Birds, Butterflies, and Mercury's Feathered Feet: Women and Winged Symbols in Fernán Caballero's *Clemencia*

Leslie Maxwell Kaiura
University of Alabama in Huntsville

Fernán Caballero's fondness for bird imagery is evident in the title of her most well-known work, *La gaviota* (1849); however, her less frequently-read novel *Clemencia* (1852) is filled not only with birds, but with a veritable flock of winged images: angels, butterflies, bats, flies, and even a plaster statue of Mercury with his winged feet and cap. The caged bird appears in various nineteenth-century works to signify the limits imposed upon the female sex; a prominent example being Moratín's *El sí de las niñas* (1808), in which Doña Irene's pet thrush symbolizes her daughter Paquita, who is being pushed into an arranged marriage to an older gentleman. In *Clemencia*, Fernán Caballero (Cecilia Böhl de Faber, 1796–1877) uses this symbol to echo the confinement of her protagonist, but she also expands the symbolism of the bird and other winged creatures to further elucidate her views on proper femininity and to develop the trajectory (or flight, one might say) of her protagonist through the storms of life to the pinnacle of Spanish womanhood.

Clemencia has received significantly less critical attention than *La gaviota*, and most of the scholars who have written about it have neglected the novel's symbolism in favor of other aspects. One of the most recent treatments of the novel, found in Lou Charnon-Deutsch's study *Narratives of Desire: Nineteenth-Century Spanish Fiction by Women*, focuses on the work's relationship to the domestic novel genre and the development of female subjectivity in the plot. The three most comprehensive studies of Fernán Caballero and her works, written by José F. Montesinos, Javier Herrero, and Lawrence H. Klibbe, all place heavy emphasis on the plot's autobiographical elements and Caballero's theories of realism.[1] Klibbe lauds her as the "creator of the

modern Spanish novel and the first important novelist who successfully directed this genre from Romanticism toward Realism" (158), and all three of the aforementioned scholars cite Caballero's assertion in her correspondence that she lacked "el genio *creador*" and that as writer she was "un vulgar daguerrotipo" that merely recorded the reality around her (qtd. in Herrero 290). Despite her insistence—"no *invento*, sino *recopilo*"—Caballero's realism is never scientifically objective or impartial (qtd. in Montesinos 38, Herrero 321). While she was known to use real people, situations, and even dialogue from actual conversations to create the rich tapestry of local color and Spanish societal customs found in her works, Caballero takes these common, realist elements and imbues them, heavily at times, with symbolic meanings that support her conservative ideology and exalt the virtues of the traditional, Catholic Spain that she so loved.[2] Montesinos observes that Caballero's "genio creador" as she described it can be reduced to "la capacidad de dar sentido doctrinal a las cosas o acaecimientos que observa, supeditar lo observado a principios, excogitar 'tesis' morales. Porque todo 'significa' algo en estas novelas, y su composición está llena de complejidades ideológicas" (38). According to her own words in the prologue to *Lágrimas* (1850), Caballero's work was designed to serve the ideological mission of promoting and restoring traditional Spanish culture, which she saw as being in moral and political decline. Her intention, she writes, is "Rehabilitación de lo santo, de lo religioso [. . .] de las costumbres españolas puras [. . .] de los lazos de la sociedad y la familia, del freno en todo, sobre todo en esas ridículas pasiones que se afectan sin sentirse" (qtd. in Herrero 318). The conclusion of *Clemencia*, which rejects passion and the more modern ways of urban society in favor of the virtues of the more traditional Spain of country village life, certainly bears out her intent.

Despite Montesinos's assertion that everything in Caballero's work has symbolic significance, he and other scholars have focused almost exclusively on *Clemencia*'s semi-autobiographical plot and the author's overt ideological commentary. The sole symbolic treatment seems to be Noel M. Valis's article "Eden and the Tree of Knowledge in Fernán Caballero's *Clemencia*," in which she analyzes tree and garden imagery as a way to interpret the gender implications of the protagonist's journey, a journey which takes Clemencia from the convent, through an

unfortunate marriage, an idyllic widowhood, a period of vulnerable independence, and finally into an idealized companionate marriage. Valis's solid interpretation of garden imagery helps clarify the ideological significance of Clemencia's relationships with the men in her life, but a closer look at the dozens of winged images in the text provides a more complete symbolic picture of the novel's gender implications, not only in reference to Clemencia and her suitors, but for the other major female characters as well.

Mother Hens and Wayward Chicks: Clemencia and her Female Foils

In a previous study, I have argued that in this novel, Caballero creates her perfect female protagonist and that in didactic narratorial commentary, she teaches a series of lessons about ideal femininity and holds Clemencia up as an example for her female readers.[3] The construction of the protagonist as the ideal woman in all stages of her life (the obedient daughter, the long-suffering wife, the wise but humble widow, and the radiant mother-to-be) is aided from the beginning by various female foils who serve to highlight Clemencia's sterling qualities through their improper behavior. Along with Clemencia, each of these foils—her aunt, the Marchioness of Cortegana, and her cousins Alegría and Constancia—is associated with winged images that symbolically reflect their qualities as women.

