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**Fashion, Ekphrasis, and the Avant-Garde Novel: Carmen de Burgos's *La mujer fantástica* (1924)**

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Although both historians and literary scholars have foregrounded the social consciousness of prolific Spanish author Carmen de Burgos, or “Colombine” (1867-1932), particularly in terms of her engagement with feminist issues like marriage and divorce, women’s education, and labor reform, still little attention has been paid to her less socially-compromised narrative fiction. Specifically, her 1924 novel *La mujer fantástica*, in which a perpetually dissatisfied, self-proclaimed “fantastic” female protagonist travels throughout Europe in search of love, fame, and eternal youth, has received virtually no critical attention. (1) Yet this novel is a curious fusion of traditional or popular narrative strategies and innovative avant-garde features, and its engagement with themes such as modern femininity, cosmopolitanism, and contemporary taboos like abortion, divorce, prostitution, and homoerotic relationships, merits further critical study. To open this conversation, this essay will examine the novel’s depiction of an aspect of culture that intersects with various aspects of modernity: fashion (*la moda*), particularly as it relates to both women’s self-representation and the Spanish Avant-garde. My analysis will demonstrate how Burgos employs ekphrastic principles to establish a connection between fashion and the fine arts, thus narrativizing her argument in her 1922 women’s manual, *El arte de ser mujer*, that the multifarious facets of female fashion – including dress selection, makeup, hairstyles, accessories, and even perfume combinations (all part of *thetoilette*) – deserve consideration as complex and admirable

forms of modern art, comparable to painting, architecture, and music (37-38) (2). Despite literary scholars' claims that Burgos remained at the margins of the Spanish Avant-garde (3), *La mujer fantástica*'s facetious tone and ambiguous interartistic references in fact serve as clever literary devices that create a hybrid novel replete with paradox: it is both playful and erudite; popular and exclusive; superficial and serious. On the one hand, it celebrates aspects of modern, cosmopolitan life and innovation, fitting within what Peter Bürger has referred to as avant-garde art's tendency to break with the past and insert itself into the absolute present, the "praxis of life" (22). Yet on the other hand, the work is imbued with playful, suggestive, and ambiguous artistic and historical references that bring to mind José Ortega y Gasset's description of *arte nuevo* as a game or irony, lacking in all transcendence (24). In fact, as I argue here, *La mujer fantástica* exhibits nearly all of the characteristics of avant-garde art (in a literary context) set forth by Ortega y Gasset, with the notable exception of the two principles most closely associated with explicit "deshumanización." (4). Thus by capturing material aspects of the fleeting present through detailed descriptions of fashion and urbanity, while at the same time developing a ludic meditation on art, *La mujer fantástica* becomes a paragon of the contradictory, hybrid nature of avant-garde activity in Spain. (5).

To summarize briefly, *La mujer fantástica* follows the adventures of a female protagonist, Elena, as she progresses from a young girl of about twenty to an older, middle-aged woman. A notable lack of precise temporal references makes it difficult to perceive the passage of time, but several clues suggest that Elena is possibly approaching fifty by the end of the novel. This would imply a twenty- or thirty-year time span within the tale; however, the narrative maintains the illusion of a constant present, featuring

episodes that seemingly always occur in the 1920s, or at least during the early decades of the twentieth century. Significantly, while the action takes place across numerous cities and countries throughout Europe, including Switzerland, Germany, and France, not a single event or encounter actually unfolds in Spain. These non-Spanish settings are crucial, as Bieder has noted, given the quantity of social taboos that comprise the experiences and dialogues that propel the narrative progress and characterize the protagonist (254-55). Such illicit content also reflects an important tenet of avant-garde identity and production: to scandalize bourgeois society (Kirkpatrick 227). In *La mujer fantástica*, a teenage Elena elopes with her boyfriend; she aborts her subsequent (and secret) pregnancy with the help of French prostitutes when he abandons her in Paris; she marries solely and unabashedly for money; she maintains a lengthy affair with a young, penniless musician; she remarries a much older, renowned theater star, whom she subsequently betrays; she discusses suicide and cocaine with her best friend; and she ultimately becomes enamored with a very young female companion. During the entire narrative, the fashionable yet fickle Elena desperately seeks attention, admiration, and the approval of others, first traveling between cities and countries and before traversing the streets of Paris. She seeks nothing more than to fulfill her vain desire of becoming a renowned and celebrated public figure – to find her ideal “role” (*papel*) within her particular cultural and social milieu. As such, Elena is an irreverent and complicated woman who breaks with tradition and resists external expectations. She is at times “unlikeable,” and her iconoclastic self-positioning compares to the inventive, irreverent goals of the most revolutionary of avant-garde manifestos (6). As the narrative action advances, an avant-garde literary style comes to the fore, particularly through the descriptions of cosmopolitan cities like Paris and Geneva, as well as through the

celebration of inventive objects of modernity and technology. Yet most noteworthy in terms of its relevance to fashion, the central focus of this essay, is the attention given to the fine arts. Literature, theater, music, sculpture, and painting all feature prominently, creating a veritable interartistic pastiche. Indeed, the artistic references that Burgos employs throughout *La mujer fantástica* breathe new life into the apparent simplicity or frivolity of the plot structure, affording the educated reader a foray into a variety of cultures and historical eras. This barrage of intertextual, interartistic, and international references again fits within the tendencies of the Spanish Avant-garde, which exhibited a distinctly international character and a hybridity born of the “confusion” of different, even contradictory attitudes and elements from abroad (Harris 3-4).

Before delving into the narrative, it is necessary to identify and define the ekphrastic principles that will guide the present analysis of novel’s fashion-art nexus. Though predominantly associated with poetry, literary scholars have demonstrated that ekphrastic principles are also prevalent in prose (Cole; de Armas; Persin; Yacobi). In the most basic terms, ekphrasis is the literary representation of a visual art object, such as a painting or a sculpture; it is essentially the practice of putting into language what is typically observed or captured with the eyes. However, Tamar Yacobi argues that this simple, traditional definition – “a description of a work of art” – is both too general and too specific, failing to capture all cases of ekphrasis and perhaps omitting some of the most interesting and dynamic ones (21). Concerning Spanish literature, Frederick de Armas has identified a variety of types of ekphrasis, each capable of communicating complex meanings and creating nuanced literary portraiture. Relative to this essay is de Armas’s definition of “allusive ekphrasis,” which he refers to as subtly transgressive,

given that the work of art is *not* actually described in a traditional mimetic sense, nor is a narrative created from its image; on the contrary, “the novelist simply refers to a painter, a work of art, or even to a feature that may apply to a work of art. This becomes ekphrasis only in the mind of the reader... who can view the work in his memory and imagination” (22). This deceptively simple artistic reference creates, in the words of de Armas, “a mnemonic and visual effect that has the ability to make words capacious” (22). This evocative technique is fitting for Burgos, who had expressed disdain for lengthy, unnecessary descriptions in narrative, preferring instead the visual cues prompted more easily by theatrical representation and imagination: “En la novela la descripción es enojosa; pero en la escena todo ese mundo vive, se levanta de su sueño... Gracias a la evocación vemos las cosas que han sido y nos compenetramos con ellas (*El arte* 129).

Correspondingly, Brian Cole identifies allusive ekphrasis as a common feature of Spanish avant-garde novels, emphasizing that “the reader is expected to have background knowledge of these artists in order to fully understand what the author communicates” in the literary text (146) (7). In order to produce the desired effect, allusive ekphrasis depends on requisite knowledge; yet, not all readers are privy to the necessary, relevant insights. This particular brand of ekphrasis, therefore, exemplifies the divisive tendency of new art (*arte nuevo*) identified by José Ortega y Gasset in his 1925 essay *La deshumanización del arte*: “Lo característico del arte nuevo... es que divide al público en estas dos clases de hombres: los que lo entienden y los que no lo entienden... El arte nuevo, por lo visto, no es para todo el mundo” (13). Like metaphor – a rhetorical device that avant-garde poets privileged – ekphrasis allows writers like Burgos to play with language and challenge standardized perceptions of reality in narrative. As Gregori and

Herrero-Senés explain, avant-garde authors create texts that require “a strong decoding effort” and demand “a reader/spectator who was active and willing to face the challenge posed by the texts” (7). To fully comprehend *La mujer fantástica*, readers must call upon their knowledge of European art, particularly portraiture, and its corresponding cultural history. It is revealing, then, that shortly after the novel’s publication Burgos described it as “un texto que yo siempre consideré como adelantado a su tiempo” (qtd. in Utrera 395), a sign that the nuanced, perceptual challenges she posed to her readers by way of allusive ekphrasis were perhaps not entirely apprehended (8).

With these considerations of ekphrasis and the Spanish Avant-garde in mind, the present textual analysis will first highlight allusive ekphrases that appear throughout *La mujer fantástica*, before turning to those particularly relevant to fashion. Ekphrastic moments in the text include a reference to the late nineteenth-century Swiss symbolist painter Arnold Böcklin that brings to life a landscape Elena admires while on vacation in Germany (46) (9); Elena’s mention of a seventeenth-century “retrato de Richilieu,” which she uses to characterize and describe a member of the French aristocracy on whom she casts her gaze and “instinto de conquista” in a Paris café (102) (10); portraits and sketches by Jean-Batiste Isabey (1767-1855), which are ekphrastically detailed with an attention to fashion and clothing (200) (11); and an equestrian portrait of Louis XIV, flanked by landscape paintings, which graces the walls of an eighteenth-century Paris hotel (220). Furthermore, references to sculpture and mythology function as additional implicit or allusive ekphrases, often serving to characterize or describe women: “Una Juno que se escapó de un Museo para vestirse a la moda y venir aquí” (14); “Mira...si esa criselefantina no es más bella que tu estatua de mármol” (15); “Pensaba que bastaría



presentarse para conseguir el triunfo, lo semejante a la Frine convenciendo con su belleza (86) (12);” “resaltaba... su puro perfil de Donatello” (212). With these frequent allusions to painting, portraiture, and sculpture, Burgos creates a bona fide art museum in narrative form. Yet notably absent from this literary art gallery is the figure of Venus that so captivated the imagination of male avant-garde artists, especially surrealists (13). Fragmented and nude, the Venus de Milo represented the epitome of classical feminine beauty and became the muse of male avant-garde poets and painters. Robert Spires has suggested that male artists turned to historical and canonized models of femininity as a sort of “comfort zone” that provided reassurance in the face of new, disquieting, even threatening female images that surfaced in the 1920s and 1930s (206). But Burgos, as a “Pro-Republican feminist” (Johnson, *Gender*, 224) or “feminist *avante le lettre*” (Ugarte), created dynamic and lifelike representations of complex women who did not fit within such traditional molds. Instead, her characters represent a more complete, whole idea of womanhood by becoming active, creative, self-articulating subjects, rather than remaining passive as silent, inanimate, objectified models of corporal beauty.

Such multifaceted depictions of women begin on the very first page of *La mujer fantástica*, where Burgos inserts a suggestive allusive ekphrasis that immediately establishes the intimate connection between fashion and the fine arts that will permeate the ensuing narrative. In this opening scene, while three young sisters await the arrival of Elena, the unidentified third-person narrator describes these “tres princesitas de novelas” (3, 7) as they prepare for an evening out: “Las tres eran bonitas, graciosas; parecían tres damitas del Segundo Imperio, escapadas de un cuadro de Winterhalter” (5). For an informed reader, this concise description is pregnant with visual imagery and historical

and cultural contexts that paradoxically clarify *and* complicate, as we shall see, the representations and characterizations of women in the novel. The artist to which Burgos makes reference – Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1805-73) – was a German painter known for his portraits of European royalty. He was especially renowned as the painter of the French Courts during the Second French Empire of the mid- to late-nineteenth century (1852-70), a historical fact Burgos recognizes within her ekphrastic language. In addition to Winterhalter’s renown as the German “painter of princes, and prince of painters” (Kessler-Aurish 225), his legacy is most closely associated with his portraits of women, particularly his ability to capture the complexity of his female subjects (Straub 50-52). His work became much more than portraiture, however, and was intimately connected to fashion and the diffusion of his era’s fashionable trends. Two of Winterhalter’s most famous paintings, for example, are [\*Empress Eugénie and Her Ladies-in-Waiting\*](#), completed in 1855 and regarded as his great masterpiece (Kessler-Aurish, et al 162); and the royal portrait of [\*Empress Elisabeth of Austria\*](#) or “Sisi,” which was completed ten years later in 1865.

Both Eugenia and Elisabeth were admired for their beauty and poise, but it was Eugenia – a Spanish countess-turned French Empress upon her marriage to Napoleon III (14) – who was revered for her beauty, refined sense of fashion, and exquisite taste in clothing during the Second French Empire, a time when an increasingly cosmopolitan Paris was rapidly transforming into a center of European fashion and fine arts. Mirja Straub explains that Eugenia “made the Paris court a hub of fashion” (54) and, in the words of Ludovic Cazes, “what [Eugenia] wore and how she dressed her hair became all the rage.” Eugenia’s alternate role as what might be considered an early

fashion model is essential for understanding the symbolic weight of Burgos' references to nineteenth-century Parisian art, fashion, or royalty. In several instances in the novel, Burgos explicitly names Empress Eugenia, always in a manner that links Elena, "la mujer fantástica," to this particularly revered female historical figure. During one of her lengthy *toilette* sessions, for example, Elena refers directly to the empress and her particular "look" when she declares: "Me gustan las cejas a lo emperatriz Eugenia" (92). Within the narrative context, it is possible to consider this statement as yet another, even subtler allusive ekphrasis, given that the most popular and fashionable images of the young Empress at the height of the Second Empire would have been linked to portraiture rather than photography. One of the most widely copied and circulated paintings of Eugenia was an official state portrait painted by Winterhalter in 1853, shortly after she became Empress of France: *Empress Eugénie* (Kessler-Aurisch 14-16). Additionally, towards the end of the novel, Elena recounts her memories of parties, romantic escapades, and "toilettes magníficas" to a young female acquaintance, and the unidentified, observing narrator suggests a disconnect between her actual experiences and her own self-rendering: "Se diría que hablaba de otra mujer, de una especie de Emperatriz Eugenia" (215). This gap in perception demonstrates how the self-constructed persona that Elena so values, defined by fashion, luxury, and a high social status, is neither appreciated nor understood by those outside her intimate circle, as they fail to see, or even ignore, Elena's personal and self-conscious agency.

The ekphrastic association that Burgos establishes between Elena and Eugenia in *La mujer fantástica* is crucial for understanding the protagonist's fascination with fashion trends, make-up, and a constantly changing wardrobe, in terms that do not reduce

these habits to mere frivolity. Eugenia was an exceptional historical figure, and her death in Madrid in 1920 inspired Burgos to publish a short biography of the Empress this same year: “La Emperatriz Eugenia: su vida” (15). In the introduction to this narrativized portrait of the Empress, Burgos highlights her political influence, intelligence, and Spanish heritage, describing her as “*la española*, porque ella fué la española por excelencia... Tenía toda la característica de España, tenía en su carácter gérmenes de nuestro carácter. Era enérgica, altiva, apasionada, vehemente, impetuosa, ligera, devota, supersticiosa y abnegada. Era muy mujer” (n.p.). Certainly the Empress’s dress, or self-presentation, would have effectively communicated these traits to the public, and Burgos reveals was acutely attuned to Eugenia’s style and fashionable taste. When she published her treatise on women’s fashion and make-up in 1920, for example, Colombini not only recognized the Second Empire’s fashion and style, but made a point to describe Eugenia’s wedding dress in detail (16). She also includes a chapter in Eugenia’s short biography entitled “La Emperatriz de la moda,” opening this section with a dedication to the empress’s association with fashion: “El mayor triunfo de Eugenia de Montijo no fue solo reinar en Francia, sino en el mundo, imponiendo la moda. Una mujer española tuvo el cetro de la elegancia en Francia, entre las mujeres que tienen fama de ser las más elegantes del mundo” (n.p.). In addition to detailing the Empress’s elaborate royal dressing rooms, her role in popularizing trends like the crinoline or hoop skirt (*miriñaque*), dresses with trains (*trajes de cola*), and hairstyles with bangs (*flequillo*), Burgos notes the historical continuity behind her self-fashioning, particularly through her personal jewel collection containing pieces worn by her predecessor, Marie Antoinette. Indeed Eugenia’s appreciation for both contemporary French fashion and the elaborate costumes of the eighteenth-century has been well-documented (Kessler-Aurisch et al 158-59), and an

acclaimed Winterhalter portrait even depicts her in 18<sup>th</sup>-century dress, explicitly connecting the 19<sup>th</sup>-century empress's image to that of Antoinette's in terms of both feminine royal power and aristocratic fashion: [\*Empress Eugénie in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Costume\*](#) (1854). By suggesting parallels in *La mujer fantástica* between the fictional, twentieth-century protagonist and a nineteenth-century Spanish-born French empress, both of whom look to previous models of womanhood (in art and history) to inspire their manner of self-presentation, Burgos imbues supposedly superficial or capricious modern feminine aesthetic practices with a renewed sense of creative, cultural, and artistic value that could boast a centuries-long history (17).

