend of Mercedes who had grown up to be rebellious to patriarchal authoritarianism, said of doña Regis that the lights had already gone out in her. Furthermore, the young woman did not understand doña Regis's sense of duty: "es de las generaciones de nuestras tierras de por allá, en que, para las mujeres, amar era obedecer" [she belongs to those generations from our lands over there, where, for women, to love meant to obey] (II: 367). The world's hierarchy is not only geographical, it is also temporal; it is the global cartography of a single time whose historical linearity synchronises all of its corners. In addition to attending church, she went to the Jardin des Plantes and paid a visit to a haggard condor that reminded her of her old land (I: 322). Doña Regis knew very well how her family felt about her: "se avergüenzan de mí, se ríen de mi modo de vestir, de mi vejez, de mi aire extranjero, que hace contraste con la elegancia de todos ustedes" [they are ashamed of me, they laugh at my way of dressing, my old age, my foreign air, which stands in such contrast with the elegance of all of you] (II: 373). Only Mercedes and Rufina provided her with some form of peace, "la calma visionaria de una picadura con morfina" [the visionary calmness of a shot of morphine] (I: 32). She also experienced Paris as a terminal station, with no possible return.

Doña Regis, however, did not accept being the only one living in abandonment, silenced and isolated. In detailing the impact doña Regis had on her friend, Rosaura criticised that, like her grandmother, Mercedes had always been living in her old country and not truly in Paris. "Hasta tus amores tienen el romanticismo de *por allá*" [Even your love life has the romanticism from over *there*] (II: 419). Mercedes, who since birth had been cared for by her diligent grandmother (I: 33), seemed immune to Parisian contagion. Even Stephan told Mercedes: "Usted habla como una chiquilla, exaltada por un romanticismo que no es de estos tiempos" [You speak like a young girl, exalted by a romanticism that is not of these times] (II: 445). In this sense, Mercedes inhabited the same bubble as her grandmother and remained unfazed by the influences of Paris, which would prevent her from extricating herself from a role assigned to her by others, precisely because of her uniqueness. By way of illustration, at the social gathering where Prince Stephan approached Mercedes for the first time, the description of the event made clear that her beauty and graceful manners had caused a sensation among members of the nobility. Like Prince Stephan, they were willing to marry and "exchange" their aristocratic titles for a big dowry. Bedazzled by her, they wanted to know more about Mercedes: "muchos habían preguntado quién era aquella deliciosa muchacha rubia, de esbelta estatura y de distinguido porte, que parecía llevar con majestad innata, la corona de una larga sucesión de nobles antepasados" [many had asked who that delightful blonde girl was, of slender stature and distinguished bearing, who seemed to wear with innate majesty a crown from a long succession of noble ancestors] (I: 297). There, under a patriarchal authority reinforced by her own grandmother, it did not matter what Mercedes wanted, which was to leave and cry her eyes out (I: 297). Ultimately, what protected her also neutralised her own agency and suffocated any rebellious response to the Parisian milieu.

At the party announcing her marriage to the aristocrat, Mercedes rejected Stephan, furiously repudiating his self-assuredness, finding that he was too aware that she should fall for him because of his pedigree (II: 214). Mercedes preferred to stay in the domestic bubble inhabited by her grandmother, who "lived" elsewhere: "vivía la existencia del 'allá', contaba la crónica de su juventud, como quien entra a coger flores en un jardín abandonado; recordaba a las amigas, describía las procesiones de su pueblo" [she lived the existence of 'there', recounted the chronicle of her youth, as one who enters an abandoned garden to pick flowers; she remembered her friends, she described the religious processions in her town] (I: 32). At the same time that it soothed her, her grandmother's protection condemned the young woman. Mercedes, the narrator emphasises, "no era capaz de dejarse arrebatar por el torbellino, de cerrar los ojos para saltar