As the novel opens, the sixteen-year-old protagonist emerges from the convent "como una blanca mariposa de su capullo de seda" to join the household of her aunt in Seville (77). As pure, beautiful, and unaffected as a butterfly, Clemencia receives an ambivalent welcome from the Marchioness, who sees her as a burden, and her cousins, who mock her lack of sophistication and envy the attention that she attracts in their aristocratic social circle. Constancia calls her "una paloma sin hiel," a description which contrasts Clemencia's sweet and obedient (that is, bile-less) nature with her cousins' less than exemplary behavior: Constancia's growing bitterness and rebellion towards her mother on one hand, and Alegría's acidic wit and heartless coquetry on the other (124). In terms of bird imagery, Alegría and Constancia are figured as the wayward chicks of the text, a theme that emerges symbolically when the Marchioness complains about Alegría's impertinence by saying "las pollitas [quieren] saber más que las

gallinas" (99). If Alegría and Constancia are "pollitas," then by extension the Marchioness is the "gallina," or mother hen. The relationship between the hen image and a woman's role as mother recurs later in the text, specifically in reference to Clemencia's mother-in-law Doña Brígida, and in general as a positive symbol of family and motherhood associated with the simple wholesomeness of country life (131, 169). Here, however, it is ironically applied to the Marchioness, who suffers the disrespect and misbehavior of her chicks because she has neglected them to brood instead over her own self-interest, represented in her artificial chick—the winged statue of Mercury.

Occupying the central courtyard of the Marchioness's home, this plaster statue reappears at key moments in the first part of the novel, and as such it becomes the text's most prominent winged image related to improper womanhood. The Marchioness cares excessively for the statue, instructing her servants to take such pains to protect it from the rain that the new butler, Pepino, swears that he will treat it as if it were his own child (98). In contrast, she has taken little care to raise and educate her daughters well. Caballero describes the Marchioness as spoiled, egotistical, and "insufrible," and she comments that as a result, the education Alegría and Constancia have received from her is "viciosa" (75–76). The young women have inherited their mother's flaws, and they lack discipline, as the Marchionness's blunt friend Doña Eufrasia points out, because their mother has not imposed any upon them (93). Unlike the text's abundant bird images, the statue of Mercury is artificial, and this characteristic indicates the Marchioness's failure to fulfill her natural maternal role; a God-given duty that Caballero's contemporary Faustina Sáez de Melgar describes as "la misión santa, consoladora y magnánima de la madre" (77). The statue represents her shallowness of character and her favoring of material things over what should be the most important aspects of a woman's life according to nineteenth-century domestic ideology, proponents of which "[e]n su aplastante mayoría [. . .] declaran que las ocupaciones apropiadas para la mujer—su 'misión,' en el lenguaje de la época—son el matrimonio, la maternidad, y la domesticidad" (Jagoe 24).

Curiously, the statue reappears in the text at key moments that are associated with her maternal inadequacy. First, Alegría's disrespect for her mother becomes evident when she criticizes Pepino's stupidity (and hence her mother's decision to hire him) immediately after the

Marchioness has given the butler the serious charge of looking after her statue. This motif of disrespect is repeated when the statue loses yet another wing while Pepino is moving it out of the rain, and Alegría jokes about the accident although it pains her mother greatly to see her dear statue damaged (117–18). Shortly thereafter, the Marchioness's sorrow over the mutilated statue, which now only has one of its original four wings, is juxtaposed in the same sentence with her consternation over Constancia's refusal to comply with her mother's wishes and marry the rich and eligible Marquis of Valdemar. Thus the fatal flaws of both daughters—Constancia's rebelliousness and Alegría's disrespectful nature—are directly connected to the statue and to the Marchioness's failed motherhood. Just as the Marchioness's artificial chick loses its wings under Pepino's clumsy care, one might say that Constancia and Alegría have their wings clipped by their deficient education, and as a result they never rise to meet their full potential as women.