For common readers, then, *visual* familiarity with Winterhalter's portraits would clearly afford a more precise and artistic vision of certain scenes or characters within the novel; yet *contextual* familiarity would have been imperative for the educated, cultured reader's understanding of the representational pluralities created through fashion on the cultural and historical levels, and through ekphrasis on the narrative level. In *La mujer fantástica*, the early connection between Winterhalter and his artistic renditions of fashionably dressed, powerful women who controlled, to varying extents, their own representation in portraiture, is but one layer of additional meaning conveyed by Burgos's first allusive ekphrasis. Of further import is the fact that many of the dresses worn by the wealthy aristocracy and royal empresses when sitting for Winterhalter portraits were created by Charles Frederick Worth (1825-95), an English designer who dominated the Parisian fashion scene during the Second Empire, especially due to the patronage of Empress Eugenia after their introduction in 1859 (Coleman 61) (18). Considered the father of *haute couture*, not only did Worth popularize luxurious dresses and exclusive

garments coveted by the French aristocracy portrayed in Winterhalter's paintings, but his designs were in high demand by wealthy women throughout Europe, England, Russia, and the United States (especially after the fall of the Second Empire in 1870) (63). As such, Worth defined the parameters of modern fashion on an international level, both in the nineteenth-century and beyond, as his label continued to enjoy popularity throughout the twentieth-century, and especially during the fashionable 1920s when Burgos wrote *La mujer fantástica*. Taking into account the multifaceted historical and cultural markers informing the allusive ekphrasis that opens the novel, as well as the references to Empress Eugenia throughout, we can see how Burgos gives prominence the artistic value of fashion in an historical context. Not only does she foreground its centrality in Winterhalter's paintings, but she traces a trajectory from the beautiful royal empresses immortalized in museums, to modern women who, amidst early 20<sup>th</sup>-century reverence for French fashion and the art of *haute couture* popularized by Worth, pursue fashion as a means of self-expression and identity formation.

While Coleman explains that both Winterhalter and Worth “were true artists: they simply chose to work in different media: Worth framed his clients in fabric; Winterhalter... in watercolors and oils” (64), Burgos places emphasis on the women as artistic subjects. The feminine agency hidden in such portraits has often been overlooked by scholars like Coleman who focus on the male artists as subjects and consider the women only as the art object. Straub, however has argued that within Winterhalter's masterful portraits of women like Eugenia and Elisabeth, “the status of fashion as the sole means of self-expression available to women is clearly evident” (62). Curiously, in 1927

Burgos expressed this precise sentiment regarding fashion's value as a form of feminine artistic expression in various historical eras in *La mujer moderna y sus derechos*:

Durante mucho tiempo no ha tenido la mujer más campo que la moda para emplear su fantasía, de aquí la pasión con que se ha entregado a crear y reproducir nuevas formas de trajes, peinados y accesorios. En la historia del traje está todo el arte de la mujer. Sus cuadros, sus esculturas, su literatura se tuvieron que condensar en sus creaciones de indumentaria. (262)

Despite the fact that fashionable women have been visible in varied historical, cultural, and artistic contexts, their agency has largely been ignored. Through the reclamation of nineteenth-century cultural production and practices like royal portraiture and *haute couture* – genres and an era that modernist and avant-garde circles typically decried or rejected (19) – Burgos pens a decidedly modern, avant-garde narrative that not only places fashion among the fine arts, but also emphasizes the agency of women as subjects.

Returning to the non-fictional parallels between a nineteenth-century French empress and a twentieth-century *mujer moderna*, Olivia Gruber Florek has recently argued that aristocratic portraiture, which has traditionally been cast aside as archaic and unrelated to modernism, is in fact the very point of departure from which multiple meanings and ambiguous modern identities may be conveyed (5). In her study of the

visual culture of femininity within the Austrian courts (1850-1900), Florek refers to the aforementioned Empress Elisabeth of Austria (*Sisi*) for the way in which her portraits, like those of other European royalty, captured the ambiguous position of the declining monarchies. As recognizable visual propaganda, these works of art and their mass-produced copies (20) transformed the Empresses and female aristocracy into celebrities “whose images circulated alongside those of actresses and dancers” (3). This blurring of the boundaries between the high and low *class*, and high and low *culture*, further solidifies the fashion-art nexus in *La mujer fantástica*, as the protagonist traverses numerous social settings in which make-up, attire, and fashion trends are perceived variably as markers of social status or cultural prestige, open to the admiration, critique, or scorn of spectators. As Elena seeks the admiration of her contemporaries, she quickly turns to the arts: “Se había apoderado de ella un deseo loco de ser artista” (73). When she expresses this desire to Leopoldo, her famous theater-actor husband, however, he responds disparagingly: “¡No basta ser hermosa para ser artista!” (73, 87). He repeats this statement twice; first before Elena’s theatrical debut, then later after the mediocre reviews of her rather ordinary performance.

From that day forward, Elena holds a grudge against her husband and, viewing Leopoldo with a newfound resentment, she begins to perceive hypocrisy in actors’ behaviors. She observes as they take on diverse roles and spend great amounts of time and energy on costumes, hair, and makeup: “El gran actor podía considerarse un escultor de sí mismo, según sabía componer y tallar su rostro y su actitud” (73-74). For Elena, these tools represent an admirable art form and a liberating process of self-creation, in both the context of the French Empire of the previous century and in select circles of her



present society. She promptly realizes that actors and actresses behave each day in a similar manner as she, applying make-up, selecting the most appropriate, often elaborate garments from their wardrobes, accessorizing, and ultimately adopting a suitable – or not-so-suitable – role. Yet while they are praised and admired, earning money, fame, and status, Elena is denigrated as vain and superficial, not merely by men, but by other women as well. Marta, a stage actress who is also Elena’s husband’s ex-wife, slyly insults the protagonist for having spent hours one morning preparing herself: “Si a mí me costara tanto trabajo ser hermosa, preferiría meterme en un convento” (83-84). A furious Elena responds sarcastically by mocking Marta and her constant talk of her stage performances: “¡Necesito dedicarme a mi arte! ¡A mi arte! ¡A mi arte! – repetía Elena imitando la voz de Marta y su gesto de chicuelo alegre – ¡Valiente arte! El arte de enseñar las piernas... ¡y luego se cree seductora!” (84). In observing how fashion and make-up are common denominators in both her own reality as a bourgeois woman and the fictional portrayals of characters on a respected stage, Elena becomes acutely aware of femininity as a “performance” inconsistently judged – praised or admired as an art on stage or in museums, yet mocked or disparaged as a frivolous, wasteful hobby of bourgeois and (aspiring) upper- and middle-class women. Here, Elena’s recognition of the performative nature of modern feminine identities is consistent with Burgos’s account of the modern woman’s femininity in *El arte de ser mujer* and in her chapter on fashion in *La mujer moderna*. In these chapters, she praises fashion as, according to Ana María Díaz-Marcos, “un acto de representación, un proceso de ‘inventarse’ de otra forma” (“La ‘mujer moderna’” 117).

Despite the fact that Elena is unable to find success as a celebrated theater star, there is one “artistic” realm in which she excels – fashion, and particularly “las *toilettes*”. In this context of the early twentieth century, the word “toilette” could refer to a variety of traditionally feminine practices of self-care and grooming, including dressing and accessorizing, applying make-up, arranging the hair, and even selecting an ideal perfume combination (21). For Elena, her *toilette* is a crucial part of her identity that she refuses to forgo or reduce, and references to the word itself or its multiple components and practices appear countless times throughout the narrative. In different moments, amplifying and preserving her beauty is a process the narrator refers to with the following phrases: “la fatigosa ocupación; inmenso trabajo” (68); “los secretos de tocador” (165); “el triunfo de su arte” (185); “la tarea de su tocador” (202); and “obra suya” (223). Despite the potentially negative connotations we may assign today to words like *fatigosa*, *inmenso trabajo*, and *tarea* when referring to make-up or women’s grooming, the narrative is not structured such that it criticizes these processes, but rather celebrates the freedom they afford a woman to create herself – to become an *artist* – much like the celebrated actors and performers who take on new and temporary identities. Burgos viewed this practice as a manifestation of personal identity, yet she was aware of the fine balance and deft skills necessary to ensure the *toilette* was an individualized artistic practice as opposed to a wasteful or gauche imitation of others: “Interesa, pues, no perder la personalidad entre los caprichos de la toilette, ser una misma y no una copia vulgar; pero huyendo del ridículo, de la afectación y de la extravagancia” (*El arte* 146). Moreover, this labor invested in the act of self-(re)presentation provides another connection to the royal women of centuries past whom Elena so admired. McQueen, for example, argues that Empress Eugenia used her patronage and collection

of the arts, including painting, sculpture, interior design elements, and self-commissioned private photographs and portraits, “to define her sense of self both privately and in public,” revealing a strong relationship “between individual agency, cultural policy and artistic production in the modern period” (4).

Just as the empresses of the nineteenth-century European empires exercised control over their ideal presentational images through fashion choices, beauty practices, and commissioned portraits that would memorialize their likeness in museums of fine art on a global scale, so too does Elena attempt to curate an “ideal image” to put forth to her world (22). The narrator explains that “[Elena] confiaba el triunfo de su arte a sus vestidos, a su presentación, a su hermosura” (184-85), and later observes: “Aquella belleza y aquella frescura eran obra suya, hijas del perseverante cuidado de toda su vida” (223). Here, the uses of the words “arte” and “obra suya” effectively equate the discourse of Elena’s feminine practice with that of the fine arts. This vocabulary is consistent with Burgos’s description of the *toilette* in *El arte de ser mujer*: “Así una mujer de verdadero *espíritu de artista* hace su figurín” (145, emphasis mine). Of further import is the fact that Elena works to refine her skills by taking lessons and rehearsing, much like a painter, a writer, or an actor. In one scene, she practices new techniques with the help of a small record player (*gramófono*) purchased from the *Instituto de Belleza*, which contains multiple discs that audibly guide her in the careful preparation of her external appearance (191-92). By the end of the novel, a middle-aged Elena wants nothing more than to “volver a ocupar su lugar de reina de la moda” (222). This curious use of a word evoking royalty recalls both the Empresses who graced Winterhalter’s portraits, and the young *princesitas* who had “escaped” said portraits to transpose their images onto the first

few pages of Burgos's novel. As such, the narrative is bookended with references to both art and royalty, further underscoring the connections between the modern, twentieth-century Elena and the artistic and historic character-actors of the Second French Empire, a nineteenth-century era when fashion came to be especially valued and respected as an art form in and of itself.

In terms of Burgos's evaluation of fashion, Díaz-Marcos has demonstrated that Colombine, unlike her predecessors and contemporaries, offers a revolutionary and celebratory vision of fashion based on its capacity for creativity, production, and self-expression (*La edad* 304-05) (23). In *La mujer fantástica*, Elena's behavior clearly fits within this sensibility, and to some extent Burgos may have been inspired to arrive at this understanding of fashion based on her interpretation of the varied artistic illustrations of the empresses of the Second French Empire and mid- to late-nineteenth century Europe. But in this novel and in her essays, Burgos goes further in her praise, noting fashion's connection not merely to the present, ephemeral moment, but to the histories, cultures, and women of the past. This is consistent with Highfill's claim that avant-garde artists and writers viewed fashion as a way "to assume creative agency, to insert oneself into the ever-mobile present and to join with the creative forces of history" (248). We must recall that only two years prior to the publication of *La mujer fantástica* Burgos had affirmed that fashion – "el arte de la indumentaria" as she defined it – contains a hidden, mysterious element capable of exaggerating and embellishing even the most trivial and subdued aspects of individual and collective identities: "La moda... encierra un sentido profundo... Algo muy importante, muy recóndito, capaz de revelar por sí toda el alma de una época, todas las costumbres y todo el espíritu de un pueblo" (37). The frequent

juxtaposition of fashion and the fine arts, as well as the inclusion of allusive ekphrases throughout *La mujer fantástica*, clearly demonstrate that Burgos rejects not only the negative association of fashion with frivolity and superficial commodity culture, but also the disdain directed towards women's innovative self-fashioning. For Burgos, careful clothing selection and the dedicated practice of the *toilette* were not restrictive or wasteful, but rather liberating forms of artistic expression and identity-construction to which upper-class – and, increasingly, middle-class – women had claimed near-exclusive access and dominance throughout diverse historical and cultural eras.

Finally, in the context of the Avant-garde, Ruth Hemus has posited that many artistic practices and products preferred by Dada women, like doll-making, embroidery, and tapestry, “have been overlooked in part because they do not concur with more ‘high art,’ or customarily male, practices,” thus highlighting “questions about the relationship between gender and chosen modes of artistic expression” (12) (24). Fashion (as practice) and clothing (as an art object) easily fit within this reevaluation of avant-garde art and, as Susan Larson affirms:

Both women's fashion and the avant-garde of the 1920s – highly aesthetic pleasures – questioned traditional views of what was beautiful, sought to deny the existence of any hierarchy of aesthetic values, and recognized pleasure and beauty as important forces in the lives of modern urban citizens. (227)

Without a doubt, the literature of the Spanish Avant-garde, especially in terms of narrative, has been valued according to aesthetic preferences and practices that were largely shaped and defined by male artists and intellectuals like Ramón Gómez de la Serna and José Ortega y Gasset. Exploring the work of female authors in the context of alternative avant-garde practices – especially the writing of a woman like Burgos, who was both intimately connected to male intellectual circles yet often relegated to their margins by male privileges, agendas, and thematic or aesthetic preferences – greatly enhances our understanding of Spanish modernism, the Spanish Avant-garde, and the lived experiences of women artists as they responded to the rapid changes of modernity and urbanization. In *La mujer fantástica* Carmen de Burgos creatively embeds her defense of *la moda* in narrative through allusive ekphrasis and a markedly avant-garde style that redeems the realist impulses of the nineteenth century by reconsidering their representational pluralities. In the process, she challenges the notion that avant-garde literature necessarily represents an abrupt break from or rejection of the past, validates fashion and make-up as non-traditional, feminine artistic mediums, and establishes a cultural and historical trajectory of women’s “artistic production” through fashion and self-representation. Her vindication of nineteenth-century realist courtly portraiture and the luxurious, ornamental feminine fashion of the Second French Empire further flies in the face of the seemingly universal disdain expressed by male artists for the culture of the previous century – a decidedly iconoclast, international, and transhistorical – that is, “avant-garde” – move if there ever was one. In the end, both the novel and its fashion-focused protagonist embody resistance not merely to those individuals suspicious or critical of female fashion, but to the hegemonic male definition of “art” and the high value

placed on the abstract, dehumanized aesthetics that were increasingly dominating Burgos's intellectual and artistic circles in early twentieth-century Madrid.

### Notes

(1) Maryellen Bieder is one of the few scholars to discuss *La mujer fantástica*, noting its subversion of the myth of the modern *garçonne*, or Parisian woman (254). Bieder interprets Burgos's use of parody, satire, and non-Spanish settings as "conservative modes" that soften or counteract the potentially shocking effects of the novel's daring subject matter (254-55). Carmen Morenilla Talens also makes comparative mention of the novel's potentially moralizing intent in her study of Burgos's *La mujer fría* (1922), but neither the protagonist nor the themes are analyzed in depth (150, 156). Michelle Sharp has also discussed "feminine roles" from this novel in her research on the family and gender roles within Burgos's narrative oeuvre.

(2) In *El arte de ser mujer* Burgos states: "Arte y ciencia, no podemos desdeñar la indumentaria, como no podemos desdeñar la arquitectura o la música. Una forma de traje corresponde a un estado del espíritu de un pueblo lo mismo que su literatura o su estilo arquitectónico (38). She later connects fashion and dress to painting and museums: "La moda busca su inspiración en las bellas artes y especialmente en la pintura, con lo cual presenta relaciones y semejanzas. Un museo de pinturas es siempre un museo de historia del traje; paseando entre los cuadros nos dan a impresión de estar en un salón de otro siglo... Todos los pintores han rendido por regla general pleitesía al traje. Con amor trató el divino Leonardo las vestiduras de sus mujeres-efebos, Rafael cometió anacronismos poniéndoles a sus mujeres adornos y vestidos de época, de los cuales es hermosa muestra la *Virgen de la Diadema Azul*, en el Louvre... [E]l pintor copia nuestras modas, pero lo hace de un modo incidental" (51-52). Susan Kirkpatrick notes that the titles of Burgos's advice manuals for women – *El arte de saber vivir* (1909); *El arte de seducir* (1916); *Arte de la elegancia* (1918); *El arte de ser mujer* (1920) – demonstrate her understanding of "el oficio de ser mujer como un arte en el sentido de constituir un conjunto de técnicas y habilidades" (183).

(3) Kirkpatrick affirms that Burgos maintained "una relación tangencial" with avant-garde activity and describes her participation with the following phrases: "no participó directamente... ocupó un lugar sólo marginal... se mant[uvo] apartada" (216-18). Similarly, Roberta Johnson explains that women's vanguard fiction lacks the dehumanized aesthetics defined by Ortega y Gasset (*Gender* 224) and that female novelists instead practiced a singular form of "social modernism" (vii). Despite living and writing during the Spanish modernist period (1898-1939), Johnson notes that Burgos is rarely mentioned in studies of this time, as "literary modernism emphasized form and philosophy over social phenomena" ("Carmen de Burgos" 66).

(4) In 1925 Ortega y Gasset identified seven tendencies of new art in *La deshumanización del arte*. While it is true that women's writing largely eschews these abstract tendencies (as Bieder, Johnson, and numerous literary critics have noted), *La*

*mujer fantástica* does in fact five of Ortega y Gasset's seven characteristics (especially 3-7). Ortega y Gasset describes this "nuevo estilo" as follows: "Tiende: 1) a la deshumanización del arte; 2) a evitar las formas vivas; 3) a hacer que la obra de arte no sea sino obra de arte; 4) a considerar el arte como juego, y nada más; 5) a una esencial ironía; 6) a eludir toda falsedad, y, por tanto, a una escrupulosa realización. En fin, 7) el arte, según los artistas jóvenes, es una cosa sin trascendencia alguna" (24).

(5) Derek Harris discusses the "hybrid nature" of the Spanish Avant-garde in the artistic and literary production of predominantly male artists, whereas María Soledad Fernández Utrera has demonstrated hybridity to be a forceful characteristic of both male and female vanguardists. Fernández Utrera suggests that women's avant-garde activity strays from but does not entirely reject the terms set forth by Ortega y Gasset: "El discurso vanguardista femenino... marginaliza la creación de productos puros y favorece la de prácticas culturales híbridas (112-13). Robert Wells has recently pointed to problematic contradictions inherent in the dehumanized aesthetics promulgated by Ortega y Gasset and practiced by avant-garde poets like Pedro Salinas. Wells takes issue with the division Ortega y Gasset attempted to draw between life (*la vida*) and aesthetics (*la poesía*) (404-05), a critique especially relevant to scholars' evaluations and classifications of women's modernist and avant-garde literary and artistic production.