en el vacío, de atropellar la piadosa costumbre de la sumisión filial” [was not capable of being carried away by a whirlwind, of closing her eyes to jump into the void, of stepping over the pious custom of filial submission]. She found herself unable to rebel because of the way she had been brought up by doña Regis, shaped by beliefs that had created a young woman with a chaste soul, “sin romanticismo, modelada por la religión del deber” [without romanticism, shaped by the religion of duty] (I: 275). It is what allowed Graciano to use her as a bargaining chip to invest in genealogies and aristocratic relationships. His gaze was not limited to Hispanic America, it was a geopolitical vision of potentially global alliances. In his opinion, “las dos Américas, la del Norte y la del Sur, traen a Europa sus hijas y sus riquezas, y se sienten muy ufanas de encontrar nobles sin ocupación, sin profesión, y sin fortuna, a quienes dárselas” [the two Americas, North and South, bring their daughters and their fortunes to Europe, and they are very proud to find noblemen without occupation, without profession, and without fortune, so they can offer their fortunes to them]. For him, then, this transatlantic game was simply “un intercambio de conveniencias” [an exchange of conveniences] (II: 52). Under these material conditions, Graciano could assure the Countess of Montignan, who negotiated on Stephan’s behalf, that he had no doubt that Mercedes’s choice would be that of her parents (II: 93–94). Regarding this transatlantic game, Milagros told Graciano that he had conducted himself like a diplomat, after which Dolores added that “nuestro gobierno debiera nombrar a papá ministro en París” [our government should appoint papá minister in Paris] (II: 189). These references lead Durán Luzio to underline the resemblance of the Canalejas with the Chilean family Cousiño Goyenechea and their aristocratic aspirations in Europe (918). In Blest Gana’s story, Mercedes was aware that nobody would vouch for her in her family. They were beyond the point of no return, swollen with pride at the idea of being related to a prince (I: 302). She assumed her own loneliness and impossible resistance to the interests, aspirations and negotiations of her family.

The domestic resistance of doña Regis, flanked by Rufina and Mercedes, created a bubble barely touched by the Parisian family dynamics. In their quarters, if Rufina prepared a national dish from their old land, the three of them reminisced about the old place: “El vapor de la olla, como un incienso, les traía la devota ilusión de la patria, la trémula emoción del alma envuelta en lo pasado” [The steam from the pot, like incense, brought them a faithful illusion of the homeland, a tremulous emotion of their souls wrapped in the past]. Inevitably, what for them meant a special treat was also unwillingly “shared” with the rest of the house, “el violento olor de las legumbres y de las viandas en la cazuela inundaba también la gran escalera de la casa” [the violent smell of legumes and food in the casserole also flooded the great staircase of the house] (I: 32). The legumes felt almost like an ambush for don Graciano and his family, all made up and dressed up to go out to dinner but having to endure the thick smell of their country’s national dish (I: 32–33). With the smell stuck to his clothes, don Graciano exclaimed “¡Jesús! ¡Ya está mi madre con sus guisos de la tierra!” [Jesus! There goes my mother with her stews from the old country]. Milagros, rehearsing a French accent, added “¡Tienen razón en creernos salvajes!” [They are right to think us savages!]. And Dolores, with a similar accent, concluded, “¿cómo no nos han de llamar *rastaquouéres*?” [how can they avoid calling us *rastaquouéres*?] (I: 33). The term alludes, in Alberto del Solar, to a French caricature of “grotesque characters, who, as *damaged samples* from our race” would make their presence known in Paris (XIV). The name alludes to a “South American barbarism,” according to Silvana Gardie, “on people’s arrival in Europe encouraged by the availability of a fortune and the promotion of tourism” (67). The tainted word rejects and marks those who did not belong to a Latin American elite and sought to distance themselves in Europe, from those excluded from their countries of origin, which in the novel points an accusing finger at the modest origins of don Graciano.

At the domestic level, embracing or rejecting one’s culture of origin generated two triumvirates whose final confrontation became the fight for sovereignty over Mercedes’s body. For her part, she joined forces with doña Regis and Rufina against Dolores, Milagros and doña Quiteria. The nanny and the grandmother, Rufina and Regis lacked any of the decision-making power that was bestowed upon Graciano, in front of whom Juan Gregorio was just the inaudible voice of a failed project. Rufina, moreover, emerged subordinate, silenced and invisible, as Solene Bergot argues with respect to a domestic servitude whose members “never play a role in the plot of a story” (64). If the grandmother played any role, it was to neutralise Mercedes: “ésta no ha sido criada por la casquivana de su madre” [she was not raised by her frivolous mother], says Patricio, but by her grandmother, who has made sure to make Mercedes obedient:

la ha substraído al contacto y al ejemplo de las dos mayores, modelos acabados de la ligereza inconsciente, de superficialidad pretenciosa que puede hacer germinar en un cerebro de muchacha hispano-americana trasplantada a París, una educación sin criterio (Blest Gana, I: 225).

