LIFE-WRITING IN EUROPE: PRIVATE LIVES, PUBLIC SPHERES AND BIOGRAPHICAL INTERPRETATIONS
University of Oxford, 20–21 April, 2012

THE QUEEN'S TWO BODIES: BEYOND PRIVATE AND PUBLIC IN THE BIOGRAPHY OF ISABEL II OF SPAIN

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In 1986, the Fine Arts Section of the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid acquired two portfolios containing a total of 89 watercolours on satirical political themes which included a high percentage of clearly pornographic images. Outstanding among them were pictures that showed Queen Isabel II in indecent postures together with other individuals in similar attitudes, including her confessor, Father Claret, Sister Patrocinio, the so-called "Nun of the Stigmata", the King Consort, Francisco de Asís, the last president of Isabel's Council of Ministers, Luis González Bravo, and the Queen's notorious lover on the eve of the revolution of 1868 which removed her from the throne.

The watercolours are signed with the pseudonym SEM, and in the first of the series the figure of a woman wearing a long tunic lifts aside a canopy to reveal Queen Isabel in an obscene posture with her dress raised and with her crown and sceptre flung down on the floor. The title at the top is *Los Borbones en pelota* (The Bourbons in the Buff).[1] The themes of these watercolours clearly point to the period 1868–1869, the first year of the new, and fragile, democratic regime which was ushered in after the dethroning of Queen Isabel II.

After consultation with specialists, the watercolours and their titles were initially attributed to two unlikely individuals: the famous post-Romantic poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer and his brother, a genre painter. The former features in the Spanish literary canon of the

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[1] Or *naked stripped*. It is difficult to translate.

nineteenth century as a poet of exquisite sensibility – all Spanish girls of my generation recited his poems at school – and a conservative political tendency has always been attributed to him. These factors, together with the characteristics of the material, served to accentuate its strangeness and the ensuing debate.

As yet, the authorship of the watercolours has not yet been completely clarified. I share the idea of some recent studies on nineteenth-century iconography and literature that SEM must have been a collective pseudonym to which artists of very varied political affiliations contributed, ranging from radical republicans to conservatives such as the Bécquer brothers. However, this point is not what the present talk is going to be about.

What I wish to do is to propose a historical analysis of this awkward material (about whose existence we had only indirect references) which is exceptional but at the same time representative of a phenomenon of a decisive cultural and political order: the use of the Queen's body and supposed sexual perversions to delegitimize[2] the monarchy, to bring about a loss of respect among broad sectors of the population and ultimately to create a favourable climate and also moral justification for the revolution that dethroned her in 1868.

However awkward it may be, I think it needs to be examined carefully from a historical viewpoint, because in its distorting mirror it is possible to get a better idea of the kind of values that were associated with the constitutional monarchy at the time and what was expected of it, not only in the realm of politics but also in the cultural, social and moral sphere. With all its heterodoxy and singularity it has, in my opinion, a broad potential for political signification, as has been shown by studies in recent decades on the satirical political and pornographic iconography (prints, paintings and, later, photographs and photomontages) concerning the European monarchies and, more

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[2] Implying demystification and desacralization. Issues related to the anti-clericalism of these watercolours can be further discussed during the debate.

generally, women and power. The best-known case is that of Marie-Antoinette, and, of course, the work of Lynn Hunt, but in recent studies similar processes and mechanisms of political and moral delegitimation have been observed in other European countries in the final decades of the eighteenth century and early decades of the nineteenth. For example, in relation to the last Hanover monarchs before the reign of Queen Victoria; or the Papacy and the royal family of Naples during the conflictive process of the unification of Italy, and, considerably later, the campaign to defame Tsarina Alexandra during the various phases of the Russian Revolution.

An analysis of this material forms part of my biography of Queen Isabel II, though not treated systematically. What I wish to explore here is why and in what way it is important for that biography and, more broadly, for a better understanding of the first consolidated attempt at constitutional monarchy in Spain.

Before continuing I would like to clarify a few points of a theoretical and methodological nature. I am convinced (as a historian) that the statement that there is no history without a problem must also be applied to biographical studies. In other words, there is no biography that is of interest without an interesting problem to give it an orientation, going beyond the particular, singular interest of the individual whose biography it is.

The historical problem that has guided this biography can be summed up in two questions: What role was played by the monarchy in the process of the consolidation and functioning of the liberal regime in Spain? And what form was taken by the tension between Crown and Parliament, which in Spain, as in the rest of Europe, was consubstantial with the constitutional monarchy throughout its historical development?