(6) I use the term "unlikeable" because the protagonist often behaves in despicable ways that are not defended by the narrator or other characters, nor redeemed by the end of the tale. She is narcissistic and short-tempered, often to the point of damaging her friendships, and she is an adulteress, unable to remain loyal to her husbands or male companions. Bieder goes as far as to describe her as a prostitute and "a defective woman" (255), but in my reading Elena is never shown to be a prostitute in the traditional sense of exchanging money for sex (her marriages and relationships with wealthy men may, however, be construed as a form of prostitution according to modern, feminist interpretations of male-female relationships built on economic inequality. In fact, Margarita Nelken dared to make this comparison in Spain in 1919: "...el matrimonio burgués se envilece desde un principio por culpa de la mujer que se vende legítimamente con no menos astucia, y a veces hasta con no mayor hipocresía, que cualquier ramera" (51).). The contradictory nature of Elena's behavior and persona creates a wealth of ambiguities that merit further critical study in terms of Burgos's conception of the real and fictional "modern woman" and her place within the real and imagined worlds of Spanish modernity.

(7) Cole's analyses focus on avant-garde prose in José Ortega y Gasset's fiction series, "Nova Novorum" (1926-1929), and he examines new aesthetic sensibilities and experimental narrative strategies through the lens of ekphrasis in the following works: Pedro Salinas' *Vispera del gozo* (1926); Benjamín Jarnés' *El profesor inútil* (1926) and *Paula y Paulita* (1929); and Antonio Espina's *Pájaro pinto* (1927) and *Luna de copas* (1929). Like most studies of the Spanish literary avant-garde, Cole pays little attention to women artists, focusing instead on the contributions of Ortega y Gasset, Ramón Gómez de la Serna, and Giménez Caballero, in addition to the aforementioned authors.



(8) The difficulty in “understanding” (*entender*) avant-garde literature or *arte nuevo* (to use Ortega y Gasset’s language) has led to accusations of elitism against artists of this movement (Gregori and Herrero-Senés 7).

(9) Elena states: “Boecklin debió pintar aquí ese cuadro que hemos admirado en Basilea. Es el pintor del Rhin” (46). Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901), a Swiss symbolist painter, is best known for his painting *The Isle of the Dead*. He painted five versions of this eerie, naturalist landscape between 1880 and 1886, one of which is known as the “Basel version” (1880), the likely visual associated with Elena’s reference. The mysterious, suggestive *Isle of the Dead* was admired by the surrealists and Freud, who admits to having dreamt about the macabre painting in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

(10) In referring to a portrait of Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642), a French clergyman and dignitary, it is probable that this reference would bring to mind one of the paintings by Philippe de Champaigne, completed in 1642, that depict an aged Richelieu in red religious robes.

(11) Isabey was a French painter of the courts who specialized in portraits and miniatures. The artworks mentioned in the novel feature “cabezas de mujeres peinadas con bucles, sobre los que había un adorno de tul, que descendía sobre los hombros y se mezclaba a las pieles” (200).

(12) Phryne (la Frine) was a Greek courtesan known for taking on lovers and exhibiting her nude body and breasts, though a variety of sources confuse a historical person with a fictitious personality (Havelock 43-45). She was the alleged human model for the famous ancient Greek statue of the divine Aphrodite, created by Athenian sculptor Praxiteles in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (see Havelock 42-50 for stories surrounding Phryne as Praxiteles’s model).

(13) See García de la Rasilla for a discussion of male and female surrealists’ portrayals of the fragmented, deformed, fetishized, and often mutilated female body. García de la Rasilla describes the mother-goddess in several iterations, for example: “...la famosa Venus de Milo, de brazos amputados, cuya belleza resulta hipnotizante precisamente por su figura inacabada, provocadora de interpretaciones ilimitadas” (184). See Larson for an interpretation of José Díaz-Fernández’s novel *La Venus mecánica*, that focuses on the transformation of the protagonist (“la venus mecánica”) from prostitute to fashion model to mistress. Highfill presents the “dethroning” of Venus (247) as a celebrated female model of beauty in the poetry of Pedro Salinas before exploring modern interpretations of this goddess, particularly those put forth by the novelist and journalist Andrés García de la Barga (Corpus Barga) in his 1924 article “¿Cuál es la Venus de usted?”.

(14) Born in Granada (1826), the future French Empress’s full name was María Eugenia Ignacia Augustina de Palafox, Portocarrero de Guzmán y Kirkpatrick; McQueen notes that today she is often misidentified as Eugenia de Montijo or as a princess (2).

(15) Only four days passed between the death of the Empress on July 11, 1920, and Burgos's tribute to her, published in *La Novela Corta* on July 15.

(16) Burgos states: "El Segundo Imperio es de importancia capital... El traje de boda de la emperatriz Eugenia era de cola, de terciopelo blanco rizado, cuerpo alto con pedería y falda cubierta de punto de Inglaterra" (*El arte* 119).

(17) Burgos addresses the purported superficiality of women's fashion in her Introduction to *El arte de ser mujer*, ironically commenting on the assumption that fashion is a frivolous affair, unworthy of serious essayistic attention: "Este es un libro de estética atrevida, superflua, pueril, en el que me he decidido a abordar con toda audacia la difícil, complicada y tenue psicología de la moda... Este es un libro que yo hubiera querido llevar a la mayor perfección y elevar todos los temas frívolos hasta un punto diáfano, ideal, de una exquisitez celeste" (*El arte* 17-18). Díaz-Marcos interprets these initial words as a type of disclaimer, "[una] apología de la moda y el cuestionamiento de la categoría de lo 'frívolo,'" which functions as a discursive strategy by which Burgos defines herself as a bold, modern artist whose daring aesthetic will equate "frivolity" with poetic exquisiteness (*exquisitez poética*) ("La 'mujer moderna'" 114). Kirkpatrick similarly notes the introduction's defense of the so-called feminine qualities of frivolity and irrationality, linking these traits to the production of new literary and aesthetic values (193). For Ugarte, Burgos's statements in *El arte de ser mujer* are contradictory and paradoxical, as they are both a warning of the frivolous nature of writing on beauty and fashion and also an attempt to realize perfection by means of this same presumed frivolity (55-56). Ugarte describes Burgos's writing here as embodying "a kind of frivolity that speaks from frivolity itself" (55-56). As for Burgos's own continued engagement with contemporary attitudes towards fashion and "la psicología de la moda," in 1927 she would continue to dispute Georg Simmel's claim that fashion is arbitrary and capricious (*La mujer moderna* 259), though she would show some support for Gregorio Marañón's interpretation of fashion's three motives (utilitarian, economic, sexual) (260).

(18) Napoleon III encouraged his wife's patronage of dressmakers in order to support France's textile and fashion industries (Coleman 58). Eugenia did her part to help revive France's faltering textile trade, and "in Worth and her friends at court she had perfect silent partners" (62).

(19) Gregori and Herrero Senés explain that "open-minded and cosmopolitan" Spanish avant-garde writers "were declared enemies of the past and felt a particular loathing for the nineteenth-century heritage, romanticism and realism, and for their topical language, outdated and full of pomposity" (6). Similarly, Ortega y Gasset criticizes nineteenth century art, especially realist tendencies, for their simplistic focus on human rather than artistic elements (20-22).

(20) Winterhalter's state portraits were "routinely copied as soon as they had left his easel for official distribution, and thousands of copies were disseminated in various media" (Kessler-Aurisch 14). When he completed his first three portraits of Empress

Eugenia between 1853-54, Winterhalter's fees "granted the state both the paintings and the rights of reproduction, which it exploited to the fullest, commissioning artists to make copies of the portraits in painting, print, and tapestry, both in large scale and in small" (McQueen 94). Copies of official photographs or portraits would circulate as *cartes de visite* (pocket-sized visiting cards) or as larger album-sized photographs (126). In the early twentieth century, Eugenia commissioned photographs of herself that were published in popular magazines, such as *Femina* in 1911. In these images, which differ significantly from early official portraits, she wears an array of elaborate dresses from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in addition to costumes from a variety of Mediterranean cultures (126-31).

(21) Burgos details the *toilette* in chapters 12-13 of *El arte de ser mujer*, emphasizing the need to individualize both the process and the objects according to social class, complexion, and age (144-164).

(22) Regarding the "ideal image", Straub compares 19<sup>th</sup>-century women's desire to control their appearance in commissioned portraiture to today's digital-age practice of selecting an ideal "selfie" in order to present oneself in the most flattering way: "Ladies in court society are also highly likely to have wanted to present such ideal images of themselves in Winterhalter's portraits. And in the paintings they wanted to look as others *were supposed* to see them. So what Winterhalter evidently succeeded so well in realizing and what he captured in the form of portraits was a sort of *ideal image*" (50).

(23) Díaz-Marcos contrasts Burgos's views with those of Rosario de Acuña and Emilia Pardo Bazán, affirming that Colombine's positive evaluation of luxury and spending may be considered an early celebration of a society of consumption, rather than a warning as to the pitfalls of consumerism (*La edad* 305). She also notes Burgos's critique of the masculine rejection of fashion and subsequent negative association of "la moda con lo femenino" (291-92).

(24) Persin highlights noncanonical art forms such as television, film, photography, and mass media culture, each of which may function as unique art objects that speak for themselves (18). It is certainly appropriate to add fashion to that list and, as *La mujer fantástica* and *El arte de ser mujer* demonstrate, Burgos considered fashion worthy of high artistic praise.

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**Accesorios hacia la modernidad: modas disonantes en los cuentos  
periodísticos de Machado de Assis**

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El célebre escritor Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis (Río de Janeiro, 1830-1908) colaboró en numerosas publicaciones periódicas dirigidas a la mujer en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, en particular en revistas de modas. Si bien la actividad periodística de Machado ha sido ampliamente abordada por la crítica (Pinheiro; Silveira; Crestani), su interés por la indumentaria apenas ha sido considerado en profundidad, a excepción de los recientes trabajos de Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva.<sup>1</sup> (1) El presente ensayo tiene como propósito indagar en una faceta casi desconocida del autor, analizando la representación de accesorios que lleva a cabo en una selección de cuentos escritos para *A Estação*, la revista de modas más popular en el Río de Janeiro decimonónico.

En *Accessories to Modernity*, Susan Hiner apunta que, a pesar de la tradicional concepción periférica y marginal de los accesorios en los estudios culturales y literarios, estos comportan un significado multifacético a lo largo del siglo XIX, etapa que coincide con factores socio-económicos clave en la civilización occidental, tales como el desarrollo industrial, la proliferación del periodismo, la revolución en los patrones de consumo y la emergencia de un creciente público lector femenino (9). En el caso concreto que nos ocupa, numerosos relatos de Machado son protagonizados por sombreros, zapatos, guantes y pañuelos que acaparan y determinan el desenvolvimiento narrativo.

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<sup>1</sup> Las líneas iniciales de este párrafo han sido modificadas en Julio 2022, a petición de la autora. Una primera versión de este texto fue publicada en Diciembre 2017.



Basándome en el argumento de Hiner, muestro cómo los accesorios que circulan en *A Estação* operan como objetos de contemplación para la “modernidad,” (2) contribuyendo de forma decisiva a materializar y reforzar la expresión artística de este movimiento estético. Asimismo, configuran “zonas de contacto” (Pratt 6-7) o plataformas discursivas de interferencia cultural donde se debaten cuestiones que afectan a las categorías identitarias de raza, género y clase social en el contexto de la modernización iberoamericana.

Las prendas de vestir descritas en el cuento machadiano a su vez reflejan las incoherencias e inadecuaciones que conlleva el advenimiento de la modernidad occidental en Brasil. Partiendo de la corriente teórica “thing theory,” mi ensayo explora de qué forma los accesorios, al dominar y sustituir al personaje que los porta, subvierten la tradicional división cartesiana entre sujeto/objeto. El personaje (sujeto) por contacto con la prenda (objeto) queda reducido a un simple maniquí eclipsado bajo el influjo del incipiente sistema capitalista que caracteriza la modernidad material. Como analizo, Machado se sirve de este recurso literario para valorar con distanciamiento crítico los avances de la modernización y para abordar la subordinación cultural de Latinoamérica frente a Europa—en concreto, Francia—, hecho que la moda encarna de forma magistral. Las disonancias de la modernidad expuestas por Machado encuentran su correlato en el propio devenir editorial de *A Estação* que era elaborada en París—eje de la moda y la modernidad—desde donde era exportada a una élite intelectual brasileña.



***A Estação: la revolución de la moda parisina en Río de Janeiro y el fenómeno transnacional de la moda***

La revista de periodicidad quincenal *A Estação. Jornal ilustrado para a família* (Río de Janeiro, 1879-1904), dirigida prioritariamente a una audiencia femenina de clase media y alta, gozó de un éxito sin precedentes, alcanzando una tirada de diez mil ejemplares (15/03/1883). *A Estação* se dividía en dos secciones bien diferenciadas con paginación independiente: una parte de modas, titulada “Jornal de Modas,” seguida por la “Parte Literária.” La primera sección, adaptación y traducción directa del francés, era coordinada por una corresponsal brasileña radicada en París que instruía a las lectoras acerca de cómo incorporar a su guardarropa las últimas tendencias europeas con elegancia y economía. En cuanto a la parte literaria, esta poseía un contenido heterogéneo que incluía la colaboración de autores destacados en el panorama literario junto a textos de diverso género—didáctico-moralizante, poesía, teatro, variedades y anécdotas sobre la vida elegante—y de interés exclusivo para la mujer—recetas, labores de hogar y consejos de etiqueta. Una novedad de la revista, a diferencia de otras de la época, estriba en su lujoso y esmerado aspecto visual, lo que se comprueba en la abundancia de grabados, litografías y patrones, así como en el elevado número de anuncios publicitarios que aumenta progresivamente con el paso de los años.



**Fig. 1 Titular de *A Estação* (15/01/1879)**

Acompañada por el subtítulo “Jornal de modas parisienses dedicado às senhoras brasileiras,” *A Estação* aparece fuertemente vinculada a París desde sus inicios. A este respecto, Marlyse Meyer sostiene que la revista procura dar continuidad en Brasil a la famosa publicación gala *La Saison. Journal illustré des dames* que había circulado en Río de Janeiro entre 1872 y 1878 (76). Como se lee en la primera carta de presentación dirigida “Aos nossos leitores”, publicada el 15 de enero de 1879: “[*A Estação*] é forçosamente parisiense e só poderia colher os seus elementos na capital da moda” (1) (“[*A Estação*] es forzosamente parisiense y solo podría cosechar sus elementos en la capital de la moda”). (3) Es precisamente la “marca francesa” lo que explica la longevidad editorial de *A Estação* frente a otras publicaciones coetáneas que no lograban perdurar en el mercado. De acuerdo a Jaison Luís Crestani, “París” proveía una eficiente estrategia comercial y económica para los periódicos que intentaban atraer al creciente público lector femenino (54-55). A esto se suma que la capital gala, erigida como el

pináculo del buen gusto, era el lugar donde se encontraban las principales casas de la moda y residían los más renombrados diseñadores especializados en vestimenta femenina, como el británico Charles Worth.

Recientes investigaciones en el ámbito iberoamericano han dirigido la atención hacia las revistas de modas decimonónicas que proliferan hacia mediados de siglo, distinguiéndolas como un elemento básico en la transmisión del espíritu de la modernidad (Hallstead; Root; Goldgel). (4) Dichos estudios subrayan el trasfondo político e ideológico que adquiere este tipo de prensa durante el periodo de formación de los estados latinoamericanos tras sus independencias. Como observa Víctor Goldgel en *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América*, las revistas de modas colmaban el afán de novedad de una élite latinoamericana deseosa de forjar una nueva identidad y distanciarse estéticamente de la ex-metrópolis. A su vez, revelan el principio de imitación y búsqueda por parte de la clase media latinoamericana de asociarse en apariencia con la aristocracia europea a través de la indumentaria. De ahí que ciertas prendas de vestir occidentales, en cuanto bienes simbólicos, pasasen a encarnar modelos de comportamiento europeo, simbolizando una seña cultural de progreso y civilización frente a la barbarie (Masiello 23).

Conectando estas ideas con nuestro objeto de estudio, puede considerarse a *A Estação* como un producto cultural que emerge dentro del mismo proyecto de la modernidad latinoamericana. Si su sección de modas, traída directamente de París, hacía alarde de las últimas tecnologías modernas con impresión en papel satinado, lujosas ilustraciones, grabados y reproducciones artísticas en color, su sección literaria procuraba divulgar otra modernidad: la producción literaria nacional más reciente con nombres de reputado prestigio como el de Machado de Assis. (5) Empero, un análisis atento de la

revista desvela las inadecuaciones que recibe la moda europea al trasladarse a la realidad socio-cultural y económica brasileña. Este desajuste aparece en el mismo origen de *A Estação*, ya que, pese a su supuesta aura parisina, años después se descubre que es traducción y adaptación de una revista alemana, *Die Modenwelt*. Una vez desvelada la procedencia germana de *A Estação*, en la nota “Aos nossos leitores”, los editores se defienden de las acusaciones que otros periódicos hacían de la revista acusándoles de emplear lo francés como estrategia comercial:

O tronco da organização de que *A Estação* é um dos ramos está na verdade plantado em Berlim. Aí publica-se *Die Modenwelt*, jornal de modas que hoje, só sob esse título, tem edição maior do que todos os jornais de modas publicados em Paris reunidos. Aí é redigida, aí são gravados os desenhos, aí é impressa e traduzida em 14 idiomas para dar à luz vinte publicações diferentes cujo elemento artístico é o mesmo. (1)

(El tronco de organización de *A Estação* pertenece a una de las ramas que está establecida en Berlín. Ahí se publica *Die Modenwelt*, periódico de modas que hoy, solo bajo ese título tiene una edición mayor que la de todos los periódicos de modas publicados en París juntos. Ahí es redactada, ahí se escriben sus dibujos, ahí se imprime y se traduce a alguno de los catorce idiomas para dar a luz a veinte publicaciones diferentes, cuyo elemento artístico es el mismo).