Years later, when both daughters have fallen short of the womanly ideal, the statue is replaced by another symbol: the Marchioness's breast cancer, which eats away at the part of her body that is most closely associated with a mother's nurturing care. As the cancer devours her body, the Marchioness is devoured by regret over the fate of her daughters. Like their mother, Constancia and Alegría have failed to accomplish their ordained mission as women. While Alegría does become a mother after marrying Constancia's spurned suitor, the Marquis of Valdemar, she has no maternal instinct or devotion to her children.[4] She shocks Clemencia, who though childless has instinctively begun to mother the children around her, by railing against maternity: "¡Niños!" esa plaga, esa carga, esas trabas, que acaban con la paciencia, que destruyen el físico, que quitan el gusto y el tiempo para todo. ¡Oh! son una calamidad" (270).[5] Unsurprisingly, Alegría also has little thought for her role as a wife and is eventually disgraced by an adulterous affair with her former beau, spurring her husband to leave her and put their children under the care of his mother. A husbandless wife and childless mother, Alegría's only remaining role in society is as a subject of malicious gossip in the salons of Seville. Constancia's failure is of another sort: after disobeying her mother and rejecting the Marquis, her true beloved dies in a shipwreck and she resigns herself to an empty life of nun-like spinsterhood. Instead of mothering children, she is reduced to caring patiently for her own ailing

and increasingly difficult mother, a strict penance which eventually turns her into an admirable, if unfulfilled, woman.[6]

In addition to mothering her own daughters poorly, the Marchioness clearly displays her self-interest and lack of maternal feeling in the way she treats the orphaned Clemencia, who depends on her aunt to be a surrogate parent and guide. Furthermore, as I will later demonstrate, the Marchioness's neglected duties to Clemencia are also connected with the statue of Mercury. The Marchioness is rather indifferent to the task of mothering her niece and preparing her for her future role as a wife and mother; consequently, Clemencia is thrown from a state of innocence and ignorance into a disastrous marriage. Her innocent state is reflected in the Marchioness's garden, where the birds sing and fly freely and where Clemencia finds happiness despite her aunt's indifference and her cousins' petty jibes. In writing about this stage of the protagonist's life, Valis focuses on a conversation between Clemencia and the Marquis of Valdemar in which they compare the Marchioness's garden to the Garden of Eden. It is an incomplete Eden, however, without a tree of knowledge, a serpent, or, as the Marquis adds, an Adam. The garden is thus a reflection of Clemencia's lack of worldly knowledge and experience with men. Valis claims that this notion of "an Adamless and treeless paradise [. . .] governs [Clemencia's] subsequent behavior" as she longs for a return to this lost state of innocence (254). The symbolism of this edenic garden is augmented, however, by the image of happy, un-caged birds because only in this innocent state, apart from the control of a husband or father-figure, are Clemencia and her birds indeed free. For the rest of the novel, the birds most closely associated with her—those in her house or garden—are more likely to be caged as they reflect both the positive and negative bonds that tie her to the men in her life.

It is the Marchioness who, rather than taking time to prepare Clemencia for married life and to help her find a suitable partner, takes the first opportunity to marry off her unwanted ward and thus brusquely evict her from this free and innocent garden paradise. Obviously annoyed by Constancia's refusal to marry the Marquis, the Marchioness lectures Clemencia about the necessity of accepting a good match: "Sépaste, Clemencia [. . .] que no hay una locura mayor en las muchachas que rehusar un buen partido cuando se les presenta [. . .] y que la cabeza de chorlito que rehusa un buen porvenir por capricho, por imprevisión, o por desobediencia, merece encerrarse en San Marcos" (126). Other references to Constancia's stubbornness undoubtedly connect her to the "cabeza de chorlito," or bird-brained girl that according to the Marchioness deserves to be shut up in an asylum.[7] Clemencia, ever obedient, heeds the Marchioness's words of warning and learns from her cousin's negative example. Not long after this conversation, the dissolute but wealthy Fernando de Guevara asks for Clemencia's hand in marriage and the Marchioness immediately grants his request. Though disconcerted by this sudden engagement, Clemencia consents and within days finds herself married to a strange man who is accustomed to "pajarracos menos pulidos"—that is, experienced and worldly women—rather than to women of her dove-like innocence (129).

Once again indicating the Marchioness's neglected responsibilities, the statue of Mercury makes its last appearance in conjunction with Clemencia's lack of preparation for marriage. Caballero gives an example of how a loving mother should help ease her daughter's transition into wifehood with assurances such as this one: "En breve ese hombre que aun te impone, te será íntimo y querido como me lo es a mí tu padre; no llores, no llores" (134). The author's choice of the verb "imponer" allows this phrase to allude simultaneously to the new obligations of wifehood, to the imposition of the husband's authority, and to the anxiety or fear that the groom may still inspire in the inexperienced bride.[8] The Marchioness has no such words for Clemencia, and neither has she prepared her ward for the realities of the wedding night and the sexual relationship that will follow. Clemencia's ignorance and nervous tears prompt Fernando to insult her and her convent upbringing, making their marriage unhappy and abusive from the very beginning. Her lack of knowledge, coupled with what is most certainly an unpleasant initiation into marital intimacy, leads her to cling to the chaste innocence of her upbringing even after it has been lost. For instance, on one occasion Clemencia is confused and ashamed to the point of bursting into tears and hiding her face when Fernando brings her a mythological illustration of a nude Venus and Adonis. Caballero explains this reaction with a symbolic reference to the Marchioness's failure to educate her niece: "En casa de su tía [. . .] solo el famoso Mercurio, envuelto el torso en una airosa banda, y adornado con alas, [. . .] había tenido el privilegio de bajar del Olimpo al patio de aquella morada. Así fue que apenas comprendió Clemencia lo que

miraban sus ojos" (139). Even in a setting far away from the Marchioness's courtyard, the statue reappears in the text in relation to Clemencia's deficient preparation for the sexual realities of marriage, a deficiency that exacerbates her incompatibility with the uncaring and worldly man to whom her aunt so hastily united her.