However, in connection with these problems, for several decades the disparagement of biography, associated with the more conventional political history, spread suspicion about the intrinsically

personal, elitist nature of any work of biography devoted to great figures, such as kings or queens, who featured over-prominently in the efforts of the old "top-down" political history. Yet not the least of the paradoxes associated with this suspicion was the fact that an enormous amount of (usually negative) responsibility continued to be attributed to those "great figures" in the determination of the historical processes in which they were immersed.

In this respect, the case of Queen Isabel II was paradigmatic. In general terms, historiography had accepted the explanation of the liberals of the time (including a good many monarchical politicians) that, in the final analysis, one of the crucial obstacles for normal functioning of the constitutional regime had been the behaviour of the Crown, and therefore of the Queen herself, whose personal limitations were one of the fundamental causes for discredit of the monarchy.

This was an explanation that did not convince me, from either a historical or a theoretical, methodological viewpoint. It ran the risk precisely of over-personalising a far more complex historical process and gave too much prominence to the individual as opposed to factors of a more impersonal, collective nature – values connected with the conception of politics in those years, the party struggle, the tensions that derived from the problems of governability in the period after the Spanish liberal revolution, and so on.

At any rate, it seemed to me a convenient, escapist explanation to account for the failure of the first attempt at post-revolutionary constitutional monarchy in Spain. Certainly it was a very useful explanation for monarchists of all kinds, because it saved the institution and transformed the maladjusted personality of Isabel II into an unfortunate accident of history or chance.

There was still a good deal of scope, in my opinion, for making a more profound analysis, not only of *why* but also of *how*, in all the history that so easily dissolved into the rose-coloured or black legend

of Queen Isabel. I was interested in the process of the fabrication of that figure, the kind of power that she did or did not succeed in attaining; and the scope and limits of her responsibility in the deterioration of the image of the monarchy, in the perversion of the functioning of parliament and government, and so on. I cannot, of course, deal with all the implications of all these questions in a short talk like this. I shall concentrate on just a few points of interest.

Firstly, we must bear in mind that the problem I am addressing had a transnational dimension (affecting all European nineteenth-century monarchies) and it is in this way that it must be treated. Secondly, the most recent studies show it to be a problem that is not only political but also cultural in a broad sense. In other words, on the European post-revolutionary scene the compatibility of monarchy and liberalism was resolved not only in the sphere of politics, in the strict sense, but also, decisively, in the sphere of the cultural values and meanings associated with the new society that was beginning to move from the old world of the aristocracy (based on privilege) to that of the middle classes, based (rhetorically, at least) on work, merit and talent.

In the nineteenth century – and also, to some extent, now, as has been shown, for example, by Michael Billig for England – when one talks about monarchy one is also talking about privilege and/or equality, about nationality, morality, family, the roles of women and men, of parents and children.[3] Approval or disapproval of the actions of monarchs includes moral values, perspectives and assumptions. It also includes expectations about public *representation* of all these assumptions, which can link up with the perceived image of the nation as the ultimate moral and political authority. Respect for royalty thus begins to cease to be something consubstantial, magical or religious, and progresses (by fits and starts) towards the current

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[3] Michael Billig, *Talking of the Royal Family*, London, Routledge, 1992. Issues about the relationship between "banal nationalism" and "banal monarchism" can be also discussed during the debate.

majority perception that this respect must be deserved and earned day by day.

In this process, the nineteenth century was crucial. It was then that kings and queens began to find themselves obliged to adapt their political and private behaviour, and public representation of both, to the new rules that were marked out by the gradual (but also uneasy) consolidation of liberalism throughout western Europe. The changes in this respect did not take place on separate planes, developing simultaneously or subordinated mechanically to each other. On the contrary, they constantly intersected, reinforcing or obstructing each other, and, most decisive of all, mutually symbolising each other in the eyes of public opinion. Similarly, they were experienced by the monarchs themselves throughout the difficult process of adaptation (or not) of their behaviour to the political culture and moral world of liberalism.

The effectiveness of the monarchy in the construction of the new nation-states depended increasingly on retaining a margin of manoeuvre for themselves that came not only from their legislative or executive capacity but also from the accumulation of an adequate reserve of symbolic power. The materials that accumulated this new "symbolic capital" were diverse and sometimes contradictory, and they varied in the course of the nineteenth century and in different European cultures.