El engaño periodístico revela la existencia de *Die Modenwelt*—literalmente “El mundo de la moda”—, una publicación germana que era traducida a catorce idiomas y difundía sus redes en Europa y el continente americano, exportando desde Berlín una misma concepción estética de la moda francesa y, por extensión, de la modernidad. Al

final de la carta-defensa publicada en *A Estação* se anuncia que el número de suscriptores de *Die Modenwelt* en todo el mundo es de 740.000, una asombrosa recepción para la época. Como justifican los editores, *A Estação* continúa siendo “parisiense,” mas para abaratar su precio se imprime y edita en Berlín, lo que no merma su carácter francés, al contrario, la hace accesible a lectores de más países. A pesar del escándalo editorial, lo cierto es que *A Estação* continuó vendiéndose y exportándose como francesa hasta su cese en 1904. (6)

Por otra parte, *A Estação* pone de manifiesto una discordancia notable fruto de su carácter transnacional, pues ¿cómo vestirse a la moda europea cuando es verano en París e invierno en Río de Janeiro? La aclimatación a las caprichosas y cambiantes modas parisinas genera situaciones no exentas de comicidad en la revista a causa de la divergencia de estaciones. Esto se percibe incluso en su aspecto visual, como ejemplifica la portada del 15 de enero de 1879, donde se ve a una mujer con pesadas ropas de abrigo en pleno verano brasileño (fig. 2).



**Fig.2** Portada de *A Estação* (15/01/1879)

En este mismo número, los redactores aluden con frecuencia a las diferencias climáticas y tratan de buscar una justificación lógica al ridículo “contra-senso” que conllevan las modas europeas:

O que daí resultava para nós era o ridículo, visto como quem queria trajar no rigor da moda tinha forçosamente de morrer de calor em janeiro e constipar-se em junho. Hoje, felizmente, a moda, mesmo em Paris, altera-se de dia para dia; constantemente aparecem novas criações, variegadas combinações ... fugindo do contra-senso. (1)

(Lo que de ello resultaba para nosotros era el ridículo, visto como que quien quería seguir el rigor de la moda debía forzosamente morir de calor en enero y constiparse en junio. Hoy, felizmente, la moda, igual que en París, cambia de día en día; constantemente aparecen nuevas creaciones, variadas combinaciones ... huyendo del contrasentido).

A pesar de los humorísticos comentarios que ironizan la subordinación cultural vestimentaria, las tendencias parisinas eran rigurosamente emuladas por la “gentil lectora” de *A Estação*, forzada a agudizar su ingenio para acomodar su indumentaria a los desfases climáticos y a las “inconvenientes exigencias de nosso clima” (1) (“inconvenientes exigencias de nuestro clima”). En el siguiente fragmento, tomado de la edición del 15 de febrero de 1889, se hace evidente que los editores de *A Estação* no vislumbran ninguna posibilidad de desacreditar París para la mujer que quiera vestirse de acuerdo a la última moda:

Certo é que as modas parisienses atuais são próprias do inverno, mas respeitando os feitos e disposições que é o que constitui verdadeiramente a moda, podemos aqui executar *toilettes* semelhantes, mas próprias da nossa estação. Ali é que se revela todo o gosto e engenho da nossa gentil leitora. (12)

(Es cierto que las modas parisinas actuales son propias del invierno, pero el respetar las maneras y disposiciones es lo que constituye verdaderamente la moda, podemos realizar aquí *toilettes* similares, pero propios de nuestra estación. Aquí es donde se revela todo el gusto e ingenio de nuestra gentil lectora).

La impresión que queda es que no existe otra opción que seguir a rajatabla la dirección impuesta por la capital francesa. Las contradicciones que despliega *A Estação*, una revista de modas parisina *made in Germany*, donde el sistema de producción es más económico y rápido que en Francia indica la masificación y mecanización de la moda femenina a un nivel global. Igualmente, apunta a la existencia de una idea de la modernidad simbólica y artificial cuajada de ambigüedades a las que Machado, desde la sección literaria de la revista, alude a través de la representación de accesorios y prendas de vestir.

### **La representación de accesorios en los textos periodísticos de Machado de Assis**

Machado de Assis publicó treinta y siete cuentos y dos narraciones largas por entregas—*Casa velha* y *Quincas Borba*—en *A Estação*, además de ser considerado el “padre espiritual” de la publicación desde su primera edición (Farias 180). (7) Los cuentos de Machado, en consonancia con el espíritu francés que promueve la revista, destacan la metáfora de París a través de Rúa do Ouvidor, “la gran calle del lujo y las modas francesas” (Freyre 155). A partir del traslado de la familia real portuguesa a Río de Janeiro en 1808, Rúa do Ouvidor se convierte en un importante centro urbano, comercial y cosmopolita que refleja importantes cambios culturales, sociales y económicos (Menezes



73). A este respecto, Silva afirma que esta avenida conformaba el espacio urbano más representativo de la modernidad decimonónica brasileña, donde el sistema de la moda parisina era reproducido (*Machado de Assis* 148).

Tal y como comenta uno de los personajes femeninos machadianos en el relato “Tempo de crise”: “Queres ver a elegância fluminense? Aqui acharás a flor da sociedade, as senhoras que vêm escolher jóias ao Valais ou sedas a Notre-Dame” (*Jornal das Famílias*, 13/4/1873, p.107) (“¿Quieres ver la elegancia fluminense? Aquí hallarás la flor de la sociedad, las señoras que vienen a escoger joyas a Valois o sedas a Notre-Dame”). Rua do Ouvidor representa el escenario urbano más frecuentado por la lectora consumidora de la moda y con el que, por tanto, la lectora tenía más facilidad de identificación. Así por ejemplo, en el relato “Pobre Finoca!,” la acción se desarrolla en una mercería localizada en la popular avenida carioca, donde las protagonistas Alberta y Finoca, siempre rodeadas de telas, son retratadas comprando seda, cordones, agujas o hilos para imitar los figurines parisinos que han adquirido previamente en revistas (*A Estação*, 31/12/1891–31/1/1892).

Sin embargo, debido al tono conservador y moralizante de *A Estação*, que no dejaba de ser una publicación encaminada a la formación de la esposa y madre de familia, los cuentos de Machado procuran orientar a las mujeres en sus labores domésticas, instruyéndolas en el cuidado y educación de los hijos y proporcionándoles consejos útiles para el matrimonio. (8) Los relatos del autor brasileño, generalmente protagonizados por personajes femeninos, premian a la mujer virtuosa y condenan a la díscola, lo que contribuye a reforzar la estructura patriarcal dominante de la clase burguesa y propagar

la imagen ideal de la perfecta casada o “ángel del hogar.” (9) En este sentido, el uso de la moda por parte de Machado puede interpretarse como un instrumento retórico que busca capturar el interés de la mujer, el nuevo público lector y consumidor al que es preciso instruir y moldear. No obstante, la representación literaria de ciertos accesorios rebasa estas funciones y se extiende a otros temas que afectan a cuestiones de género, raza e identidad social.

Este es el caso de “A mulher pálida,” donde el escritor muestra fricciones sociales a través de la caracterización externa de Máximo. Como describe, el protagonista “tinha os cabelos despenteados, vestia um chambre velho de ramagens, que foram vistosas no seu tempo, calçava umas chinelas de tapete; tudo asseado e tudo pobre” (*A Estação*, 15/8/1881, p.183) (“tenía los cabellos despeinados, vestía una bata vieja con adornos de ramajes que fueron vistosos en su tiempo, calzaba unas chinelas de tapiz; todo limpio y todo pobre”). La descripción de la indumentaria cumple la función de localizar socialmente al personaje e indicar su extracción humilde. Máximo, enamorado de una joven de clase elevada, Eulália, decide conquistarla a través de su indumentaria, para lo que se viste con “um paletó à moda, umas calças talhadas por mão de mestre” (*A Estação*, 31/8/1881, p.193) (“un paletó a la moda, unos pantalones confeccionados por la mano de un maestro sastre”). Máximo se presenta ante la joven ataviado de manera elegante, con prendas que contradicen su posición financiera y son de difícil adquisición para su bolsillo. No obstante, su aspecto peca de ridículo y no cumple el efecto deseado, ya que la chaqueta es vieja y ha sido comprada de segunda mano en Rua do Hospício, un lugar apartado del nivel de la élite. Además, como describe el narrador con ironía, tanto la chaqueta al estilo francés obtenida por Máximo como su afición por mujeres de tez pálida,

de acuerdo a los cánones imperantes de belleza europea, revelan unas “intenções estrangeiras e literárias” que no se adecuan a la realidad del personaje, un mestizo perteneciente a las capas más bajas de la sociedad fluminense (*A Estação*, 31/8/1881, p.193) (“intenciones extranjeras y literarias”).

En otros cuentos, Machado recurre directamente a accesorios para mostrar el carácter psicológico de sus personajes e insertarlos en un grupo social. (10) Así, en “Brincar com fogo,” João dos Passos es caracterizado como un dandi a través de una marca inconfundible, su “chapéu fabricado em Paris” (*Jornal das Famílias*, 15/8/1875, p.211) (“sombrero de copa fabricado en París”). Este accesorio pone en antecedentes al lector sobre la desmedida afición por la moda del protagonista y su preocupación por la apariencia. Lo que resulta relevante en la narración no es la convencional trama de enredo y triángulo amoroso, sino la transgresión de los códigos vestimentarios tradicionales y de las normas sociales por parte de João mediante su apego a la moda extranjerizante. Al igual que su insólito sombrero, sus formas y comportamiento pecan de arrogantes y excesivos, y su aire de dandi encarna la degeneración importada frente a los modales puros. De esta forma, la prenda de vestir adquiere un papel fundamental en la construcción del perfil de João, al proporcionar indicios de su comportamiento superficial y liviano, atributos del dandi, y anticipar su oportunismo, deshonestidad e interés material.

De forma similar, en “Um esqueleto,” Machado emplea de nuevo un sombrero para identificar al Dr. Belém. Como apunta el narrador, “No tempo em que me ensinou alemão usava duma grande casaca que lhe chegava quase aos tornozelos e trazia na cabeça um chapéu-de-chile de abas extremamente largas” (*Jornal das Famílias*, 15/10/1875,

p.290) (“En el tiempo que me enseñó alemán llevaba una gran chaqueta que le llegaba casi a los tobillos y en la cabeza un enorme sombrero de paja refinada con alas extremadamente largas”). El extravagante y obsoleto sombrero de paja del Dr. Belém ocupa el primer plano en la descripción e introduce su personalidad singular y excéntrica. En cada uno de los casos textuales señalados, el sombrero incorpora datos internos y externos de los personajes y añade información al texto, además de adelantar la trama narrativa y alertar al lector—o más bien lectora—sobre una clase de hombre no recomendable para el matrimonio.

Años más tarde, Machado publica “Capítulo dos chapéus” que cuenta la disputa conyugal entre Mariana y su marido Henrique Seabra. El motivo del conflicto es el sombrero hongo que Henrique insiste en llevar al trabajo y a reuniones sociales a pesar del disgusto de su esposa y suegro. Como se lamenta el padre de Mariana, el sombrero de Henrique es la “abominação das abominações” y razón de vergüenza pública (*A Estação*, 15/8/1883, p.169) (“abominación de las abominaciones”). A este respecto, Gilda Mello e Souza en *O espírito das roupas* escribe que ciertos accesorios masculinos, entre los que sobresale el sombrero de copa, eran insignia de poder y erotismo hacia la segunda mitad del siglo XIX (75). La utilización del sombrero correcto demostraba que el hombre apreciaba las reglas de la elegancia y etiqueta europea vigentes. Este accesorio masculino figura como un símbolo indispensable para mostrar respetabilidad burguesa y conformidad con las normas sociales. Si bien el sombrero de copa baja u hongo era todavía utilizado, el de copa alta era el accesorio más representativo y valorizado, al señalar dignificación social y comunicar una pretendida imagen de poder.

A partir de esto, se entienden las razones que conducen al padre de Mariana a escandalizarse ante el sombrero de su yerno. Henrique, por su parte, no está de acuerdo en dejar de utilizar la prenda y rechaza la petición de su esposa. En las líneas que siguen, el personaje enfatiza la importancia de su sombrero y afirma que no es solo un accesorio, sino una prolongación orgánica de su cuerpo. Para el personaje, la elección del sombrero se origina en un principio metafísico; es una cuestión profunda de naturaleza científica y su carencia se equipara con una mutilación corporal:

– A escolha do chapéu não é uma ação indiferente, como você pode supor; é regida por um princípio metafísico. Não cuide que quem compra um chapéu exerce uma ação voluntária e livre; a verdade é que obedece a um determinismo obscuro. A ilusão da liberdade existe arraigada nos compradores, e é mantida pelos chapeleiros que, ao verem um freguês ensaiar trinta ou quarenta chapéus, e sair sem comprar nenhum, imaginam que ele está procurando livremente uma combinação elegante. O princípio metafísico é este: *o chapéu é a integração do homem, um prolongamento da cabeça, um complemento decretado ab aeterno; ninguém o pode trocar sem mutilação*. É uma questão profunda que ainda não ocorreu a ninguém ... Ninguém advertiu que há uma metafísica do chapéu. Talvez eu escreva uma memória a este respeito... Quem sabe? *Pode ser até que nem mesmo o chapéu seja complemento do homem, mas o homem do chapéu*. (la cursiva es mía; *A Estação*, 15/8/1883, p.169)

(– La elección de un sombrero no es una acción indiferente, como supones; está regida por un principio metafísico. No creas que quien compra un sombrero ejerce una acción voluntaria y libre; la verdad es que obedece a un determinismo oscuro. La ilusión de la libertad existe arraigada en los compradores y es mantenida por los sombrereros que, al ver a un cliente probarse treinta o cuarenta sombreros y salir de la tienda sin comprar ninguno, imaginan que está buscando libremente una combinación elegante. El principio metafísico es este: *el sombrero es la integración del hombre, una prolongación de la cabeza, un complemento decretado eternamente; ningún hombre puede cambiar de sombrero sin ser mutilado* ... Es una cuestión profunda que todavía no se le ocurrió a nadie... A nadie se le ha ocurrido todavía pararse delante del sombrero de copa y estudiarlo por todos lados. Nadie advirtió que hay una metafísica del sombrero. Tal vez yo escriba una memoria a este respecto... ¿Quién sabe? *Puede ser que hasta el mismo sombrero no sea complemento del hombre, sino el hombre del sombrero*).

Después de la disputa con su marido, Mariana se reúne con su amiga Sofia, una viuda ataviada al último estilo francés que viste un traje de seda color negro y un complicado sombrero parisino. El narrador describe que “o chapéu aumentava-lhe o ar senhoril; e um diabo de vestido de seda preta, arredondando-lhe as formas do busto, fazia-a ainda mais vistosa” (*A Estação*, 31/8/1883, p.180) (“el vistoso sombrero le aumentaba el aire señoril; y un demonio de vestido de seda negra le redondaba las formas del busto, haciéndola todavía más vistosa”). Como indica, Sofia tiene una modista francesa que se encarga de su atuendo y es una ferviente consumidora de revistas de moda. La caracterización moderna del personaje femenino y su extravagante sombrero manifiestan

su carácter independiente y libre, así como su superioridad respecto a Mariana. Ambas mujeres se encaminan al núcleo urbano en Rua do Ouvidor y contemplan desde la ventana de un comercio el desfile de sombreros de copa que atraviesa la calle:

Da janela podia gozar a rua, sem atropelo ... *Alguns chapéus masculinos, parados, começaram a fitá-las; outros, passando, faziam a mesma coisa* ... Sofia, entretanto, contava-lhe a história de alguns chapéus, – ou, mais corretamente, as aventuras. Um deles merecia os pensamentos de Fulana; outro andava derretido por Sicrana, e ela por ele, tanto que eram certos na rua do Ouvidor às quartas e sábados, entre duas e três horas. Mariana ouvia aturdida. *Na verdade, o chapéu era bonito, trazia uma linda gravata, e possuía um ar entre elegante e pelintra* (la cursiva es mía; *A Estação*, 31/8/1883, p.181).

(Desde la ventana podía disfrutar de la calle, sin atropello... *Algunos sombreros masculinos se paraban y comenzaban a mirarlas; otros, pasando, hacían la misma cosa* ... Mientras, Sofia le contaba la historia de algunos *sombreros* – o, más correctamente, de sus aventuras. Uno de ellos merecía los pensamientos de Fulana; otro andaba derretido por Sicrana, y ella por él, tanto es así que algunos de ellos [los sombreros] estaban en la rua do Ouvidor los miércoles y sábado, entre las dos y las tres. Mariana estaba aturdida. En verdad, *el sombrero era bonito, llevaba una hermosa corbata y poseía un aire entre elegante y descarado*).

En este fragmento, Mariana, a través de un procedimiento metonímico, reemplaza a los caballeros por su sombrero que quedan reducidos a meros objetos de adorno. Todos ellos aparecen diluidos en un grupo uniforme de sombreros de copa que viven el mismo tipo de “aventura” y se desplazan por el epicentro de la moda y el consumo. Que, desde la óptica de ambas mujeres, el nombre e identidad de cada uno de los caballeros queden difuminados bajo su accesorio, se vincula con la declaración emitida anteriormente por João: “Pode ser até que nem mesmo o chapéu seja complemento do homem, mas o homem do chapéu” (“Puede ser que hasta el mismo sombrero no sea complemento del hombre, sino el hombre del sombrero”).