Cranes, Falcons, and Doves: Clemencia and her Relationships with Men

As the preceding paragraphs have demonstrated, Caballero uses bird and other winged images to emphasize the contrast between Clemencia's positive example of womanly behavior and the negative examples of her aunt and cousins. However, she also references various species of birds to symbolize the relationships that Clemencia has with the men in her life, relationships which range from abusive and predatory to paternal and loving. These bonds, along with the symbolism that accentuates their nature, continue to demonstrate Clemencia's ideal femininity through her reaction to each of the men in her life, whether it be her loving resignation to an abusive husband, her meek obedience to her guardians, or her rejection of a morally bankrupt suitor.[9]

The first of these relationships is her mercifully brief marriage to Fernando de Guevara. Even in an abusive marriage to a man who does not love her, Caballero stresses that Clemencia fulfills her role as the loving, long-suffering wife, who hopes all the while that her care will transform her husband into a better man. Caballero writes that "Clemencia se acercaba a él, y empezaba a verter los inagotables tesoros de interés y de consuelo que todo corazón de mujer abriga hacia su marido," and that "Como otra Santa Mónica, esperaba firmemente que Guevara tarde o temprano miraría la vida bajo su verdadero punto de vista, renunciando a la viciosa y disipada que llevaba, y que con la edad, su corazón se abriría a todas las virtudes y buenos sentimientos" (138, 140).[10] Sadly, despite her attempts to adapt to her situation, the marriage almost kills Clemencia's tender spirit because Fernando is a jealous man who verbally abuses his wife and socially isolates her by locking her in the house. This cruel confinement is embodied by Clemencia's caged pet bird, which becomes an even more conspicuous symbol of her crushed spirit when Fernando murders it in a fit of

sadistic jealousy. Caballero writes that Fernando "había llevado la locura de los celos y el placer de mortificarla hasta matar por su mano un pajarito que criaba Clemencia, que era su único compañero en la soledad" (136). The marriage causes Clemencia to fall into a deep depression, and like a "ruiseñor enjaulado," she wishes to return to her natural environment, here figured not as the freedom of the garden, but as the sheltered convent of her girlhood (141). Fortunately for Clemencia, Fernando dies in a campaign after only one year of marriage, but the effects of their brief union are unmistakable. Rather than feeling liberated from the marriage like a bird freed from its cage, Clemencia is so wretched and lonely that she wants to die and be reunited with Fernando in heaven where they could be happy together. Her identity is so intimately tied into the social and spiritual importance of her role as a wife—a role that is now impossible for her to fulfill—that she sees death as her only escape from a miserable situation. Even after time has assuaged her grief somewhat, she still wishes to die and for her soul to fly to God like a lark (155). The flight of the soul is the only true flight to freedom in a society where she is so strictly confined by her status as a woman.

Clemencia's spirit revives, however, in the second part of the novel when she goes to live under the paternal guardianship of her father-in-law Don Martín and his brother, the abbot, in the village of Villa-María. The large country house that they inhabit is at once an escape and another cage because although she is loved and appreciated there, she is also subjected to her guardians' well-meaning expectations. Don Martín is a rather larger-than-life country gentleman who is fond of repeating dozens of popular refrains that he applies to all situations and that the author often seems to load with symbolic significance. Near the opening of the second part, Caballero describes how Don Martín was never suited to city life, and that each time he returned from a visit to Seville, he would say of himself: "A tu tierra, grulla, mas que sea con un pie" (167). The image of a crane, towering in height over the other bird images in the text, is an apt one for Don Martín, who as the village's wealthy benefactor looks after his household and the surrounding community from his manor house. When Clemencia arrives, Don Martín is immediately taken with his daughter-in-law's beauty and sweet disposition—"Es un sol para la vista, un canario para el oído," he says—, and he begins to look after her as well, thinking of plans such as remarriage that will assure her future well-being. Thus

she becomes part of the family under his attentive eye and under the tutelage of the abbot, who watches out for her in a similar if more perceptive fashion (174).