Looking beyond factors of some other particular nature, the symbolic effectiveness of the monarchic institution as a force for preservation and orderly change – in relation to the chaos brought about by the revolution and also the moral and political corruption of absolutism – was bound up with the ability of the post-revolutionary dynasties to *represent* the adaptation of the old forms of aristocratic behaviour to the great bourgeois narrative of domesticity as the "cradle of the middle class" and the kaleidoscope of its cultural and moral values. Values that obviously had a strong and decisive gender

connotation. In this regard, the learning of the office of constitutional monarch – as Leopold of Belgium advised Queen Victoria- required the monarch to be ready to subject his domestic life to the basic norms of behaviour of his subjects or, at least, that part of them who felt themselves to be represented and protected by the new constitutional monarchy. Historical understanding of this kind of monarchy therefore requires analyses that cut across all these planes of activity, transcending the formal distinction between *public* and *private* and establishing the connections existing between the doctrinal discourses, cultural values and public practices set in motion *by* and *about* the new nineteenth-century monarchies.

Like any other component of any discourse intended to cushion social and political conflict, the monarchic discourse had to act both vertically and horizontally: towards the working classes and middle classes, but also among the elites. In both directions, the reserve authority of the monarchy could not be openly or directly instrumental. In other words, in order to survive, the monarchy had to project itself as basically neutral and therefore capable of representing the nation as a whole.

From the very outset, in Isabel II's Spain, this myth never functioned and was not allowed to function. One of the conservative politicians closest to the Court, Isabel II's private secretary in the months prior to the beginning of her reign (at the imprudent age of thirteen), wrote to the morganatic husband of the Queen's mother: "The progressives do not need the Monarch to be strong because they have the support of the mob (...) The moderates, in order to be strong, do not need the mob because they have the support of the throne: but where will our strength come from if we do not have the support of the throne or the mob? You will say it is sad to release one's hold on the prey." From the very outset of her reign, as I have said, the so-called moderate party conceived of Queen Isabel as the hunter's prey, as a sequestered power.

Here I cannot go into the whole political process set in motion by this distinctly partisan option. But I think that detailed analysis of it shows that the clearly instrumental nature of the Queen and the monarchy was lethal, not only for the other monarchic parties (such as the so-called progressives) but also even for the internal stability of the conservatives. Moreover, what I wish to argue here is that the **capacity of the Crown, and particularly of Isabel II, to produce political and moral destabilisation was not the ultimate cause of the lack of consensus of Isabelline liberalism but a phenomenon inherent in Isabelline liberalism itself.**

It is within this framework of interpretation – seeking to go beyond distinctions between public and private, political and personal – that aspects seldom treated seriously hitherto become meaningful, such as Queen Isabel's amorous or sexual behaviour, the conditions of her systematic transgression of the models of middle-class femininity (the angel of the hearth or the Christian mother), and their repercussions on the growing political and symbolic delegitimation of the monarchy.

The idea of exploring the relationships between the moral world of the private experience of subjects and political criticisms of the system has changed our perspective of such disparate phenomena as, for example, the French Revolution or British radicalism. It may also do so with regard to the problems of political and symbolic consolidation of the constitutional monarchy in Europe, avoiding the danger of considering the study of the intimate personal behaviour of kings and queens as unnecessary (or obscene) and also that of treating it by way of a more or less dissimulated form of historical pornography. It is the only way in which it makes sense to deal with a work such as *Los Borbones en pelota*, which proves exceptionally useful for reflecting on how explicitly normative features of the

personal moral world may shape the rhetoric of politics and define the areas of denunciation or conflict in public life.[4]

What I wish to argue is that the public image of Queen Isabel II – which, in the long run, was so lethal for the prestige of the monarchy and, beyond that, of the objective materials with which it could be constructed – was the ambivalent result of the cultural responses of the age to three questions that historians normally analyse independently. Firstly, the discussion about the power that should be attributed to the monarchy in the liberal political world of the first half of the nineteenth century. Secondly, the debate about the social value assigned to women and the role of the family in liberal society. Thirdly, the political and cultural effects of the formal distinction between private and public areas of social experience and action that liberalism sought to impose while at the same time constantly subverting it.

I shall now try to give an account of some of the basic results of this cross-analysis of political and cultural variables.

Firstly, the more conservative liberalism undoubtedly succeeded in imposing its will on other political families and converting Isabel's monarchy into a strictly party monarchy. I am interested in the practical consequences of this situation, which were unforeseen and unwanted by the conservatives themselves, and explosive for the stability of the representative system as a whole.