Inmerso en el ejército de sombreros, Mariana descubre a su primer novio, al que también describe a través del accesorio: “Tinha na mão um chapéu novo, alto, preto, grave, presidencial, administrativo, um chapéu adequado à pessoa e às ambições” (*A Estação*, 15/9/1883, p.185) (“Tenía en la mano un sombrero nuevo, alto, negro, grave, presidencial, administrativo, un sombrero adecuado a persona de sus ambiciones”). Las atribuciones del sombrero determinan las cualidades de su dueño que, al igual que su prenda, es moderno y aristocrático. El sombrero de copa alta indica una elevada colocación social y refleja la personalidad ambiciosa del joven que ansía medrar socialmente y participar en el espíritu de la modernidad. En cambio, el sombrero hongo del marido de Mariana revela su falta de pretensiones políticas, ya que es un humilde abogado que no desea ocupar ninguna actividad prestigiosa socialmente. El sombrero de copa baja no es solo índice de su falta de preocupación ante los dictados de la moda, sino que además señala su actitud pasiva y falta de codicia, motivo de frustración para su



esposa y suegro. De nuevo, las diferencias de personalidad entre los personajes son demarcadas a través del objeto de moda en cuestión.

La sustitución del sujeto por la prenda de vestir se repite en otros cuentos de Machado escritos para *A Estação*. Este es el caso de “Trina e una” (15/1/1884-15/2/1884) y “O contrato” (29/2/1884). En el primero, la joven casadera Doña Clara no habla de hombres sino de “calças”: “Já falei das calças masculinas, que de quando em quando cortam o raio visual da nossa dama” (p.139) (“Ya he hablado de los pantalones, que de cuando en cuando cortan el rayo visual de nuestra dama”). Finalmente, acaba casándose con un par de pantalones (Don Severiano) que conoce en una tienda ubicada, una vez más, en Rua do Ouvidor. El protagonista masculino es, por ende, transformado en unos pantalones, una prenda utilitaria cuya posesión favorecerá que Clara acceda a la clase alta. Como expresa el amigo de Severiano, Matias, la joven “casaria com o diabo, se fosse necessário” (*A Estação*, 15/2/1884) (“se casaría con el diablo si fuese necesario”). La identidad y particularidades del pretendiente son reemplazadas por su prenda, sin ofrecerse información sobre su personalidad o carácter. Mientras, en el cuento “O contrato,” dos jóvenes casaderas contraen matrimonio con dos accesorios. Laura con “uma das mais tímidas gravatas que tem andado por esse mundo” (“una de las corbatas más tímidas que han andado por este mundo”) y Josefina con un sombrero de copa parisino (*A Estação*, 29/2/1884). La originalidad narrativa de “O Contrato” radica en que las particularidades físicas y psicológicas de los pretendientes se difuminan en contacto con el accesorio que portan.

Los cuentos de Machado documentan de qué forma los artículos de vestir alcanzan una centralidad inusitada, supliendo y absorbiendo la identidad del sujeto, cuyo único

cometido es el de ser un objeto a la moda. Se supera así la identificación ontológica cartesiana sujeto/objeto propia del racionalismo moderno, según la cual el sujeto manipula al objeto y es el único productor de significados. Por el contrario, el objeto aparece como un agente productivo que participa en el orden social e interviene activamente en la formación de categorías identitarias. Esta estrategia narrativa establece conexiones con recientes paradigmas en la crítica literaria que persiguen revalorizar el papel de lo material en la historia social y cultural. (11) Bill Brown, principal exponente de “thing theory,” tomando como fundamento la obra de Arjun Appadurai *The Social Life of Things*, dirige la atención hacia el plano de la materia, destacando la significación cultural de objetos y cosas. Para Appadurai, los objetos, lejos de constituir entes inertes, inmóviles y pasivos, se hallan revestidos de “social life” (4). En esta misma línea, “thing theory” comprende nuevos pensamientos “about how inanimate objects constitute human subjects, how they move them, how they threaten them, how they facilitate or threaten their relation to other subjects ... [about] how they [inanimate objects] organize our private and public affection” (Brown 7).

Trasladando estos preceptos teóricos a los textos aquí analizados, se observa cómo los objetos materiales ejercen una capacidad de acción que supera el plano de lo humano, poniendo de relieve ansiedades producto de la modernización. La relación que se establece entre el sujeto y el accesorio genera un profundo conflicto de identidad, ya que el segundo borra la identidad del primero. Las prendas de ropa parecen transmitir que no hay individualidad y que el ser humano, inserto en la modernidad capitalista y el consumo masificado, no es más que una mercancía utilitaria sin control sobre el orden material en derredor. Resulta relevante que sean precisamente objetos de moda los encargados de

transformar al sujeto y que la mayor parte de ellos se localicen en Rua do Ouvidor, el núcleo del comercio y el consumo. Recurriendo a accesorios, Machado parece aludir a las consecuencias de la expansión de la moda, un fenómeno decimonónico que, de acuerdo a James Laver, surge con la emergencia de grandes almacenes, el crecimiento de las ciudades y el capitalismo mercantil global (21-23). Como sugiere el escritor brasileño, la moda y los cambios socio-culturales asociados a esta pueden suponer una amenaza, puesto que detentan la capacidad de alienar y reducir al hombre a un simple objeto de adorno carente de rasgos individuales.

Por añadidura, las prendas de vestir arrojan información sobre las nuevas dinámicas de género, resultado de los profundos cambios socio-culturales y económicos acaecidos a mitad de siglo. Las protagonistas, escudadas en su afición a la moda y el consumo, ostentan cierta autonomía, penetrando en la esfera pública con libertad. Las tensiones en torno a los roles de género se evidencian en “Capítulo dos chapéus,” “Trina e una” y “O Contrato,” en los que la mirada femenina “deshumaniza” y “cosifica” al hombre, revirtiendo la estructura patriarcal que imperaba en las instituciones de la época. Si el hombre había sido tradicionalmente el factor dominante que controlaba la visión de la mujer y la objetificaba (Butler 80), en los textos machadianos se muestra al hombre como un indumento a merced del deseo femenino.

El mecanismo de objetificación sartorial se extiende a otras temáticas que giran en torno a cuestiones de distinción racial y jerarquía social. Esto se demuestra en “História comum” (*A Estação*, 15/4/1883), donde el narrador-protagonista es un alfiler de uso vulgar “desses com que as mulheres do povo pregam os lenços de chita, e as damas de sociedade os fichus, ou as flores, ou isto, ou aquilo” (*A Estação*, 15/4/1883, p.73) (“de

esos con los que las mujeres del pueblo prenden los tejidos de *chita* [tejido de algodón popular con flores y colores vivos] y las damas de sociedad los *fichus* [pañuelos], o las flores, o esto, o aquello”). La función del vulgar alfiler es únicamente utilitaria, distinta a los ornamentales que se empleaban para adornar y embellecer la vestimenta femenina. El objeto es adquirido por Felicidade, una mucama negra, cuyo trabajo consiste en coser ropas elegantes y confeccionar complementos para las esposas de comerciantes acomodados. En el cuento, el alfiler-narrador refiere la celebración de un baile en casa del desembargador para el cual:

As senhoras preparavam-se com esmero e afinco, cuidavam das rendas, sedas, luvas, flores, brilhantes, leques, sapatos; não se pensava em outra cousa senão no baile do desembargador. Bem quisera eu saber o que era um baile, e ir a ele mas uma tal ambição podia nascer na cabeça de um alfinete, que não saía do lenço de uma triste mucama? – Certamente que não. O remédio era ficar em casa (*A Estação*, 15/4/1883, p.73).

(Las señoras se preparaban con esmero y tesón, cuidaban de los encajes, sedas, guantes, flores, brillantes, abanicos, zapatos; no se pensaba en otra cosa sino en el baile del desembargador. Bien quisiera saber lo que era un baile, e ir a él pero, ¿tal ambición podía nacer en la cabeza de un alfiler que no salía del pañuelo de una triste mucama? Ciertamente no. El remedio era quedarse en casa).

Como advierte Souza, los bailes de sociedad eran los principales espacios de exposición de la moda, donde se exhibían los últimos avances vestimentarios. Los complementos y accesorios eran considerados seña de poder y de pertenencia a la clase aristocrática (145). Quien más ayuda en el acicalamiento de las damas es la obediente mucama Felicidade que “ia de um lado para outro, solícita, obediente, meiga, sorrindo a todas, abotoando uma, puxando as saias de outra, compondo a cauda desta, concertando o diadema daquela” (*A Estação*, 15/4/1883, p.73) (“iba de un lado para otro, solícita, obediente, cariñosa, sonriendo a todas, abotonando a una, estirando las faldas de otra, componiendo la cola de esta, arreglando la diadema de aquella”). A pesar de aderezar a las jóvenes para el baile, Felicidade no puede disfrutar de la fiesta, debido a su condición de esclava negra y a su pertenencia a una clase social humilde. Al contemplar los preparativos, el narrador confiesa que siente envidia de otros alfileres: “Quando os via ir da boca da mucama, que os tirava da *toilette*, para o corpo das moças, dizia comigo, que era bem bom ser alfinete de damas, e damas bonitas que iam a festas” (*A Estação*, 15/4/1883, p.73) (“Cuando los veía ir a la boca de la mucama, que los sacaba de la *toilette* y los prendía al cuerpo de las muchachas, decía para mí que era bien bueno ser alfiler de damas, y de damas bonitas que van a fiestas”).

Con el transcurso del relato, Clarinha, una de las jóvenes damas ya dentro del coche, deja caer una rosa que llevaba prendida del pecho. Al no haber tiempo para buscar un alfiler ornamental en condiciones, Felicidade entrega el suyo a la joven, lo que permite que el narrador se infiltre en la fiesta aristocrática. Durante el baile, Clarinha y su enamorado Florêncio conversan. Una vez que este le pide matrimonio, ella le entrega la

rosa que lleva sujeta al vestido, arrojando con indiferencia el alfiler desde el balcón, lo que señala su función prescindible y fútil. Por último, el accesorio finaliza su destino cayendo sobre el sombrero de copa parisino de un caballero que en aquel preciso instante pasaba bajo el balcón.

De esta forma, el “alfinete” absorbe la identidad de la mucama y penetra en una fiesta que le es vedada por su condición social y racial. Pese a su humilde condición y frente a todo pronóstico, el vulgar objeto logra ascender en la escala social y colocarse en lo más alto de la modernidad, como simboliza el sombrero de copa. El escritor brasileño aborda asuntos de igualdad social y diferenciación racial mediante la representación de accesorios en otros relatos. En “A agulha e a linha,” una aguja y un ovillo de lana se encargan de bordar aderezos parisinos mientras dialogan sobre los derechos del trabajador (*Gazeta de Notícias*, 1/3/1885). Por su parte, en “Filosofia de um par de botas,” unas botas “novas, bonitas, asseadas” dispuestas en un lujoso escaparate de Rua do Ouvidor discuten temas políticos en boga (*O Cruzeiro*, 23/4/1878) (“nuevas, bonitas, limpias”).

En suma, los accesorios en la producción periodística de Machado adquieren una multiplicidad de significados: funcionan como signos deícticos dentro del texto, sirven para caracterizar a tipos sociales como el dandi y reflejan los peligros del consumo a través de una serie de personajes masculinos que, por mor de su excesiva familiaridad con la moda, son reemplazados por sus complementos. En cada caso, la materialización del accesorio en la prensa de modas documenta las contradicciones y ambigüedades inherentes al fenómeno de la modernidad iberoamericana (Ramos; Alonso). Si, por un lado, existe un intento por copiar y emular la moda francesa, por el otro, esta posee un carácter desestabilizador e incompatible con la realidad brasileña. El objeto cumple la

función simbólica de incorporar al sujeto latinoamericano en la modernidad y mostrar distanciamiento respecto de la tradición de la ex-metrópoli. Simultáneamente, advierte sobre los peligros de la moda que pone en riesgo los valores tradicionales. En cualquier caso, los accesorios se convierten en espacios simbólicos primarios para el trabajo ideológico de la modernidad. Operan como una “marca” de lo moderno y permiten evaluar, desde una perspectiva “material,” el complejo advenimiento de la modernidad en la recién formada nación brasileña.

En último lugar, este ensayo ha introducido cuestiones que merecen ser investigadas con mayor profundidad en el futuro, tales como la conexión entre Machado y otros intelectuales cercanos a su tiempo que se valen del discurso de la moda en revistas femeninas y, similarmente, emplean prendas de vestir con valor metafórico. (12) Así también, el caso de la revista *A Estação* plantea la poco explorada relación que mantiene la modernidad con su público lector femenino, el que, como apunta José María Martínez en “El público femenino del modernismo,” probablemente fuera el mayoritario (15). En este sentido, resulta indispensable recuperar las revistas femeninas de modas decimonónicas con el fin de determinar su importancia en la creación de públicos lectores y en la diseminación de los imaginarios latinoamericanos de la modernidad.

### Notas

(1). Cabe señalar el dossier “Machado e a moda” de la revista electrónica *Machado em linha* de la Universidad de São Paulo publicado en abril de 2017. (<http://machadodeassis.fflch.usp.br/node/30>)

(2). La noción de “modernidad” ha sido extensamente teorizada en el ámbito ibérico y latinoamericano sin que exista un consenso crítico. De cara a este ensayo considero que “modernidad” se aplica tanto al proceso de industrialización y urbanización que caracteriza la modernización como a “the more general experience of aestheticization of everyday life, as exemplified in the ephemeral and transitory qualities of an urban

culture shaped by the imperatives of fashion, consumerism, and constant innovation” (Felski 13).

(3). Todas las traducciones del portugués al castellano que aparecen en este ensayo son mías. Las citas extraídas de *A Estação* y de otras revistas mencionadas se han obtenido de sus versiones digitalizadas, disponibles en la Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira (<http://memoria.bn.br/>) (Acceso: diciembre 2016 y enero de 2017)

(4). La relación entre moda y modernidad, iniciada por Charles Baudelaire en su breve ensayo “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863), ha sido abordada por una nutrida nómina de autores, entre los que destacan George Simmel (“The Philosophy of Fashion”), Walter Benjamin (*The Arcades Project*), Ulrich Lehmann (*Tigersprung*), Elizabeth Wilson (*Adorned in Dreams*), Valerie Steele (*Paris Fashion*) y Christopher Breward y Caroline Evans (*Fashion and Modernity*).

(5). *A Estação* también contaba con la producción de otros escritores de reconocida competencia. Destacan, en poesía, Olavo Bilac, Raymundo Correa, Alberto de Oliveira, Luiz Murat y Guimarães Passos; en narrativa, Macedo, Lúcio de Mendonça, Luiz Guimarães Júnior y Júlia Lopes de Almeida; y, en crónica, Arthur Azevedo.

(6). Para un análisis exhaustivo de *Die Modenwelt* y su proyección transnacional, remito al ensayo de Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva “From Germany to Brazil.”

(7). La colaboración de Machado se inicia el 31 de enero de 1879 con el cuento “Curiosidade” y finaliza el 31 de marzo de 1898 con la última parte de “Relógio parado.” El escritor además redactó cuentos relacionados con la moda en *Jornal das Famílias* (1863-1878) y *Gazeta de Notícias* (1875-1895). Sobre la producción literaria de Machado en estos últimos periódicos, consultar Bruna da Silva Nunes.

(8). Alexandra Santos Pinheiro explica que la marcada ideología conservadora que caracteriza las revistas femeninas de la época se debe a que los padres y esposos pagaban la suscripción fija y a que era necesario educar en la moral a la mujer lectora. Sin embargo, parte de la crítica considera que *A Estação*, al mantener una estrecha relación con París, posee una línea más liberal y progresista que otras coetáneas como *Jornal das Famílias* (Gledson 17-19).

(9). Para una aproximación teórica a la imagen femenina decimonónica de “ángel del hogar,” remito a Bridget A. Aldaraca (100-108) y Catherine Jagoe (87-90).

(10). En *The Psychology of Clothes*, el psicoanalista John C. Flügel profundiza en la dimensión psicológica de la moda e incide en sus implicaciones colectivas e individuales.

(11). Otros autores que engloban esta tendencia académica son Bruno Latour (*Reassembling the Social*); Mauriza Boscagli (*Stuff Theory*); y Jane Bennett (*Vibrant Matter*).



(12). Por mencionar algunos ejemplos, en Argentina, se encuentran Domingo F. Sarmiento y Juan B. Alberdi; en París, Rubén Darío; y, en España, Mariano José de Larra.

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## **French Fashion and Crisis of Spanish National Identity in Galdós's *La de Bringas***

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### **Introduction**

Since the Middle Ages, female attraction to fashion and sartorial goods has been disparaged by male critics and described as vanity and superficiality that negatively affected the moral and domestic life of women (1). Dorota Heneghan, in her article about fashion and modernity, offers a distinct perspective on the importance of clothing and fashion in Galdós's novels, focusing on *La de Bringas* (1884). Heneghan discusses the importance of fashion for the creation of a modern female persona that challenges the nineteenth-century image of *ángel del hogar*. She depicts fashion in *La de Bringas* not only as a commodity fetish or private vice, as previously described by critics such as Akiko Tsuchiya, Bridget Aldaraca and Paul Smith, but as a tool for literary construction of gender:

Rosalía's passion for finery and inordinate love for sartorial goods have traditionally been interpreted as evidence of egotism, social ambition, and/or the cause of her moral decline. More recently, critics have explained the protagonist's penchant for self-adornment as an expression of her repressed sexuality (Tsuchiya), a manifestation of her secretly experienced emancipation from her husband's tutelage (Aldaraca "Revolution of 1868"), and as a sign of her alienation from male society (Smith). Although these interpretations are enlightening, nevertheless, by reducing the

protagonist's fascination with clothing to a private vice and the meaning of her elegant outfits to a commodity fetish, such views tend to diminish fashion's significance in Galdós' literary construction of the cultural image of gender. (Heneghan 3)

In her recently published book about fashion in Galdós, Pardo Bazán and Picón, Heneghan further develops her argument and states that fashion is a key feature of modernity that helps bring to light the problematic formation of modern femininity and masculinity in Galdós's novels: "Through his portrayals of the fashion-oriented characters' burning desire to advance the past and look modern and, at the same time, their lack of initiative and/or opportunity to break away from the dominant gender constructs, Galdós denounced Spain's irregular (at times more apparent than real) progress toward modernity" (*Striking* 13).