The abbot is indirectly linked to Don Martín's crane image by virtue of his close relationship to his brother, and he is also directly connected to bird imagery in his loving and parental care for his niece. In describing the transformation of some dusty old rooms into Clemencia's elegant and comfortable quarters, Caballero attributes the change to the abbot, "cuya fina delicadeza y cuyo simpático cariño hacia ella habían querido embellecer y hacer dulce su nido a la sobrina que amaba, cual los pájaros tapizan con suaves plumas los de sus polluelos" (178). Though not quite a "mother hen," the abbot nevertheless fulfills a comparable function by feathering Clemencia's nest and by metaphorically giving her wings and teaching her to fly through instruction, moral guidance, and perhaps most importantly, the trust that he places in her ability to make her own decisions about marriage. In his parenting of Clemencia, the abbot contrasts with both the Marchioness, whose maternal neglect and mistrust hampers her chicks' ability to fly, and with Don Martín, who would snare his canary of a daughter-in-law into his own plans for her future.

Unlike Don Martín, who benevolently if misguidedly tries to make decisions on Clemencia's behalf, the abbot realizes that she will not be truly happy unless she finds the right partner and comes to the decision to remarry on her own. So, instead of taking advantage of her meek obedience to persuade her to marry, he essentially sets her free to fly even though it means she will be on her own after he and his brother are gone. His wisdom still guides her after his death, and the resolution of Clemencia's love dilemma in the novel's third part reminds the reader of his lesson that genuine happiness lies "en procurarse alas que nos eleven, no a las nubes, sino sobre ellas; pues las nubes [. . .] aunque en esfera aérea, son de terrestre origen, y a la tierra vuelven" (192). After being heartbroken by her sophisticated and self-interested suitor Sir George Percy in the novel's final part, Clemencia's womanly dignity "se alzó fuerte y brillante como el faro," a symbol that while distinct from the text's dominant bird imagery, still reflects the elevation and flight of the canary-like protagonist over worldly things represented by the cynical Englishman (346).[11]

Although the widowed Clemencia eventually has a chance to spread her wings independently in Seville, she is first subjected to a pleasant sort of caged captivity in Villa-María. Shortly after she arrives there, Don Martín repeats another of his sayings to her: "la viuda lozana, o casada o sepultada o emparedada" (174). This refrain signals the limitations that the walls of the manor hold for Clemencia, and it also prefigures Don Martín's plan to marry her to his nephew Pablo, an idea which leaves her anguished after the traumatic experience of her first marriage. Furthermore, although the country house is a happy, bustling place, it still has traits that reveal Clemencia's confinement: the many windows with iron grates and the small patio that she turns into a garden, which is described as "encerrado como un preso" by the walls of the house (174). Clemencia is literally "emparedada," and likewise, most of the birds that inhabit her garden are caged. They sing happily in their carefully tended home, though, and Clemencia thrives along with them. Villa-María may still be a place of confinement, but to be confined there, surrounded by people who have her best interests at heart, is infinitely better than to be locked in a lonely house by an unloving husband.

Like a larger version of a birdcage, the manor at Villa-María represents the limitations on the female sex present in Caballero's gender ideology; while she shows some glimmers of forward-thinking in the broad intellectual education that she allows her female protagonist, Caballero still envisions a woman's role as firmly placed within the family home.[12] This becomes particularly evident when Clemencia ventures outside of her in-laws' house. For instance, on one occasion she takes some of the local girls into the countryside to gather flowers, disregarding her mother-in-law's admonition that "el campo es para los lobos" (198). On this excursion, Clemencia does not meet any wolves, but she does have two encounters with symbolic animals. The first is a bird that the youngest of the girls appears to have squeezed to death, but when Clemencia reaches out for it, the creature revives and flies away. On one hand, the bird's revival and subsequent flight represent Clemencia's emotional recovery from her first marriage and her later journey into independence when she leaves Villa-María to set up her own household in Seville. On the other hand, it can be read as a foreshadowing of how Pablo, out of consideration for Clemencia's feelings, rejects Don Martín's plans for their marriage, thus setting her free to make her own decisions about the future.

The second symbolic encounter is with a rampaging bull that threatens Clemencia and the children with almost certain death before Pablo appears at the last moment to rescue them. Valis reads the bull as a symbol of the dangers of male sexuality and as a foreshadowing of the appearance of Sir George in the novel's final part. This interpretation of the bull is quite valid, especially considering that just as Pablo rescues her from the bull, the memory of his pure and self-sacrificing love helps rescue Clemencia from her dangerous attraction to Sir George. However, the threat of the bull can also be read in a broader sense as representing the dangers of feminine independence; outside of the family home, flying free like the revived bird, Clemencia is extremely vulnerable regardless of her wisdom or strength of character. With her excellent education from the abbot, Clemencia should be ideally suited to navigate independent life successfully, yet even she cannot escape its dangers without being significantly wounded.