On the one hand, in not conceiving of any way of strengthening their position as a party other than by strengthening the power of the Crown, the conservatives depended strictly on their ability to take control of or manipulate the royal power. This position inevitably converted them into a "Court" party, and so they could not help losing authority over the Crown and finding themselves being taken over instead of taking over. This is exactly what happened in the mid

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[4] Jo Burr Margadand, "Gender, vice and the political imaginary in postrevolutionary France. Reinterpreting the failure of the July Monarchy, 1830-1848", *American Historical Review* (1999), 1461-1496.

1850s and later, in the final years of Isabel's reign, bringing about the 1868 revolution. Like Victor Frankenstein, they had created a monster that turned against its creator and threatened their power and survival.

On the other hand, in a closely related process, the search for royal favour, increasingly separate from the parliamentary game, exacerbated the latent internal divisions among the conservatives (a party of accretion, in which former revolutionary liberals coexisted with Isabelline absolutists and ex-Carlists) to the extent of reproducing among them the political Cainism that had characterised their relationships with the progressives until then.

The disintegration of the conservatives affected the Crown in two ways, adding to its power in the short term and in the long term weakening it. On the one hand, it created a margin of independent power for the Crown, based on the maxim of *divide et impera* which had such a long tradition in Bourbon political culture. On the other, and not necessarily in contradiction, it dragged the monarchy – specifically, Isabel and her all-powerful mother – into getting involved in internal conflicts between the various factions in the party. An involvement that thus, from the outset, blocked any possibility that the monarchy might become an institution of regulation or arbitration, not only between conservatives and liberals but even among the moderates themselves.

In this way – as a result of the undesired effects of the political practice to which it gave rise – the partisan takeover of royal power ended up as a kind of political boomerang for the monarchy as an institution and for the inner cohesion of moderatism, which was the sine qua non for its political authority over the Crown. However, it was also lethal for the monarchy itself as an institution, because it was precisely in its extreme power in the short term that the conditions for its long-term powerlessness began to form.

The result, by the end of the reign, was a tremendous political entropy in which the forces of the constitutional parties and those of the Crown obstructed and neutralised each other. The Queen certainly attained great power, but it was always the negative power of *not letting things be done* rather than the positive power of *doing* (in one sense or another) which was possessed by other European monarchs, such as Louis Philippe of Orleans, Leopold of Belgium or Napoleon III.

The fragmentation of the parties and the clearly partisan option that the Crown was forced to take placed the Queen in a position of very high political and personal visibility, and, in the utterly Cainite struggle (without any moderation, control or limits) that in those circumstances broke out between parties and party factions, it was this that converted her private life into a further weapon for political combat. As was written by Howden, at that time British ambassador in Madrid: "Here the monarchy is no longer conceived as other than a party monarchy and all the parties and factions defend themselves rather than the Crown and attack or protect it depending on whether they are in power or not … In no party or faction is there a genuine monarchic feeling as we understand it, they all despise the royal family, and they despise it all the more they need it."

This brings me to the last issue that I wish to address. I believe that from the mid 1850s onwards Isabel II's political and symbolic position demonstrated the Queen's personal and political incapacity to exercise power personally, to reign and govern by keeping the majority parties, most especially the moderate party, in subjection to the authority of the Crown. Isabel II's extreme symbolic weakness made it impossible for her to preside over the fight between the parties because in order to be able to do so (in order to be able to give power or take it away from political factions so thoroughly at odds with each other) she would have had to have had a margin of symbolic authority and power never accorded to her by any political group or party.

Isabel II's broad margin for detailed manoeuvre was thus revealed, at a deeper level, as a substantial inability to set herself up over the parties as an unquestioned and unquestionable institution; or even over the moderate factions and the opposing interests of the royal family. Parties, factions and family that did not hesitate to use the Queen's "private vices" to weaken her politically, thus discrediting the robust monarchy that they said they wished to establish and respect.

In this great crisis of values (which ultimately brought about the 1868 revolution) Isabel II's private behaviour – and this is the viewpoint from which it is interesting to analyse it – was primarily used by liberalism and, within it, by broad sectors of the conservative party itself as political material for launching accusations. In fact, it was the more reactionary members of the latter party (together with the King) who were the first channels for rumours about the Queen's lovers and doubts about the paternity of her children. The Scottish writer Fanny Calderón de la Barca – married to a Spanish politician and diplomat – expressed it thus in a book intended for English-speaking readers. The game of hypocrisy and double morality was habitual in high society in Madrid. For a married woman whose conduct was careless, "the worst she has to dread is a legal separation (…) There (in England, says one of the characters), she may be coldly received in society – here (in Madrid), she finds herself on a level with the most virtuous of her sex".

