



**Mapping the Social Body: Urbanisation, the Gaze,  
and the Novels of Galdós (North Carolina Studies  
in the Romance Languages and Literatures)**



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# Mapping the Social Body: Urbanisation, the Gaze, and the Novels of Galdós (North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures)

Collin McKinney

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Influenced by trends in medicine, town planning and social etiquette, Madrid's middle class viewed urban growth with apprehension in the second half of the nineteenth century. In *Mapping the Social Body*, Collin McKinney examines manifestations and critiques of that reaction in the work of Benito Perez Galdos, Spain's greatest modern novelist. Drawing on a wide range of recent cultural theory as well as contemporary non-literary texts, this book provides modern readers with a metatextual map of Galdos's Madrid and Spanish society as they experienced urbanisation.

In a century obsessed with all things visual, the map became a useful model with which the recently formed middle class hoped to reform a social body ravaged by disease, crime, prostitution, and class conflict. This study finds that Galdos's attitude toward the middle class and its mapping enterprise changes over time. Whereas his early novels depict dividing practices as reliable and perhaps necessary, his later works show Spain's social maps to be subjective and discriminatory. In *La desheredada*, *Tormento*, and *La de Bringas* the social body is mapped according to class, genealogy, gender and physical difference. Physically and morally ambiguous, the characters in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, *Nazarin*, and *Misericordia* are unmappable and thus resistant to the bourgeois categorising gaze.

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About the Author

Collin McKinney is assistant professor of Spanish at Bucknell University.

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