While I acknowledge and embrace Heneghan's innovative approach to a more substantial analysis of fashion in Galdós' novel, I propose a discussion of French fashion in *La de Bringas* not only as Galdós' key feature for portrayal of (stifled) progress toward modernity, but as a bitter acknowledgment of crisis of the Spanish national identity. The solution of this crisis is impossible in the proposed form; the contemporary model of modernity for Spain was France, the old imperial rival, which culturally colonized Spain through *afrancesamiento* in the nineteenth century.

The complicated geopolitical relationship (2) that existed between these two nations since before the Napoleonic era is crucial in explaining non-acceptance of modernity in Spain. At the same time, the loss of the colonies and imperial power was a bitter reality for Spain at the end of the nineteenth century, which made the traditional

national/imperial image impossible to maintain. This clash between inability to accept modernity and incapacity to maintain traditional values is personified in *La de Bringas* through two characters: the protagonist Rosalía de Bringas, and Manuel Pez, an influential bureaucrat and family friend. Their destinies symbolize the simultaneous failure of two national fictions in the novel—Spain cannot accept or reproduce the modernity of France (Rosalía), but it cannot rely on the traditional, romantic past either, because the time of glorious imperial masculinity is over (Pez) (3)—which only deepens the crisis of Spanish national identity.

In the following pages, I study fashion in *La de Bringas* as an expression of and commentary on the French cultural colonization of Spain through Rosalía and Pez. I demonstrate how French fashion contributes to the *afrancesamiento* of the Spanish nation, exemplified through Rosalía's obsession with French garments, her willingness to do anything to procure them and use of French language among her friends. I also comment how French fashion affects Rosalía's self-confidence, seemingly makes out of her a subject and helps her decolonize herself from domesticity and the patriarchal ideal of *ángel del hogar*, but how, eventually, excessive consumption increases her dependence on men. Finally, I discuss how colonization by French fashion and customs reveals the crisis of Spanish conventional/imperial masculinity through Pez's lack of traditional values and passivity before the invasion of foreign trends.

Before entering the analysis of fashion in *La de Bringas*, I will ground my approach with a brief description of the geopolitical situation in Spain, and Europe, at the end of the nineteenth century, as well as explain *afrancesamiento* and changes in Spanish national fashion trends. This will clarify and justify the connection between French

fashion in *La de Bringas* and the geopolitical context, as well as the unacceptable modernity and the crisis of national identity that I discuss.

### **History and Geopolitics**

The nineteenth century was a period of substantial changes on the European political scene, especially at the turn of the century when “old” empires, including Spain, lost the majority of their overseas colonies and when “new” empires were being formed. Eric Hobsbawm explains this by commenting that the era between 1875-1914 was the period of a new type of empire—the colonial one—dominated by Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, the USA and Japan. The ancient surviving pre-industrial European empires of Spain and Portugal were the victims of this process, as their power declined, and loss of territories was rapid (67) (4).

According to several authors, (Hobsbawm, José Álvarez Junco, Balfour), the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century were the peak of European nationalism and imperial expansion. To maintain the illusion of imperial power, Spain’s ruling structures tried to preserve traditional values and national imagery, which sustained the *status quo* and led to xenophobia and stifled modernization of the country. Every influence that came from outside, especially France, was considered anti-Spanish and anti-traditional by conservatives: “Los modernizadores eran ‘extranjerizantes, antiespañoles, afrancesados’” (Álvarez Junco 116).

Consuelo Maqueda Abreu explains the geopolitical situation in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century:

[L]a Europa de esta centuria basculó entre el afrancesamiento y la anglomanía, dos enfermedades que afectaron a los españoles y que Nipho critica, considerándolo como ‘enfermedad que ha quitado muchos espíritus’; pero es un europeo y posee una imagen de este continente como un triángulo perfecto: en un lado, Inglaterra; en el otro, Francia y en el centro, España, posiciones que les hacen, más tarde o más temprano, tener que luchar por la hegemonía. (143)

For Spain, the most important enemy in terms of the hegemony of its national identity was France (Álvarez Junco 248) (5). The influence of France on Spanish customs and common life in the nineteenth century, which was believed to corrupt the moral life of Spain, was known as *afrancesamiento*.

Luis Barbastro Gil explains that *afrancesamiento* is a political matter, which evidences “la fragilidad del sistema político español a comienzos del siglo XIX, la hegemonía política de Francia en el concierto internacional de esta época y en la propia política interior española” (8). The origin of the Francophobia “podría remontarse a las interminables guerras de los siglos XVI y XVII entre las dos grandes monarquías del mundo católico, los Habsburgo y los Valois/Borbones” (Álvarez Junco 122). The beginning of the *afrancesamiento* of Spain, according to Federico Suárez, was in the 1700s when the first Bourbon, Felipe V, came to the throne (44). The culmination of animosity against France was at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Independence War against Napoleon started, but this feeling remained throughout the century (6).



Jesús Torrecilla comments, when talking about Spanish realism, that “[c]omplaints against French cultural hegemony can be found everywhere in Spain at that time” (100). Galdós’s novels were a significant example of critique of *afrancesamiento*. He was one of the liberal writers, besides Pardo Bazán, Clarín, Pareda and Alarcón, who was hostile towards French realism. This hostility, explained by Torrecilla, is in some instances “justified by its immorality and absence of religious values, but also, and above all, because these authors perceive the new trend as a humiliating imposition of French cultural hegemony” (100). Galdós himself writes pejoratively about *afrancesamiento* of Spanish literature and culture as unnatural: “Ya desde principios del siglo pasado, la reforma de la etiqueta, la venida de los Borbones, la irrupción de la moda francesa, comenzaron a *desnaturalizar* nuestra aristocracia (“Observaciones” 165). His disapproval and critique of French literary and cultural models is also visible when he describes French novels as “*peste nacida* en Francia, y que se ha difundido con la pasmosa rapidez de todos los males contagiosos” (“Observaciones” 164, emphasis added).

### **Fashion and Geopolitics**

The *afrancesamiento* of the customs and culture in Spain was most visible in fashion. Maqueda Abreu comments that the “clases cultas” were the most affected by it and she describes Richard Ford’s, a distinguished British traveler who spent long time in Spain and considered himself Spanish, opinion about it: “La crisis del Antiguo Régimen está cargada de un sentimiento, de un odio frontal de extranjeros y entre ellos resalta particularmente Ford, que desprecia el *afrancesamiento* de las clases cultas que se

manifiesta en trajes, haciéndolo público en su *Guía*, en la que alaba a las clases bajas, frente a las otras, porque dice que son superiores.” (196)

According to Carmen Bernis, the first echoes of French fashion were present in Spain before 1640, but it was the establishment of the Bourbons in Spain in 1700 that shook the strong national character of the Spanish garment (201). Ana María Velasco more specifically points out that it was Fernando VII (1784-1833), and his wife María Cristina de Borbón, the parents of Isabel II referenced in *La de Bringas*, who installed French fashion in Spain with their garments (159). However, it was with Isabel II that European (French) fashion triumphed in Spain (Velasco, 160).

During the period of Isabel II, Spain was internally divided between foreign and domestic elements in fashion, culture, customs and finally, as well observed by Velasco, its own (national) essence: “Se identifica lo foráneo como sofisticado y se rechaza lo propio—sobre todo lo castizo, tan querido en los tiempos napoleónicos—por vulgar. Los aristócratas incluso hablaban en francés” (162). This testifies to the political character of fashion in the nineteenth century. Or as Ana María Diaz Marco’s explains, in the nineteenth century, fashion becomes an important ingredient of history, frequently employed by novelists for expression of the spirit of the epoch (*Zeitgeist*) (135) (7).

### **National (Fashion) Allegory in *La de Bringas***

Galdós employs fashion in *La de Bringas* to create an image of the political and social atmosphere of the period and crisis of the national identity. Through fashion, he portrays the social circumstances of Madrilenian bourgeoisie prior to the Revolution of 1868—*afrancesamiento* of the middle classes and failed imitation of the French model,

the downfall of Spanish traditional values, as well as the decay of Isabel II, which ends with her exile to France (8).

Peter Bly, in his canonical work about Galdós, describes *La de Bringas* as the best example of Galdós's novel of historical imagination or historical allegory (61). In *La de Bringas*, Galdós avoids the direct linkage to historical events or figures, but cues parallels between its main characters and historical monarchs: Queen Isabela and Rosalía, King Francisco and Francisco de Bringas. These cues were ample to support the connection, especially for contemporary readers.

The center of the narrative is the Royale Palace in Madrid, where the Royals Isabela II and Francisco reside, as well as the protagonists—the Bringas family—in one of the Royal apartments. As explained in the novel, the Bringas lived in one of the spaces meant for employees of the Palace, far from the Royal luxury that Rosalía desired: “[L]a familia vivía en Palacio en una de las habitaciones del piso segundo que sirven de albergue a los empleados de la Casa Real” (18). In order to get to their apartment on the second floor, Francisco had to climb one hundred and twenty-four steps and the entire stairway was in the form of a labyrinth, as witnessed by the narrator and Manuel Pez during their first visit: “La primera vez que don Manuel Pez y yo fuimos a visitar a Bringas en su nuevo domicilio, nos perdimos en aquel *dédalo* donde ni él ni yo habíamos entrado nunca” (19, emphasis added). The living arrangement of the Bringas family and convoluted way of getting to it reflect the confusion of their own, as well as national, identity, trapped between the grandiose shine of the frenchified aristocracy and cruel reality of the post-imperial decadentism.

Bly explains the allegory of the living space of the Bringas family as connected to the political and social circumstances of the moment:

The image of the quarters as a city placed above the roof of the royal apartments, immediately and confusingly reminding the reader of the real city of Madrid below, suggests an overweight, ill-proportioned Royal Palace which might topple over. The final image of the servants' quarters as 'una real república' extends the representativeness to a national level: one might conclude that the whole of Spain is quartered atop these royal apartments, as in one sense it is, because of the traditional and spiritual bond between the Monarch and her people symbolized by the crown. The image of the republic applied to the Monarch's servants is, of course, highly ironic; but it is also prophetic: The Bourbons will be overthrown, toppled over by the nation that they are supposed to serve. As a result of this revolutionary process, a republic will eventually be established. (62)

In other words, the Royal Palace and couple are also representations of the Spanish nation and the crisis of national identity (Noël Valis 14). The Royal couple of French descent is the source of *afrancesamiento* of the Madrilenian bourgeoisie and middle classes, who, through imitation of French fashion and customs try to maintain an appearance of nobility. Conflict between modern/foreign and traditional forces topples the monarchies, both allegorical and historical.

### **French Fashion as Class Imitation**

George Simmel comments that fashion itself is defined through imitation, as a tool for establishing one's place in society: "La moda es imitación de un modelo dado, y satisface así la necesidad de apoyarse en la sociedad; conduce al individuo por la vía que todos llevan" (73). Similarly, as commented by Díaz Marcos, critics like Valerie Steele see fashion as a tool for creation of one's own image and identity, even if the improvement is made through imitation: "la dinámica de la moda conjuga el deseo de imitación y el de diferenciación: ser como otros y al mismo tiempo ser 'diferente'" (Díaz Marcos 51). In this sense, imitation in fashion made possible the apparent fluidity of social classes: "La interpretación de la moda como imitación de las clases superiores destaca su función como marcadora de clase" (Díaz Marcos 36). Exactly this is the essence of the problem with imitation of French fashion expressed in *La de Bringas*: Spanish bourgeoisie and middle classes do not create or improve their own image by imitating a French model, they aspire to be French. In this way, they lose their national essence, while only superficially improving their social status and image. As very well presented in *La de Bringas* the "improvement in class" through French fashion is false and based on just appearances.

Rosalía mentions several times the importance of appearances for her family. It is very important for her that her children look well and that they represent her impeccable taste and social status: "[Y]a se había provisto de figurines, y proyectaba cosas no vistas para que Isabelita y Alfonso publicaran en la plaza de Oriente, entre la festiva república de niños, el buen gusto de su opulenta mamá" (194). This is because she believed herself to be of a noble origin, an aristocratic woman (9) who deserves a good life, which unfortunately her husband is not providing for her: "Al lado de Bringas no había

gozado ella ni comodidades, ni representación, ni placeres, ni grandeza, ni lujo, nada de lo que le corresponda por derecho de su hermosura y de su ser genuinamente aristocrático” (168).

The real social status of the Bringas family is exposed several times in the work. Francisco becomes worried about the amount he will have to pay to his doctor, which may be increased because of Rosalía’s bogus elegance: “‘Señor don Francisco: ayer vi a su señora salir de misa de doce en San Ginés...¡Siempre tan elegante!’ Pues tu dichosa elegancia va a ser el cuchillo con que ese hombre me va a segar el cuello” (206). Rosalía’s hair style is also described as a representation of her “true image”: “[S]u peinado era *primitivo*, y en su bata se podían estudiar por inducción todas las incidencias del gobierno *de una casa pobre*” (170, emphasis added). Another example of “false nobility” and “appearances” is provided when Rosalía discovers that the Bringas won’t be able to go on a vacation, out of the city, like “the rest of the aristocrats”: “Tener que decir: ‘No hemos salido este verano’ era una declaración de pobreza y cursilería que se negaban a formular los aristocráticos labios de la hija de los Pipaones y Calderones de la Barca, de aquella ilustre representante de una dinastía de criados palatinos” (203).

### **French Fashion as Ostensible Liberation**

On the other hand, Rosalía feels liberated and elevated to the image of whom she aspires to be, physically, with the help of French fashion: “La única presunción que conservaba era la de llevar siempre su mejor corsé para que no se le desbaratase el cuerpo.” (170). French fashion, and the appearance of wealth and style that it buys her, also seem to initiate Rosalía’s emancipation and separation from the chains of

domesticity: “Hacía planes de emancipación gradual, y estudiaba frases con que pronto debía manifestar su firme intento de romper aquella tonta y ridícula esclavitud” (181). Her “slavery” was that of married woman in Spain in the nineteenth century—she was expected to be an angelical mother and wife and nothing more or less: “La pobre señora era una mártir de los insufribles métodos de su marido, y no podía retrasar su vuelta a la casa, porque si la comida no estaba puesta en la mesa a la hora precisa, don Francisco bufaba y decía cosas muy desagradables, como, por ejemplo: ‘Hijita, me tienes muerto de debilidad. Otra vez avisa, y comeremos solos’” (93). Yet, the price of Rosalía’s “freedom” is very high: lies and malversations behind her husband’s back, fear of getting caught and later even prostitution. The fact that she ends up as a prostitute negates the value of her newly achieved freedom, because she, again, existentially depends on men (10).

A special role in Rosalía’s formation as a subject, even temporarily, is reserved for her dressing room, or *Camón*. This is one place in Francisco de Bringas’ domestic kingdom that is safe from his influence, in which Rosalía is the omnipotent ruler. Elena Delgado comments on this: “En mi opinión, Rosalía siente, ya desde *Tormento*, al matrimonio como una ‘jaula’ y el *Camón* se constituye por el contrario en el único lugar donde la autoridad domestica establecida por Bringas, basada en los principios del orden y el ahorro, queda subvertida” (37). This is where all her dresses are, where she spends time with her friend Milagros and talks about fashion. However, *Camón* is not only a place separated from the rest of the house and her husband’s influence, but from Spain too. It is a French space in which Rosalía and her friends talk about French fashion and style, using French terms and expressions: *pouff*, *chic*, *gros glasé*, *biés*, *retroussé*, *ruche*.

This is a practical and direct example of *afrancesamiento*, its influence on Spaniards and cultural colonization of Spain by France.

### **Split from Spanish Tradition to Attain French Modernism**

The French colonization of Spain through fashion is also exemplified by the rare use and degradation of *mantilla* by female characters. The traditional Spanish veil *mantilla* is mentioned twice in relation to women—once when Rosalía puts it on to go to Refugio, a woman of a lower social class who earns money by selling fabrics and pieces of clothing, to ask for a loan and the second time when Refugio is getting ready to go ask another friend for the money she would loan to Rosalía. Both times the *mantilla* is a “casual” outfit, not elegant or representative, as *mantilla* traditionally was. Velasco explains that *mantilla* was a quintessential Spanish item, a symbol of *majismo* that was worn by ladies of both high and low social classes. Its disuse, which started approximately around 1830 with the slow ascent of French fashion, according to Velasco, offers an example of the conflict traditional/Spanish vs. modern/French (163-64).

On the other hand, there are numerous mentions of Rosalía’s beauty in French garments. When Rosalía tries a cape (*manteleta*), just like one that was worn by the Queen, her friend Milagros tells her: “¡Qué bien, qué bien!...A ver, vuélvete...¿Sabes que me da no sé qué quitártela? No, no te la quites [...] Es tuya por derecho de conquista. ¡Es que tienes un cuerpo!” (57). On another occasion, when Rosalía puts on a dress made of *Mozambique*, a luxurious and expensive material, her friend again praises her beauty and elegance: “Sí es usted elegantísima..., si cuanto usted se pone resulta maravilloso. La verdad, no es porque sea usted mi amiga...A todo el mundo lo digo: si usted quisiera,



no tendría rival. ¡Qué cuerpo, qué caída de hombros! *Francamente, usted, siempre que se quiere vestir, oscurece cuanto se le pone al lado*” (131, emphasis added). Rosalía’s friend’s praises are obviously exaggerated and ironic, and one more of Galdós’s ways of criticizing the superficiality of the frenchified middle bourgeoisie.