The bull threatens Clemencia because she is out of place and unprotected, and when she moves to Seville following the deaths of Don Martín and the abbot, she is also out of her natural element. This seems to be reflected in the intriguing fact that the birds so prevalent in the first two parts of the novel become extremely scarce when Clemencia leaves for Seville. Indeed, her departure from Villa-María is foreshadowed by the removal of her birds from the garden; in her grief over the abbot's death, she orders the servants to take them away, and shortly thereafter she leaves the manor since she cannot honorably reside there with Pablo as a single woman (261). During Clemencia's time in the city, there are descriptions of flowers, gardens, and nature, but birds are conspicuously absent from her house and garden. Caballero uses a few figurative bird images that do not relate to the novel's main characters, and she only employs one that is explicitly connected to Clemencia. It is a telling metaphor, though, which likens Clemencia again to a dove and her suitor, Sir George, to a falcon (324).[13] This ominous image of predator and prey is compounded by the symbolic storm that brews over the city as their courtship becomes more intense. The natural world, which has tended to be a happy refuge for Clemencia, becomes threatening, and it seems that the birds have flown to safer havens. If her beloved birds are absent from Seville, Caballero seems to be indicating that Clemencia should be elsewhere

also. Her residence there as a young and desirable widow makes her vulnerable in a social circle inhabited by the likes of the cynical and experienced Sir George; though less independent, she was much more at home in the simple world Villa-María, surrounded by loving and like-minded people. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that as soon as the world of Villa-María re-emerges in the text, the birds immediately reappear along with it. When Pablo comes to Seville, one of the first things Clemencia does is to inquire about the birds she left behind in her garden, and when she finally returns to Villa-María, Caballero writes that "los pájaros lanzaban sus más alegres cantos como para darle la bienvenida," thus signaling her return to her natural environment (372).

In the novel's resolution, Caballero continues to use bird imagery to echo her protagonist's relationships in the contrast between Sir George's predatory desires and Pablo's pure and gentle love. After Sir George's cynical nature and aims at seduction leave Clemencia disillusioned and heartbroken, she passes through a sort of "dark night of the soul" as she wrestles with her emotions. By following the abbot's last lesson—"*la pasión es ciega, la razón ve claro; si luchan, haz que venza ésta*"—Clemencia evaluates her situation and, as mentioned above, she rises above her heartache to find a course that will lead to happiness (260). Having realized where and with whom she belongs, Clemencia summons Pablo to Seville and confesses her love for him. It is not a passionate, romantic love like she felt for Sir George, but rather a virtuous and reasoned affection that seems more suited for a brother than for a husband or lover. Valis notes that "No hint of evil or forbidden temptation is associated with Pablo for, despite his maleness, he is as nearly like Clemencia as the author could make him without falling into the trap of incest" (258). Pablo is no predatory falcon; rather, his similarity to Clemencia is marked in the bird references that are linked to both of them. One of the first bird images associated with Clemencia is the dove, and similarly, the first one applied to Pablo in the text appears when Don Martín compares his nephew's vigorous health to that of a "palomo buchón," that is, a dove whose chest looks more robust because of its inflated crop (234). The dove reflects not only Pablo's robustness, but also his gentle character and pure intentions, and since he is the only character besides Clemencia who is directly connected with this image, it is not surprising that they are paired at the end of the novel.

Furthermore, by virtue of his devotion to his family and the community of Villa-María, Pablo is also obliquely connected with another bird symbol that was rejected by his cousin Fernando: the rooster. Upon marrying, Fernando refused to settle down with the family in Villa-María because he would not give up his rowdy lifestyle to "acostar[se] con las gallinas y levantar[se] con los gallos" (131). Given the symbolic relationship between the hen and motherhood, one can replace the typical reading of the rooster as a sexual and phallic symbol with a more benign significance that refers to the father and family man that Pablo will later become, and that will complement Clemencia's new role as mother hen. Like Don Martín and the abbot before him, Pablo becomes the gentle patriarch who watches over his community and who lovingly cares for Clemencia. Indeed, his care for her has not diminished even in her absence from Villa-María; when they arrive back at the manor as a married couple, Clemencia finds that both her garden and her birds have flourished because Pablo has taken great pains to care for them himself. In contrast to his cousin Fernando, who jealously caged Clemencia and nearly killed her spirit along with her pet bird, Pablo relinquished Clemencia because he loved her, then continued to care for her, as symbolized in her birds, even after she rejected his simple and selfless affection. Although she does not feel a great passion for him, Clemencia has learned through her own experiences to value the tender, respectful love of a man who shares her moral foundation and her love of family life in the wholesome Spanish countryside.[14] Her decision to marry Pablo may seem to some like a capitulation to the desires of her father-in-law and the abbot, but returning at his side to the pleasant captivity of life at Villa-María does seem to represent her best possible choice, and given what the reader can infer from the bird symbolism in the text, it also seems to be the ideal one in Caballero's opinion.[15]