The Queen may have been particularly imprudent, yet the release of rumours about her lovers invariably came from courtiers or politicians resentful because of their lack of access to the patronage that the favourite could dispense. "It is the old story of the French revolution. The abuse of the queen came at first from the higher classes. It was caught up by the vulgar; and when the public passions were let loose the nobles found themselves the first victims, and

could no longer stay the tempest they had themselves undesignedly aided in raising."[5]

In this regard, the double morality had to do not only with the fact that what was accepted in all men (and in all kings, before and after) was not accepted in that particular woman and queen. This distinction was not, strictly speaking, a double morality, but a profound cultural value of the time with regard to the different nature and functions of men and women.

The real duplicity had to do with the fact that Isabel II's lovers acquired political visibility when their function of patronage and access to the royal will was not sufficiently shared out. The very individuals who, in conditions of power or potential access to it, bowed down like reeds before all of the Queen's private eccentricities, did not hesitate to drag her name through the mud when that power slipped away from them.

The problem, therefore, was not only that Isabel II's love life clashed increasingly with the cultural conventions of the middle class concerning the conduct of respectable women (though that, too, was a problem). But the fundamental difficulty, at least at that point in the evolution of nineteenth-century Spanish society, was that the Queen's deviation from the middle-class ideal of the angel of the hearth (or of the Christian mother) became a powerful symbol (on a moral level) of the Crown's desire of political independence.

To check this independence, liberal politicians (from the whole political spectrum) did not hesitate to promote an increasingly deranged and brutalised public image of the Queen, articulated (as happened with Marie-Antoinette and Tsarina Alexandra) by way of a kind of criticism of a strongly misogynistic, sexist nature. A political pornographic criticism that, in my view, revealed the profound anxiety of the liberals of the time with regard to a dangerous double

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[5] Fanny Calderón de la Barca, *The attaché in Madrid; or Sketches of the Court of Isabella II*, New York, D. Appleton and Co., 1856; pp. 61-62 and p. 95.

display of independence: the political independence of the monarchy and the independence of female sexuality that the Queen seemed to embody. A double independence that was perceived as especially dangerous by a society caught up in a shift of values and with a very low degree of consensus among the political actors involved, attempts to resolve which were made precisely via the shield of monarchic legitimacy, on both a symbolic and a political level.

Therefore the scandals related to Isabel II's personal life were not trivial matters or some kind of pre-political opposition, as has occasionally been believed. On the contrary, they pointed directly to the relationship between power and virtue that should ideally preside over the workings of the constitutional regime.[6] A relationship that was a crucial mechanism of symbolic appropriation of the monarchy by the liberal nation, as opposed to the independence, corruption and moral decadence of absolutism.

From all these viewpoints, paraphrasing Kantorowicz, the Queen's *second body*, the more immaterial and the more effective one, was her woman's body.[7] It was this female body, converted into something grotesquely material and sexual, that was later dragged through the mud in the political pornography of *Los Borbones en pelota*.

I cannot go into this further here. I will only note that in all the cases that I have analysed, and also in the case of Spain, from the very outset – especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the periods that I know best – political pornography has served two purposes, and it is worth reflecting on the link between them, in which, to a large extent, its interest as historical material resides. On the one hand, it certainly provides the possibility of giving free rein to desires considered sinful, to a lust that the prevailing morality

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[6] See, as an example, Anna Clark, "Queen Caroline and the sexual politics of popular culture in London, 1820", *Representations* 31 (1990), 47- 68

[7] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology,* Princeton University Press (Madrid, Alianza, 1985).

condemns, to desires for sexual domination and/or humiliation, to sexism and misogyny. On the other, it seeks to personalise, to explain political actions in a primary way, offering the key to their most *natural*, secret and most *private* origin. *Bedroom politics*, the epitome of politics out of control, subjected to the lowest and most disgraceful passions – a politics that arouses both fascination and repugnance – is the great target of political pornography. It is also the measure of its effectiveness as primary language of general delegitimation which evades and erases shades of meaning.