Still, French fashion highlights Rosalía’s beauty and makes of her a real seductress. Rosalía herself mentions how many rich suitors she has had: “Ocho años antes, el marqués de Fúcar, que con frecuencia la veía en casa de Milagros, le había hecho la corte. ¿Y ella?..., un puerco espín. Y no era sólo el marqués de Fúcar su único admirador. Otros muchos, y todos ricos, habíanle manifestado con insistente galantería que estaban dispuestos a hacer cualquier disparate” (227). Besides, as observed by Bridget Aldaraca, French fashion gives Rosalía class status and with it, social power: “Class status permits access to power, which is, in turn, the prerequisite for entering into the game of power” (55). However, this attractiveness and ostensible power achieved with French fashion only makes Rosalía’s enslavement by patriarchy easier, through prostitution.

Rosalía is not an isolated case of *afrancesamiento* of the middle bourgeoisie and its appearance of class and nobility, but rather a prototype. This is confirmed in the novel itself when Refugio describes the falsity and superficiality of Madrid’s numerous “poor aristocracy”:

Y aquí, *salvo media docena, todos son pobres. Facha, señora, y nada más que facha*. Esta gente no entiende de comodidades dentro de casa. Viven en la calle, y por vestirse bien y poder ir al teatro, hay familia que se mantiene todo el año con tortillas de

patatas... Conozco señoras de empleados que están cesantes la mitad del año, y da gusto verlas tan guapetonas. Parecen duquesas, y los niños principitos. ¿Cómo es eso? Yo no lo sé. Dice un caballero que yo conozco, que de esos misterios está lleno Madrid. *Muchas no comen para poder vestirse*; pero algunas se las arreglan de otro modo... (257, emphasis added)

### **French Fashion and Crisis of Masculinity**

From this we can conclude that Spain was a nation of superficial appearances and imitation in the nineteenth century, a nation that had lost its own national values. An example of this loss and final confirmation of the deep crisis of national identity is an ironic presentation of traditional Spanish man, Pez, Bringas' friend and Rosalía's ideal of manhood: “[E]l señor de Pez, su ideal...¡Oh, qué hombre tan extraordinario y fascinador! ¡Qué elevación de miras, qué superioridad! [...] ¡Y qué finura y distinción de modales, qué generosidad caballeresca! (157). She admires Pez's manners and stylishness: “¡Y aquel modo de peinarse, tan sencillo y tan señor al mismo tiempo; aquel discreto uso de finos perfumes, aquella olorosa cartera de cuero de Rusia, aquellos modales finos y aquel hablar pomposo, diciendo las cosas de dos o tres maneras para que fueran mejor comprendidas...!” (134).

As commented by Heneghan, Pez is completely different from Rosalía's stingy husband Francisco, who saves on a soap and neglects his appearance. But exactly this focus on his exterior is what makes Pez similar to the figure of *dandy* and what ultimately casts “doubt on the protagonists's adherence to models of conventional masculinity” (*Striking* 50).

As a part of Galdós's ironic presentation of the Spanish masculinity of the moment, the novel is full of descriptions of Pez's *caballería* and traditional values, expressed by Rosalía, but also the narrator himself. As readers, we are frequently overwhelmed by the praise of Pez's qualities and virtues. He seems a hope for the recovery of old ideals: "Era este Pez el hombre más correcto que se podía ver, modelo excelente del empleado que llaman *alto*" (63). He is the "real Spanish man", caballero, romantic, from times of Spain's greatest imperial power.

Bly similarly comments on Pez's important role in Spanish society: "Pez is ideally placed to be the man who possesses the inner secrets of Spain's recent history, the expert who, having seen governments at work from inside, can suggest remedies for the nation's problems" (72). He considers himself superior to his contemporaries and representative of old, "better" times:

Considerábase superior a sus contemporáneos, al menos veía más, columbraba otra cosa mejor, y como no lograra llevarla a la realidad, de aquí su flemática calma ....Para contemplar en su fantasía la regeneración de España apartaba los ojos de la corrupción de las costumbres, de aquel desprecio de todas las leyes que iba cundiendo...Adoraba la moral pura, la rectitud inflexible, y su conciencia le indemnizaba de las infamias que veía por doquier. (149)

A part of this "superiority" is Pez' apparent despise of the "corrupción de las costumbres" (149) and French fashion and its imitation, testified by his description of Rosalía to the narrator: "Con una frase que conservo en la memoria calificó Pez aquel

carácter vanidoso, *aquel temperamento inaccesible a toda pasión que no fuera la de vestir bien*. Dijo este gran observador que era como los toros, *que acuden más al trapo que al hombre*” (198, emphasis added). By comparing Rosalía to the bull (*el toro*) Galdós again expresses his dissatisfaction with the cultural colonization of Spain by France. The bull, as the symbol of the Spanish nation, is more seduced by the “trapo”, elements of the exogenous fashion, than by the man, who represents the hegemonic nations (France). In short, this sums up the “Spanish problem” of the period—instead of making important internal political changes based on modern European models, Spanish middle bourgeoisie and aristocracy imitated the external products of their modernity, which were not feasible or logical in Spain, as exemplified in Rosalía and Pez.

This bitter description of Rosalía at the same time makes Pez seem resistant to the *afrancesamiento* and seductions of the “novelty” of French fashion. However, Pez’s connections help Spanish women get clothes from France easily, without hassle on the border. This likewise includes Pez’s daughters—lovers of French fashion: “El administrador de la aduana de Irún debía el puesto que ocupaba a nuestro Pez, y también él era Pez por el costado materno, con lo cual, dicho se está que las niñas se traían a España media Francia” (199).

Hence, this traditional, ideal Spanish man has “half of France” in his house and he is powerless and/or indifferent to it. Besides, he is seduced by Rosalía, even though he describes her as a superficial follower of French fashion, which he despises. He also ends up being cruel and opportunistic—very distant from all the virtues that were ascribed to him—which is exemplified through his behavior with Rosalía, when he intimately engages with her then leaves her without providing promised financial assistance. In this

moment, as well worded by Rosalía, Pez loses his idealized chivalrous image to which she firmly held him: “Sí, era un vil, pues bien le había dicho ella que se trataba de una cuestión de honra y de la paz de su casa...¡Qué hombres! Ella había tenido la ilusión de figurarse a algunos con proporciones caballerescas...¡Qué error y desilusión!” (245). Bly also notes Pez’s opportunism and loss of virtues by saying that he “is the epitome of the opportunistic civil servant and his cynicism is a convenient rationalization of his opportunism” (73). So, Pez is only the appearance of the man he aspired to be, proving that Spanish traditional ideals of manhood are corrupt and non-applicable *per se* at a time that requires a reformulation of the national image. Or as Heneghan concludes: “Trendy on the exterior, but unmanly and inert at the core, the fashionable politician incarnates the illusion of progress and aptly captures the novelist’s critical view of the bourgeois Spaniard’s superficial idea of modernity” (56).

### **Conclusion**

*La de Bringas*, as a novel of historical imagination, portrays the crisis of Spanish national identity at the end of the nineteenth century as embodied in the clash between modernity (France) and tradition (imperial past). This clash is depicted through French fashion as the main means for *afrancesamiento* and cultural colonization of Spain by France—represented through Rosalía—and loss of traditional Spanish chivalrous values—represented through Pez.

The depth of the Spanish national/imperial crisis, caused by the loss of the majority of the overseas colonies, is confirmed through Spain’s middle bourgeoisie’s readiness to accept French colonization. This is exemplified through Rosalía, who

achieves her dreams of luxury through French fashion, abandons the private sphere of subordinated *ángel*, but ultimately ends up in a worse position than she was in before—as a prostitute and commodity who still existentially depends on men. Similarly, the strength of the crisis is reflected through Pez, who is presented as a traditional and virtuous Spanish man by the narrator and other characters, but who cannot satisfy these social expectations and instead succumbs to the trends and French colonialism through fashion. He considers himself to be above the superficiality of his contemporaries, but as demonstrated earlier, he is just one of the followers of the foreign trends. He is passive regarding his daughters' infatuation with French fashion and women procure French fashion goods through his connections on the border. This makes him an accomplice in the French colonization of Spain, not a traditional pillar of resistance, as expected from his initial portrayal in the novel.

Both Rosalía and Pez fail in living up to their ideals, as Spain cannot embody France, nor can it be the invincible imperial force it once was. The promise of a solution, political change and finding a balance between the modernity and tradition, is offered through Revolution, with the initiation of which the novel ends. All of this justifies the depiction of fashion as *Zeitgeist*—as an important element of history—and its capacity to capture and reflect the spirit of the moment.

### Notes

(1). For example, Fray Luis de León in *La perfecta casada* (1583) or Alonso de Carranza in *Rogación en detestación de los grandes abusos en los trajes y adornos nuevamente introducidos en España* (1636) (See Dorothea Heneghan (2006) for more details).

(2). Lorenzo López Trigo and Paz Benito Del Pozo explain geopolitics as “el estudio de la influencia del espacio geográfico sobre los estados y su política. Con frecuencia se identifica con la geografía política, de más amplio contenido” (283).

(3). The cult of bravery and virility of Spanish men was formed from medieval times to the period of Spanish imperialism (fifteenth-sixteenth century), when the “Spanish nation” was at the peak of its power. The glorification of Spanish imperial masculinity was one of the central elements of the romantic cult (1830-40) of the Spanish nation that resulted from the exaltation of Spain’s independence and resistance to Napoleon’s occupation (Susan Kirkpatrick 268). At the same time, the myth about inherent national identity “functioned as an imaginary compensation for the loss of the overseas empire and offered an image of national unity that was useful to a weakened absolutist regime” (Kirkpatrick 268). The crisis of Spanish national identity and emasculation of the Spanish masculinity after 1825 were in large part caused by the loss of all the major colonies (1810-1825, 1898). The emasculation of Spain as a term means “la pérdida tanto de fuerza física como de equilibrio o control moral” (Álvarez Junco 217), which is reflected through its *afrancesamiento*.

(4). Sebastian Balfour adds that Spanish decline in power was acknowledged by the new European colonial forces: “The British Premier, Lord Salisbury, gave voice to this belief in a speech in 1898 in which he made a thinly disguised reference to Spain as a dying nation” (107).

(5). Together with Spanish imperial decadence and a crisis of masculinity, the orientalization and feminization of Spain by French writers and historians was another principal element of the crisis of national identity. François-René Chateaubriand, Théophile Gautier, Prosper Mérimée, and Victor Hugo represented Spaniards as

orientalized Muslims and Gypsies and Spanish men as feminized, weak, passive and powerless. Such representations deepened and reinforced the crisis of masculinity and the effects of imperial decadence in Spain in the second half of the nineteenth century (see Joseba Gabilondo's article (2008) for more details)

(6). Barbastro Gil states that more than a hundred thousand people and twelve thousand families—marked as “afrancesados”—were exiled from Spain in accordance with monarchical absolutism in the nineteenth century (8). The exiles were most numerous during Fernando VII's “ominous decade” (1823-1833), when intellectuals like José Espronceda, Duque de Rivas, Alcalá Galiano and Mariano de Larra y Langelot (Mariano José Larra's father) were exiled. This is why, during the War of Independence, which had a populist character, the intellectual elite was seen as corrupt and anti-patriotic, those who sold the country, whereas *el pueblo* had saved the country. Even though the liberals saw the village as ignorant, not ready for progress and opposed to modernization, they had to accept *el pueblo* as a heroic bastion of national liberty (Álvarez Junco 141). Álvarez Junco explains this surprising and antithetical “giro populista de los liberales” as an homage to the *pueblo*'s bravery and patriotism that saved the country in the war against France that will vanish at the end of the century. In that period and such circumstances, “lo popular” and *el pueblo* became synonym for traditional religiosity, respect for hereditary hierarchies and anti-French, anti-revolutionary and anti-modern xenophobia.

(7). *Zeitgeist* is the capacity of fashion to capture the spirit of an epoch: “La idea se remonta al concepto hegeliano del ‘espíritu del tiempo’ y es una explicación espiritual o mística, frente al carácter socioeconómico de las explicaciones basadas en la teoría de la imitación servil (Díaz Marcos 40)



(8). However, *La de Bringas* is not Galdós's only novel with fashion as *Zeitgeist*. *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1887) is another example of the use of fashion as “espejo de momento” and “anticipación de cambios históricos e ideológicos” (Díaz Marcos 136). I argue that *Fortunata y Jacinta*, like *La de Bringas*, represents an allegory of two failed national fictions expressed through fashion—one based on a traditional, imperial past and the other based on imitation of French modernity. These failed national fictions are presented as the clash between “traditional” and “modern/foreign/French” elements (fashion) exemplified through mantón de Manila vs. moda francesa. The first, traditional fiction is presented through the relationship between rich, bourgeois man Juan and Fortunata, a poor girl of the lowest social class who exudes irresistible oriental/colonial attraction for the Occidental Spanish men (the attraction of the colonizer to the (lost) colonies). She is wild and free; Spanish patriarchal society tries to tame her and put her under its control. She represents the village and she is not wearing dresses *a la French*, like Jacinta, Juan's wife, but pieces such as “mantón de Manila” or “pendientes turquesas”, which symbolically relates her to the colonies. The “Manila shawl”, which was national fashion during the peak of Spanish imperialism, was now popular only among subaltern classes who were “the last and only repository of decadent Spanish colonialism” (Gabilondo, “Galdós” 25). Hence, Juan's attraction to Fortunata embodies an old imperial/colonial national fiction characterized by desire, which fails, because Fortunata dies upon giving birth to Juan's child and because the majority of Spanish colonies were already irrecoverably lost.

The second, modern national fiction represented in the novel is based on the marriage as contract and dominance of the bourgeois class whose entire life is an imitation of the French model, represented through Juan, his family and his marriage to Jacinta, the

prototype of the *ángel del hogar*. Juan gets bored with Jacinta's conformity and starts having an affair with Fortunata. Jacinta, who is at the beginning of the novel the ultimate representation of the *ángel del hogar*, becomes independent from her husband, empowered through his betrayal and feminization. She remains in charge of raising Fortunata and Juan's son as her own, and with that in charge of creating a new, empowered Spanish imperial masculinity. Hence, this bourgeois national fiction also fails. Its failure is represented through Juan's adulteries and immature behavior, Jacinta's incapability to conceive and her ultimate split from patriarchy. Neither the failed Spanish colonial empire (Fortunata and Juan) nor bourgeois marriage (Jacinta and Juan) are a viable solution for the formation of a new national identity in Spain. To form a successful national project, Spain needs a different, re-empowered masculinity. This new masculinity is presented in Fortunata and Juan's son, who is raised by a Spanish bourgeois woman, who is no longer *ángel del hogar*, but an *ángel imperial* focused on a new Spanish imperial future.

(9). Galdós's other novel about the Bringas family, *Tormento* (1884), talks about Rosalía's "noble origin" and peculiar genealogical obsession (supposed connection to the writer Calderón de la Barca), which she uses to confirm her aristocratic social status:

Su flaco era cierta manía nobiliaria, pues, aunque los Pipaones no descendían de Iñigo Arista, el apellido materno de Rosalía, que era Calderón, la autorizaba en cierto modo para construir, aunque sólo fuese con la fantasía, un profundísimo árbol genealógico [...] Rosalía Pipaón de la Barca. Esto lo pronunciaba dando a su bonita y pequeña nariz una hinchazón enfática. (125)

(10). See Marina Cuzovic-Severn's article for a detailed explanation of Rosalía's ironic and temporary emancipation.

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**Re-Fashioning Gendered Mestizo Identity:**

**A Dress Woven with Guilt and Betrayal in *La culpa es de los Tlaxcaltecas***

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Elena Garro's short story, "La culpa es de los Tlaxcaltecas" deals with various contested themes in Mexican culture and history: the conquest of the Nahuas by the Spaniards in the 1500s, the modern perception of la Malinche, the controversial, prevailing view of Mexican women, the mestizo identity, as well as the overt presence of European heritage in contemporary Mexican culture. Through the time-traveling

character of Laura, who belongs to both the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Garro acknowledges these themes and critiques their contemporary representations. Much scholarly literature and discussion has been done in regards to the presence of Garro's stance on these problematic issues within the story, as well as Laura's illustration of her beliefs. However, very little attention has been paid to the dress that Laura wears for the majority of the story. While Laura is generally considered to be most emblematic of Garro's positioning on these issues, the white dress she wears is equally indicative of, and offers a unique perspective on these same contested themes.

In the story "La culpa es de los Talxcaltecas," the main character of Laura leads two distinct lives in the same space: one as a member of the Nahuatl community in Tenochtitlan during the time of the Spanish conquest, married to her indigenous cousin (primo marido), and one as a mestiza, upper-middle-class woman in 1960s Mexico City, married to Pablo, a mestizo man, who physically resembles her first husband but acts nothing like him. Laura has the magical-realist ability to travel between her two lives via rays of white light. With each temporal journey, she wears the same dress that at first represents her modern life, however with each recurrent trip to the future it returns even more disheveled than before, a destruction that results from the battles in ancient Tenochtitlan. This ultimately leads Pablo and his mother, Margarita, to assume she has been raped by an indigenous man and that she continues to wear it as a victory badge of her sexual exploits. Their treatment of her becomes even more demeaning and violent until she ultimately—after reconciling her betrayal of marriage to a man of European descent in the 1960s with her cousin in the 16<sup>th</sup> century—decides to quit her life in the present state in favor of the turbulent Nahua city and the known outcome of conquest.

One of the most prominent themes in Garro's story is that of la Malinche, who is both credited with and blamed for the creation of the mestizo race. Her reception shifted after the conquest from that of a respected indigenous woman to the modern paradigm of "Desirable Whore/Terrible Mother" (Cypess 9), and has been converted into a symbol of feminine duplicity. She allegedly betrayed the indigenous populations to the Spaniards through her forced sexual acts and work as a translator; she is depicted as an overly sexualized figure who has passed this quality on to her female descendants in the Mexican state. In Garro's story, Laura is subjected to this same identity by Pablo and his mother. Although the representation of la Malinche in present-day mestiza women generally plays a pivotal role in Garro's story, Laura's white dress becomes explicitly indicative of this theme.