As mentioned in the introduction, Fernán Caballero is certainly not the only nineteenth-century Spanish author to use the image of the caged bird to reflect the limitations placed on women. Published almost two decades after *Clemencia*, Joaquina García Balmaseda's one-act play *Un pájaro en el garlito* (1871) makes an interesting contrast to the resolution of Caballero's novel in its treatment of the conflict between female independence and societal ideals. The play's protagonist, a young widow named Rosario, is happy to be "sola y libre como el

pájaro en el aire" before she is snared; that is, taught a lesson about the dangers of feminine independence by an impertinent suitor, Alberto, who deceives and antagonizes her during a night spent at an inn. As a woman travelling alone, she is nearly defenseless against Alberto's tricks, in which he is aided by the male staff of the inn. Exasperated, she finally surrenders to the feminine ideal of the time when she abruptly decides to marry Alberto and declares in the play's closing lines:

> Ay! No más independencia!
> tu esclava prometo ser,
> que por algo a la mujer
> la hizo esclava la experiencia.
> Yo llevaré con paciencia
> tu tiranía y rigor;
> ya no me causa temor,
> y con placer infinito,
> voy a dar el en garlito
> que me preparó tu amor. (22)

Like Rosario, Clemencia learns a lesson from experience about her best options in life, but unlike Balmaseda's protagonist, she is not tricked, trapped, and bullied into learning it by men. It is true that she suffers at Sir George's hands, but in the end, she does not let him manipulate her as she comes to her own decision about her future in a rational and independent fashion. Rather than embracing feminine servitude and male tyranny as Rosario purports to do, Clemencia braves the dangers of independence and then leaves it behind quite voluntarily to embrace a companionate marriage and a return to a home that she dearly loves.[16]

The end of the novel finds Clemencia and Pablo awaiting the birth of their first child, an event that will complete her identity as the ideal woman who is both the happy songbird that beautifies the home and the loving hen, mothering her chicks. As Charnon-Deutsch writes, the goal of most domestic novels "is not to imagine women as free from the social structures associated with family rearing or domestic responsibilities, but to grant them a say in the decisions that bind them to others either through love or duty, and [. . .] to help them imagine their work and their bonds of love as a consolation and the pathway to glory" (16). Fernán Caballero's goal in writing this novel was not to forge a new vision of women's roles, and as such the ideal woman in

her text is still figured ultimately as a caged bird, whether as an obedient chick in the feathered nest of her guardians or as a songbird in the walled garden that her husband has tended. However, in *Clemencia*, Caballero shows us how given the opportunity, a young woman can use her knowledge, experience, and reason to find a birdcage that instead of a prison is a refuge, a fragrant garden where the birds sing their happiest song to welcome her home.

NOTES

[1] Since other scholars have analyzed the relationship between Caballero's life and the novel, I will not review her biography in this article. For the most comprehensive study of her life and its relationship to *Clemencia*, see Herrero; for a more concise treatment of relevant biographical details, see Catherine Davies's chapter on Caballero in *Spanish Women's Writing, 1849–1996*.

[2] See Herrero's study for examples of the real-life people and situations that Caballero recorded in her works, such as one instance in which one of her contemporaries recognized in a novel a conversation he had witnessed years before (292). Herrero also points out the correspondence between the main characters of *Clemencia* and Caballero's family and acquaintances; for example, her three husbands are represented in the novel as Fernando de Guevara, Don Martín, and Pablo (296).

[3] Caballero's feminine ideal shares much in common with the *ángel del hogar*, the Victorian ideal that would gain great popularity in Spain during the latter half of the nineteenth century. There are various angel images in the novel, but they are not as prominent as either the bird images analyzed here or the garden images treated by Valis. For the purposes of this study I will not discuss the image of the angel despite its obvious ideological implications. For more on ideal womanhood in *Clemencia*, see Charnon-Deutsch's *Narratives of Desire* and my previous article, "Fernán Caballero's Lessons for Ladies: Female Agency and the Modeling of Proper Womanhood in *Clemencia*."

[4] Charnon-Deutsch writes the following about the lessons of motherhood in the domestic novel: "Women must be educated to the joys of domesticity through discipline and hard work. A mother's indulgence or lack of discipline will produce a daughter who fails to develop domestic and maternal instincts and who lives a life of dissatisfaction and sorrow" (19).

[5] Clemencia does not become a mother until after the conclusion of the novel (at which time she is pregnant), but at Villa-María she takes interest in the granddaughters

of the manor's cook, Juana, and exhibits motherly behavior toward them. When she takes them out into the countryside to gather flowers, for instance, she teaches them a lesson about charity, and when they are threatened by the bull, she cares for their safety as much as for her own (200–204). Despite Don Martín's vociferous complaints, Clemencia also mothers the gypsy girl who comes to his door, giving the girl money and bedclothes when she learns that the child has to sleep on the floor (190–91).