[she has taken her away from the contact and the example of the two elder ones, finished models of unconscious lightness, of pretentious superficiality who can make an education germinate without any criteria in the brain of a Hispanic American girl transplanted to Paris.]

However, Patricio's conception of Mercedes as a "planta rara" [rare plant] within a family full of vain expectations came to be challenged by Juan Gregorio, who bursted in and questioned Mercedes's image as "¡una muchacha modesta, que se contentaría con una posición subalterna con tal que tenga por marco el amor! ¡Eh, querido! ¡ese marco se desgastaría, se descascararía con el frotamiento diario de las contradicciones!" [a modest girl, who would be content with a subordinate position as long as it is framed by love! Hey dear! That frame would wear out, it would peel off with a daily rubbing of setbacks!] (I: 223). The protection of doña Regis had kept Mercedes as immune to her family's malaise as she was defenceless against the interests and expectations of that same family.

Juan Gregorio, brought by his parents as a child to Paris, maintained that "nosotros los trasplantados de Hispano-América, no tenemos otra función en este organismo de la vida parisiense que la de gastar plata [...] y divertirnos, si podemos" [we transplanted from Hispanic America have no other function in this organism of Parisian life than to spend money [...] and have fun, if we can]. In a reflective tone, he added that "somos los seres sin patria. Hemos salido de nuestro país demasiado jóvenes para amarlo, y nos hemos criado en éste como extranjeros, sin penetrarlo" [we are beings without a country. We have left our country too young to love it, and we have grown up in this one as foreigners, without penetrating it] (I: 331). This image illustrates the impossibility for people like the Canalejas' children to generate their own agency and who ended up being condemned by family plans. In a similar vein, Gregorio believed that young people of the Hispanic American elite transplanted into Paris, where he included himself, were neither useful citizens in Europe nor in their countries of origin (I: 332). The same went for Rosaura Fuenteviva, who asked, "¿se figuran que voy a consentir en que me lleven a un país atrasado, donde no hay diversiones, donde las mujeres se llevan en la iglesia, donde todos critican a la que sale, a la que se viste elegante, a la que *flirtea* con los amigos?" [do they think I'm going to consent to being taken back to a backward country, where there is not any type of entertainment, where all women do is go to church, where everyone criticises a woman who goes out, a woman who dresses elegantly? who *flirts* with her male friends?], after which she concluded, "¿Para qué me trajeron de allí entonces?" [Why did they bring me here from there, then?] (II: 60). In the view of Juan Gregorio and Rosaura, it was not their return that became impossible, but rather the possibility of truly entering the ranks of European society. This was because their family's immigrant and atavistic *costumbres* inevitably defined them.

The narrator configures dead-end stories, placing characters and groups in relation to dynamics whose failure has been previously announced, and he does so from the affirmation of a single possible world, where there are no external spaces, but rather marginal, peripheral regions, subject to the illusion of another time. For Rosaura, "la mujer moderna es demasiado complicada por la educación, por el medio ambiente en que vive, para comprender esa ley exclusiva de una pasión única, absorbente y hasta tiránica en su exclusivismo" [a modern woman is too complicated by her education, by the environment in which she lives, to understand that exclusive law of a unique, absorbing passion which is even tyrannical in its exclusivism] (II: 114). It is the reason why she became incensed by what the Canalejas were doing to Mercedes, which for her entailed a violation of women's rights, based on norms that governed her immigrant community (II: 186). She could not understand either how they could force Mercedes to marry or why she did not rebel. Fuentealba, like her grandmother, also believed that Mercedes's heart was of a superior substance, impervious to any type of weaknesses. "La chica, como ser moral, tenía para él la pureza de las ligeras mariposas que apenas rozan la tierra y solo se posan sobre las flores, conservando siempre immaculado el terciopelo de sus alas" [The young woman, as a moral being, had for him the purity of light butterflies that barely touch the ground and only perch on the flowers, always keeping the velvet of their wings immaculate] (I: 225). However beautiful, these were visions from another era, as Rosaura and