The unbridled lust attributed to the Queen also served to symbolise the aberrant power of the monarchy (through the Queen's aberrant sexual power and independence) and to give free rein – through the respectable format of political criticism or intention – to misogyny and the more or less disturbing fantasies that the sublime models of middle-class womanliness deleted and suppressed. Group sex, sodomy, lesbian scenes, fellation, zoophilia, etc. follow in succession in the most grotesque possible form. Thus political criticism of the performance of the monarch and her responsible governments is supplanted or devoured – subjected, really – to the moral denigration of the female that alters the assigned roles and powers. Rather similar, certainly, to what happened with the substantial differences between the trials of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette.

This use of pornographic images is not, of course, of a descriptive nature – nobody could seriously believe that Isabel II had sexual relations with her confessor, with Sister Patrocinio or with a donkey. On the contrary, it is of a performative, symbolic nature. Once one can produce or *make* allusions of this kind, it is possible to justify anything that may be *done* with regard to the Queen in the political context.

In this context, I share the concern of Vivian R. Gruder (in her analysis of the libels against Marie-Antoinette) regarding certain

forms of verbal hyperbole that might ultimately lead one to imagine that the French Revolution – or, in the case that I am considering, the 1868 revolution – were the result of scandals related to the sex life of Queen Marie-Antoinette or Isabel II. And, further, that the supposedly licentious life of these two women and their various ways of destabilising the prevailing standards of womanly conduct were the ultimate *cause* of revolution. As I have attempted to bring out in this talk, the point at issue is much more complex. In this respect, the objective data about the sexual activities of these queens are of historical and cultural value in the broadest sense, inasmuch as they were subordinate to the intentions and mechanisms by which they were *fabricated* and *represented* in the public sphere; in connection with political conflicts which used that personal life as a weapon of political combat that affected many other factors, such as financial corruption, party exclusiveness, the problems of parliamentarisation of the monarchy and public participation, the threats of political reaction, and so on.[8]

The fact that the cultural values associated with respectable women were used to legitimise or delegitimise a particular institution, in this case the constitutional monarchy, must not lead us to suppose that the particular behaviour of women (in one sense or another of whatever we may describe as *objective*) bore the ultimate responsibility for political action or was its keystone. However, if we understand politics in a broader sense we may say that these standards of cultural meaning acted, at a profound level, on the very core of the common sense of the time, as symbols of the corruption, paralysis and perversion of the body politic.

In my view, returning to my opening argument, they also served to sweep aside the proper responsibilities of the body politic in its totality and concentrate them in the body and deranged

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[8] Vivian R. Gruder, "The Question of Marie-Antoinette: The Queen and the Public Opinion before the Revolution", *French History* 16.3 (2002); pp. 269-298.

personality of the Queen and in a small company of scapegoats: the effeminate King, the ambitious lover, the corrupt confessor – Father Claret – and the manipulative, miraculous nun – Sister Patrocinio. Historical analysis was thus conveniently converted into a grotesque pantomime.

The carnival element alters the fixed hierarchies and identities of sexual identity and power, but it also reinforces them by their comic, inverted use. It does not question the more conservative moral assumptions, it confirms them. It is on the underlying stability of these assumptions that the possibility and efficacy of their transgression depends. The carnival is a mechanism of subversion but also a safety valve for moments of conflict and situations of profound powerlessness. Similarly, the elements of transgression in the grotesque aspects do not automatically imply political or moral progressiveness. I believe there is something of this in the watercolours of *Los Borbones*, or at least in the strictly pornographic ones and the ones that refer to the world of the circus or the theatre. In the end, Queen Isabel is simply a cabaret prostitute dressed up as a queen. The significance of true royalty and genuine monarchy and the true position and identity of women remain untouched. We have only to wait for the carnival to end.

I think this is important for an understanding of the particular mechanisms of the recomposition of the Bourbon monarchy just six years later, in the form of Isabel II's son (Alfonso XII), whose fundamental contribution was to accept partial withdrawal from the political arena and, above all, to preside over the turn-taking of all the monarchic parties.

This last allusion brings me to a conclusion that is surprising only in appearance. A good demonstration of the vitality and strength of Spanish liberalism, contrasting with all that has been said about its weakness and internal contradictions, is that it finally succeeded (despite the formidable obstacles against it) in subduing the Bourbon

monarchy sufficiently for it to have to acknowledge in the end that Crown and Parliament were obliged to arrive at compromises. In this process it was also necessary to subdue the two bodies of the Queen: not only the political body but also the body of a woman who had gone on living in the old world of the aristocratic values of the past. From then on, all subsequent queens had to adapt to the standards of womanly conduct of the liberal middle classes, as a measure of their capacity for taking on the new constitutional monarchy, both politically and symbolically.

Valencia, April 2012