[6] Constancia's refusal to marry the Marquis is the most obvious failing that contributes to her downfall, but simple disobedience is not her greatest sin, which is in fact ingratitude and rancor toward her mother. She is haunted by a moment in which she told Clemencia that she did not love her mother, and that is the sin for which she seeks absolution by nursing her mother and devoting herself to religion (152, 271).

[7] Although the phrase "cabeza de chorlito" is not repeated, the Marchioness's lecture echoes later in the text when Clemencia meekly accepts Don Martín's plan for her to marry Pablo. Despite her extreme aversion to remarriage, she thinks of her desire to refuse the match "como un capricho poco cuerdo, como una indocilidad sin disculpa" (224).

[8] According to the dictionary of the Real Academia Española, three meanings of the verb "imponer" that could be operative here are 1) "Poner una carga, una obligación u otra cosa," 2) "Infundir respeto, miedo o asombro," and 3) "Hacer valer su autoridad o poderío" ("Imponer" defs. 1, 3, 9).

[9] Caballero's use of Clemencia's relationships to define her as the ideal woman is typical of the gender ideology of the era. As Catherine Jagoe observes, "[La mujer] Estaba destinada a ser, según los dos tópicos de la época, *hija, esposa y madre*, y el *ángel del hogar*; es decir, un ser definido en términos de sus relaciones con otros de su familia" (33).

[10] Clemencia's behavior reflects a trend in nineteenth-century domestic ideology summed up by Jagoe: "Queda patente en los miles de escritos sobre el tema de la misión de la mujer que, según sus autores, el verdadero trabajo cultural de la mujer burguesa se hallaba en el terreno afectivo y moral. Ella era una fuente inagotable de amor, dulzura, suavidad, consuelo y bienestar. Nunca se le notaba el más leve indicio de irritabilidad, impaciencia, frialdad, hostilidad, odio o ira, porque estas cosas pertenecían al hombre y al duro y competitivo mundo público" (30).

[11] Herrero identifies Sir George with a worldly materialism that dries up the spirit and the capacity to love (216–17), while Klibbe writes that Clemencia's rejection of the Englishman represents "the refusal to accept the nineteenth-century currents of positivism, irreverence, cynicism, and amorality (117).

[12] Clemencia's moral and intellectual education under the tutelage of the abbot seems to range far beyond the standard instruction recommended for nineteenth-century Spanish women; however, Caballero makes it very clear in the novel that while a woman should be well-educated, she should not show off her knowledge. The abbot, who is Caballero's most direct mouthpiece in the novel, warns her: "Lo que aprendas, líbrete Dios de lucirlo, pues harías de un bálsamo un veneno" (180). See Davies for more on Caballero's opinions about women's education and the dissimulation of female intellectual superiority.

[13] Although the other predatory male of the text, Fernando de Guevara, is not connected with the image of the falcon, he can be associated with it by extension, since Caballero uses a key repetition of language to connect Sir George's jealous behavior with the cruelties of Clemencia's first husband. Caballero describes Fernando's

treatment of Clemencia with the phrase "las más despóticas exigencias" (136), and later, when Sir George demands that Clemencia send away the viscount, declaring, "Yo no sufro rivales," she answers, "Ni yo exigencias despóticas" (339).

[14] Charnon-Deutsch writes that "it is only because Clemencia is left alone for a lengthy period that she comes to see clearly that what she wants is a duplicate of her (docile) self, someone capable of turning his back on the deceptions of 'gran cultura' (high culture)" (26). Since Pablo shared in Clemencia's exquisite moral and intellectual education with the abbot, he fulfills this desire far better than her other suitors.

[15] While Charnon-Deutsch sees Clemencia's trajectory as a an important step forward in female agency (23), Valis writes that in marrying Pablo, "Clemencia has at last accepted and fulfilled the fervent desires of her father-in-law" (259). The ending of the novel is not entirely satisfactory since Clemencia's chaste love for Pablo seems to pale in comparison to her passion for Sir George, but I find marriage to Pablo to be her best possible choice given 1) Pablo's selfless love and his seeming consideration of Clemencia as an equal, and 2) the strong social stigma against spinsters in Spanish society, which she would have risked suffering if she had remained unmarried.

[16] In her analysis of the play, Andrea Smith questions the sincerity of Rosario's final words, writing, "Visto que García Balmaseda emplea una metáfora fuerte como el motivo de la obra, es improbable que utilizara fortuitamente este lenguaje cargado de opresión. Además, las últimas palabras de la protagonista salen en verso, no en prosa, lo que pone en tela de juicio su verosimilitud dentro de la obra. Es una cosa proponer que la mujer abnegada priorice la felicidad de su familia más que su propia dicha, pero es completamente distinto sugerir que la mujer puede tolerar, y aun gozar 'con placer infinito,' un estado de esclavitud." (41).

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