Stephan stated, from other places; they were not compatible with the real world. This traditional view was also strongly rejected by Campaña, Fuentealba's Comtean friend. For Campaña it was all about the education received by Mercedes, which suppressed any type of independence in a young unmarried woman, "como hace el horticultor con las ramas de los árboles jóvenes, sujetándolas a desarrollarse a su antojo, atadas a un enrejado" [as a horticulturist does with the branches from young trees, keeping them from developing at will, tied to a trellis]. In this way, said the friend, these young ladies could not make their own decisions or follow their own impulses (I: 226). Despite this militant dissent, Campaña recognised her father's legal authority over Mercedes; she was a minor (I: 228). It was not only tradition that annulled her very being but also her corresponding place under the law, within a world that is closed in, without any cracks or exits for escape.

Endeavouring to make an alliance for the whole family with an indebted European nobility, Graciano managed to come up with a high sum for his daughter's dowry, requested by the Countess of Montignan on behalf of the future husband. He managed to come through via elusive loans; he could not convince either the marriage broker or Prince Stephan that he was backed by material security: "no encontraron suficiente garantía en la hipoteca de bienes situados en un país distante y ocasionado a revoluciones, como lo son por desgracia la mayor parte de los pueblos de origen español" [they did not find sufficient collateral on the mortgage of property located in a distant country and prone to revolutions, as are unfortunately most of the nations of Spanish origin] (II: 247–248). The delusion became collective for the Canalejas. Milagros dreamed of the death of the Prince of Roespingsbrück, Stephan's older brother, because her sister would then become a crowned princess, which in turn would make the whole family part of the European aristocracy (I: 177). For Stephan, on the other hand, marriage was a quick and easy way to pay off debts and maintain his rhythm of life in Paris (I: 202). To double the money agreed on his behalf by the Countess of Montignan, Stephan asked Graciano to finance his sister's eventual royal engagement to another member of the European royalty (II: 253). For the Countess of Montignan, it was necessary that "la dote tuviese la mayor solidez que es dable alcanzar en estos tiempos de sindicatos y de agiotaje en que se ha visto bambolear, y a veces caer, los valores reputados de solidez inalterable" [the dowry should have the greatest solidity possible in these times of unions and speculation where established values with inalterable solidity have been shaken, and sometimes fallen] (II: 222). The whole family supported gambling on the family finances to buy access and visibility. The delirium led Juan Gregorio to even believe that, from his country of origin "el Estado le pagaría sus deudas" [the State would pay (Stephan's) debts], because of the presumed honour bestowed upon the State if the Canalejas entered the European nobility (I: 218). On that occasion and before such a suggestion, Campaña told Juan Gregorio that, if such were the case, "el Estado sería tu padre" [the State would be your father] (I: 218). The statement suggests a chain of fatherhoods that involves not only Graciano, but all those who live in Europe financed by their respective States or thanks to subsidies from their governments.

When the marriage had been agreed upon, the only possible recourse left for Mercedes, according to Juan Gregorio, Rosaura and Patricio, was an escape. Feeling trapped, while listening to Patricio Fuentealba, with whom she had a strong attachment since childhood, she heard him say that he would never be able to see her again unless she escaped with him. At that moment Mercedes, for the first time in her life, "despertaba del rosado sueño de su niñez" [woke up from her dream-like childhood] (II: 196). The narrator emphasises this change in her: "en su ser de infantil apariencia, el pesar iba operando esa madurez de la razón que, en el curso ordinario de la vida, no llega en la mujer sino mucho después de los veinte años. Ella tenía apenas diez y ocho" [in the childlike appearance of her being, the weight of grief was altering the ordinary course of life, imposing a maturity that normally does not arrive in women until long after the age of twenty. She was barely eighteen] (II: 219). Suggested by Patricio, this frustrated attempt to escape threw Mercedes's orderly life completely out of whack, "huyendo de mi casa, como una mala hija" [running away from home, like a bad daughter], to seek refuge at number 27 rue de Longchamp, the residence of Jenaro Gordanera, her uncle and doña Regis's brother (II: 130). However, her escape with Patricio to negotiate a surrender became frustrated by nearly her entire family; they ordered her to return home and continue on with the wedding preparations. Afterwards, she was certain that there was no possible protection left for her, that she was without agency, lacking any will while being forced, by her strict education, culture and

family loyalty, to marry a man with whom her father had negotiated a fair price. Doña Regis, resigned to her granddaughter's fate, relied on her deep religious beliefs: "pedía al cielo hiciese descender al corazón de su nieta la conformidad humilde de una buena cristiana" [asked heaven to bring down to her granddaughter's heart the humble conformity of a good Christian] (II: 201). From this prism, Mercedes outlined her only way out when saying goodbye to Fuentealba in writing: "como sé que sería en vano pedir al cielo que nos reúna en este mundo, mi plegaria constante implorará el favor de la muerte para poder desde allá velar por ti y pedir a la Virgen que te dé la felicidad que yo, en mi triste miseria, no he podido darte" [As I know it would be in vain to ask heaven to reunite us in this world, my constant prayer will be to implore death's favour so that from there I can watch over you and ask the Virgin to give you the happiness that I, in my sad misery, have not been able to give you] (II: 204). All illusion of resistance was shattered as the upcoming marital union continued to take shape.

After the marriage announcement, the press buried the genealogies of Stephan and Mercedes in crusades that crossed the Mediterranean or disembarked on the American coasts with Hernán Cortés, a fact which led the community of *trasplantados* to classify the Canalejas as frauds (II: 206). However, endorsing that imagined genealogy became an imperative to raise the status of the family, especially since it was "understandable that the Parisian aristocracy did not take into account Chileans and, in general, Latin Americans in the last decades of the nineteenth century," as Francisco González Errázuriz has observed (388). Even so, the marriage announcement did not go unnoticed by the transplanted community; they felt a bit of a vain solidarity toward what they perceived to be a successful alliance for the Canalejas: "¿Por qué habían de ser solamente las *yankees* las únicas de la numerosa familia americana que se uniesen a grandes títulos europeos?" [Why should the Yankees be the only ones from the large American family to attach themselves to the great European titles?]. The narration adds that those families with Latin American origin, the so-called "desdeñados *rastás*, plantaban ahora su tienda en medio de la grandeza europea, adquirían nacionalidad en el mundo *chic*" [scorned *rastás*, now pitched their tent in the midst of European greatness, acquiring citizenship in the *chic* world] (Blest Gana, II: 220).

No matter how Republican and Democratic the "*yankee*" families may have been, they did not show any opposition to their daughters' aristocratic aspirations. They possessed an immoderate appetite for titles of nobility, and for Juan Gregorio, since they were willing to bring *la galleta* with which to pay for their aspirations, everything was "*¡all right!*," the young man exclaimed. However, he clarified immediately: "yo no sé si Tocqueville o Laboulaye han hecho esta profunda observación, porque no he leído sus libros sobre la América" [I don't know if Tocqueville or Laboulaye have made this profound observation, because I have not read their books on America] (II: 258). From the wedding announcement to the Civil Service ceremony with its secular overtones, events followed a rapid pace (II: 383). The train ride after the ceremony, the treatment Mercedes received from her husband and her final secret meeting with Fuentealba, made clear to Mercedes that "lo que había sido no podía dejar de ser" [what had been could not cease to be] (II: 473). Certainly, her previous option to escape, which became a mere plan, and given the impending threat of a marriage which Stephan wanted to be consummated, the only possibility left for the young woman was to escape, as the text emphasises. Mercedes decided, within minutes, to commit suicide by leaving a gas tap open in a hotel room in Marseille, where the brand-new husband and wife had taken a break from their honeymoon journey (II: 487). When Milagros learned of her sister's death, she silenced the news so as not to ruin her invitation to attend a celebration, one she obtained by virtue of her sister's entry into European society. But she failed to contain the impact of what had happened by the time she sent the news of Mercedes's death to Dolores (II: 498–501). The drama of the *trasplantados*, says Hernán Poblete Varas, has repercussions in various novels after Blest Gana (257–58). Among them, "suicide, as a fatal outcome of the neurasthenic weakness produced by the environment," declares Luigi Patruno, "demonstrates how even a last symbol of Hispanic American identity lacks the necessary virtues for the constitution of a healthy nation" (246). However, Blest Gana's fiction no longer refers to marriage as the institutional site for the production and reproduction of citizenship. Nor does it consider matrimony to be a means for negotiating conflicts, expectations and interest within a nation. Here the novel advances a global political cartography, articulated from Paris and illuminating leading roles that cross and erase national borders, even when they are legible and provincially articulated.

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