Garro introduces the contentious garment at the fourth sentence, the end of the first paragraph, of the entire story, establishing it outright as a prominent symbol and factor in the narrative. The beginning of the tale is, in fact, the end of Laura's journey: she appears in the 20<sup>th</sup> century one last time before ultimately fleeing sans return to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the garment is introduced in an almost cyclical sense. The story opens at the dress's end point in the state in which it will be eternalized—a "traje blanco quemado y sucio de tierra y sangre" (269)—a mixture of Laura and Mexico's two worlds and cultures. This circular positioning and final, both presently —and historically—affected, state of the dress alludes to Garro's positioning on the need for a reconciliation and return of the modern mestizo identity—in part—to the indigenous side of its roots.

Laura's dress gives her a dismissive attitude towards her mestizo life and culture. It is initially a contemporary garment from the 1960s and it is most likely solely one pure,



crisp shade of white in a modest cut emblematic of fashion norms at the time, norms that were derived heavily from the fashion capitals in Europe, amplifying to the presence of European customs in mestizo society. However, Laura does not allow the article to maintain its original status: she insists on wearing it on her temporal journeys and permits it to be ruined with mud, scorches, and blood in Tenochtitlan, all the while refusing to clean or bleach it back to its initial state. This refusal to permit the plain outfit to remain as such is a nod to her indigenous lineage and first life—the markings, while dirty, serve as embellishments on the otherwise lackluster garment, markings that ultimately parallel the Nahua affinity for heavily designed apparel. At the time of the conquest, Nahua women wore exquisite shifts and skirts; ideas surrounding beauty were associated predominantly with clothing and its patterns (Olko 322). These new decorations can be seen as an attempt by her past to alter, influence, and demonstrate its persistence in her present life, making the dress much less era-appropriate for her contemporary life and causing it to fit in better with her first. These patterns become an attempt by her past to blur and smear away her second life.

Laura's continuance to wear the tarnished garment further disrespects her modern life through the allegorical connotations of the color white in her societal Catholic surroundings: purity. As an upper-middle-class, wedded woman in 1960s Mexico City, married to a man named after an apostle (Montes Garcés 118), she clearly inhabits a Catholic-dominated realm (García de la Torre and Villa Silva 718). Not only is Pablo's name a reference to the prevalent religion of contemporary Mexico, but his actions are described in this terminology, such as when he deals Laura "una santa bofetada" (Garro 275), literally a saintly or holy slap, denoting not only his Catholicism, but his attempts

to use religion to correct his errant wife. Furthermore, he “solo repetía los gestos de todos los hombres de la ciudad de México” (275), indicating his adherence to common cultural and societal practices in the city, which would include identifying as Catholic. Laura may also even be Catholic in this life as suggested by her inability to recognize one of the Aztec gods she had been taught in her childhood upon a journey back in time: “la imagen de un dios, que ahora no recuerdo cuál era. Todo se olvida” (270). The use of “un” and “cuál,” one of a grouping, indicates a reference to the Aztec pantheon. Thus, in this religious context, in allowing her virginal, dress to be dirtied—with no attempt to clean it—Laura is effectively advertising a lack of chastity. Furthermore, while the sheath is of everyday wear, its color makes it emblematic of a wedding frock; considering her male-dominated relationship with Pablo, their marriage takes part in the Christian tradition, thus her dress becomes a symbol of their Christian union. Her ruining the bridal gown is her destruction of their sacred, religious marriage. This also calls to mind her blasé attitude towards her second wedding: she weds Pablo because he physically resembles the primo marido, but for nothing else. Her love for him was not based on his own self, but rather a longing for her past life.

Apart from the general destruction of the dress as being disrespectful to her modern culture, religion, and husband, the specific markings on it further negate her second life. As Laura tells Nacha, the 1960s indigenous housekeeper and her only confidant about her time-traveling abilities, the voice of the primo marido “escribió signos de sangre en mi pecho y mi vestido blanco quedó rayado como un tigre rojo y blanco” (Garro 272). As the garment was altered without physical contact in the past, this creates the idea that the same mystical powers that allow Laura to time travel have

tarnished her outfit. Additionally, it is still the first partner who is ultimately ruining the current garment; continuing to wear the dress in contemporary Mexico without cleaning it prioritizes the first marriage and life over that with Pablo. Furthermore, the designs are described as “rayado,” striped, demonstrating that the decorations were purposeful and not just emblematic of carelessness. The representation of the striped tiger alludes back to the native jungle that grew on the land before it was developed throughout history. Moreover, the stripes parallel the wounds the primo marido sustained in battle: specifically, a “herida roja en el hombro” (277). Not only are both the dress and the first spouse's shoulders outfitted with similar stripe patterns, but Garro's poignant use of only the colors red, black, white, and brown throughout the narrative causes the parallel of the red wound and the red stripes on the garment to take on even more significance. The new patterns on the clothing are worn to symbolize the bravery of the primo marido and the loss of the ancient civilization against the invaders.

While the garment initially can be read as yet another aspect of Laura's modern life, it ultimately serves as a palimpsest, prime for further inscription and development, and as such indifferent to the world in which it was created. While initially of 1960s design, its pattern-less, white fabric serves as a canvas for the impression of the ancient Nahua embellishments that ultimately re-inscribe the garment's meaning and function within society. With these designs, it is no longer emblematic of the culture in which she acquired it, rather it becomes a mixture of its modern origins and the life Laura left behind in the 16<sup>th</sup> century—alluding to their dual presence in present Mexican culture.

While the modern garment does subvert the world and culture from which it stems, it also serves to undermine the Nahua culture and lineage of Laura's first life. It

arrives in Tenochtitlan plain and white, as it was created. It is thus another object of European influence invading Nahua society. Its whiteness is a connection to the conquistadors' skin and their imposed presence in the region. Furthermore it would have resonated as completely out of place in the indigenous realm, as traditional clothing was crafted from dyed fabrics with various geometric and natural designs and accented with symbolic animal and mineral embellishments such as fur, feathers, gold, and jade (López Hernández 19). Without these traditional elements, its initial arrival in the 16<sup>th</sup> century blatantly resonates against local dress, allowing Laura to assume the role of a “*malinchista*, [an] individual who sells out to the foreigner...in favor of imported benefits,” a term that would come about shortly after the conquest (Cypess 7).

The dress as connecting Laura to the implications and associations of the alleged betrayal of la Malinche are furthered in considering the development of pictographic representations of the infamous mother-figure. Initially, la Malinche is depicted in post-conquest artwork wearing the Nahua huipil, her hair is done up in a way that suggests a maternal, indigenous role. Her feet are barefoot, alluding to her lower status as a servant to the Spaniards, or in traditional sandals. However, in future representations, such as those in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, though she still wears the huipil, her hair is down, suggesting to popular European styles, and she wears European-style shoes (Cortez 80). After being removed from her first life for centuries Laura, in this same manner, returns in European-style garb and symbolizes a “rejection of Amerindian culture” shared with la Malinche and other malinchistas (Cypess 10). This reversal of vesture and style further underscores her link to the mother of mestizos who submitted to the European invaders, just as Laura does to her, at least in part, European second husband.

Laura further disrespects her heritage through her covering of the dress. She cannot wear the damaged garment alone in her modern domestic space without inciting rage and violence from Pablo and Margarita. Thus, “para esconder las manchas,” and appease them, Laura “se puso un sweater blanco encima” (Garro 276) before leaving the house and taking another trip back in time. The white covering of the new designs effectively makes the new ensemble indistinguishable from the old. It serves as a symbolic eraser of the strides her past had made in infiltrating her contemporary realm that quits the garment of its newfound history—suggested by the markings—as well as Laura’s and the nation’s origin. She hides her distressed vesture from her second family just as she keeps from them her other life and her true identity as a native woman. She thus becomes a symbol for a nation of people seeking a foundation in change—not the past (Paz 26)—and subverting the indigenous part of the roots upon which it was created, as the mestizo culture melded “into the cultural vortex of the West” (Klor de Alva 6). The dress had acquired ancient embellishments in going back in time, however her hiding these markings is her ascribing herself to the prevailing modern social mindset of giving preference to the European aspects of its lineage that has carried through into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, specifically by giving preference for material goods. That the sweater is yet another plain, white fixture demonstrates the mestizo culture’s efforts to construct a new sense of being through consumer materials (García de la Torre & Villa Silva 719). However, due to the ultimate dual presence of the additions—ancient markings underneath the contemporary sweater—the dress simultaneously represents the unification of the modern culture with the indigenous part of roots.

The white color of the dress ultimately ties it very closely, on various levels, to the racially white culture it reflects. This color characterization of the bland outfit contrasts sharply with the primo marido, who is described as a panther in regards to his stillness and his black hair: “se quedó quieto como las panteras”; “le ví el pelo negro” (Garro 277). The implications of his connection to the animal—suggesting that his hair is figuratively fur that is covering his body in blackness—create a duality in the vesture of the two that presents a stark foil as they stand together in the warring city. She is clothed entirely in white, he in black, augmenting her separation from her first life. Not only does she wear all white, she has become all white, as evidenced by her starchy hands, to which the primo marido “reacts in horror at their resemblance with the Other, the white European” (Nanfito 131), stating that one of them “está muy desteñida, parece una mano de ellos,” (Garro 271). This response suggests that her time away from the 16<sup>th</sup> century has literally bleached her complexion to the extent that she appears like a pure European next to her fully-indigenous husband.

The dress’s original clean, blank state and ultimate adorned with indigenous markings of blood, burns, and dirt allows it to stand as a metaphor for the mestizo race as a whole and the nation’s and culture’s foundation in war: something comprised of both white and colored lineages. However, as the final version of the garment is so shunned in her modern world, it ultimately gives her a stronger connection to her past life. It allows her to fully reconcile her betrayal of the primo marido—by marrying a partially European man—and her Nahua community—through her “[selling] out to the foreigner” as a malinchista (Cypess 7). Laura intentionally re-dons the sheath, reflected by the verb “poner” (Garro 276) used to describe this act both by Nacha and Margarita. She also

fosters the dress's new designs by refusing to wash them out. These combined actions are the ultimate symbolic gestures that permit her to resolve her trespasses in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and fully reunite with her first husband and society.

As Laura's outfit is completely void of color initially, its whiteness represents a starchy purity that contrasts to the native land soiled with blood in Tenochtitlan—the very same elements that later serve to color it. The dress's preliminary sterile state allows it to demonstrate the belief that whitening a lineage was a form of bettering its descendants. These views have been held since the birth of the first mestizo and the creation of the caste system in the New World, “as the notion of purity gradually came to be equated with Spanish ancestry, with ‘Spanishness’” and thus whiteness (Martínez 2), and maintained through the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The dress, in its colorless innocence, represents attempts to wash, or bleach, the indigeneity out of the mestizo culture, specifically, out of the domestic domain constructed by Pablo and Margarita. This is exhibited by the way Pablo reacts in horror every time he sees Laura wearing the damaged garb in his white castle—“¡Déjate de hacer la idiota!..¿Por qué traes el vestido quemado?” (Garro 278)—and she ultimately has to cover up the new version of the costume with a bleach-white sweater to appease him or even earn permission to leave the house and go out in public where she represents his status. Not only is the dress dirty and thus improper to be worn in public by an upper-middle-class businessman's wife, its muddiness reflects an indigenous lineage shunned in Pablo's domestic empire.

In this realm, Pablo reigns with the authority of a tyrant and has banned all reminders of his own mixed lineage. This is demonstrated through his forcing Laura under house arrest as if she were his subject who can be jailed for breaking a law (“después, en

muchos días no dejaron salir a la señora Laurita. El señor ordenó que se vigilaran las puertas y las ventanas de la casa” (Garro 279). His rejection of indigeneity in the realm can be easily seen through his anger at Josefina’s claim to have seen an indio at the window: “¡Señora, anoche un hombre estuvo espiando por la ventana de su cuarto,” a revelation that causes Pablo to look at his wife “como si la fuera matar” (274). He makes his wife a threat to the stability of his rule and he treats her as though she were an accomplice to an act of terror brought about by the “other,” the indio. Though Laura ultimately defies him, until she quits her modern life she must succumb to his rule and cover her contentious garment.

In continuing to wear the dress, even underneath the sweater, Laura is subverting her tyrannical modern husband along with the aspects of their shared mestizo culture. Furthermore, this continuity in wearing the now-Nahua-style sheath demonstrates a solidarity with her indigenous community suffering in their 16<sup>th</sup> century battle along with Laura’s desire to have a reminder of this part of her past life in her present one. While Pablo and Margarita lock her in her bedroom under house arrest for even bringing a meek reminder of her indigenous heritage into the modern domain, Laura refuses to mimic this practice with her lineage, flaunting it on her clothing by forcibly bringing her ancestry into her colorless, domestic realm of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This camaraderie is viewed as an even greater insult by Pablo who associates the garment with her alleged sexual assault, which is augmented by the other man’s perceivably inferior, fully indigenous, race.

Pablo’s anger at the incident that resulted in the first instance of damage to the dress (returning from car troubles at the bridge in Cuitzeo) stems both from his perception of his wife as sexually unfaithful and inconstant as well as his own, unreconciled, mixed



lineage (Tyutina 8). The fact that he resembles the primo marido indicates an indigenous lineage to at least some degree. Laura notes “me enamoré de Pablo en una carretera, durante un minuto en el cual me recordó a alguien conocido, a quien yo no recordaba” (Garro 275) and “a los dos les gusta el agua y las casas frescas. Los dos miran el cielo por las tardes y tienen el pelo negro y los dientes blancos” (274), establishing not only their similar appearances but a shared affinity for nature and weather patterns that were quintessential concerns in indigenous society. However, while Pablo looks like the primo marido to the extent that Laura expects he will act in a similar manner –“a veces, recuperaba aquel instante en el que parecía que iba a convertirse en ese otro al cual se parecía” (275) –, and thus that she could create her modern life as an extension of her past one, the opposite is true. She continues, stating that “Pablo habla a saltitos, se enfurece por nada y pregunta a cada instante: ¿en qué piensas? Mi primo marido no hace ni dice nada de eso” (274) signifying Pablo’s brutish, unintelligible, and incendiary reactions that deviate from the primo marido’s calmer and more caring nature.

Pablo has not only omitted the indigenous lineage from his personal history, but he comes to represent the culture that has all but forgotten it. After Laura fell in love with him for appearing like her first husband, Pablo “inmediatamente volvía a ser absurdo, sin memoria, y sólo repetía los gestos de todos los hombres de la ciudad de México” (Garro 275). His absurd nature and lack of memory are indicative of the dearth of cultural recollection regarding the nation’s Nahua roots. As ethnicity can be seen as a non-fixed societal interpretation (Nagel 111), Pablo represents a consensual mestizo agreement to “perform” its Caucasian origins. The fact that he resembles every other man in the large city gives him a sense of anonymity and demonstrates that his attitude is representative

of the one that is shared by the hegemonic, patriarchal force in the nation. This reflects the development of the mestizo identity post-conquest: “Mestizos ... sought to cope with the new reality by abandoning indigenous communities and moving into towns and cities” (Maclachlan 249-50) and by “rejecting” any “Indianizing stance,” by “abandoning native languages, dress, eating habits, religions, and sometimes kin—to deflect the negative consequences of being recognized as ‘indios.’” (Klor de Alva 6-7). While this desertion is initially physical and spatial, it becomes figurative, as well. Laura’s preliminary white outfit is thus symptomatic of the anonymous, male-dominated, memory-less culture of the developed, urban center.

Laura’s dress does not just link her to the mestizo culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also to the perceptions of la Malinche’s sexuality that eventually expanded to that of mestiza women in general. As the white color allegorically symbolizes virginal purity of the wearer, Laura’s tarnishing this symbol gives the impression that she is no longer chaste and thus fuels Pablo and Margarita’s perceptions of her as overly promiscuous and inconstant. These views are furthered by the family’s shared history, or belief that Laura was raped by an indigenous man: Pablo employs her insistence on wearing the garment after the bridge incident as confirmation of an extra-marital affair with the same native man and quickly decides his wife is unfaithful to him. Thus, her wears renders her as a fickle betrayer in his quick-to-react mentality. In constructing the liaison, he is able to make himself the victim of the situation, rather than allowing Laura to be the sufferer of a sexual assault, further cementing Laura’s connection to la Malinche, “the mother violated but still blamed” (Bartra 221). Laura’s forced assumption of the development of la Malinche’s reputation from its origins in the 16<sup>th</sup> century through present day

ultimately displays Garro's call for a repositioning of la Malinche's modern social perceptions and connotations.

Laura's covering of her tarnished outfit is indicative of the mestizo view towards feminine sexuality. The dress, for being dirty and non-purely white merits concealing, however, she must also cover herself in order to enter the public sphere and maintain her image as Pablo's respectable wife. Her family sees her continuing to wear the ruined garment beneath its new covering as confirmation of her imaginary carnal exploits and sexuality. They then extend this association to indigenous men as evidenced by Margarita's initial reaction to seeing Laura's state in Cuitzeo: Margarita, "asustada, tocaba la sangre [del] vestido blanco y señalaba la sangre que tenía en los labios y la tierra que se había metido en [sus] cabellos" (Garro 273). To her, the only explanation for this appearance is rape by an indigenous man. This is confirmed, later, as the housemaids claim to have seen a similar-looking man at the window, to which Laura confirms that this is "el indio que me siguió desde Cuitzeo hasta la ciudad de México..." (275).

Pablo's constructions of Laura's actions calls into question the role of the dress in sexual and marital infidelity. Undoubtedly, Laura has deceived each of her husbands: she has been disloyal to the primo marido by marrying Pablo and she has gone against Pablo, technically, by having another marriage. Pablo, however, has no knowledge of her actual treachery and imagines one that differs greatly from reality. This assignment of the false incident and blame mirrors the construction of history by the Spanish invaders in regards to the conquest the Nahua people: "awed but uninformed, Europeans settled on a popular-history version of events, a heroic myth that at its heart rested on assumed European superiority and Indian incapacity" (Maclachlan 195). In this trope, Pablo functions as the

conquistador and boxes Laura into the “[incapacitated]” native. He sees her continuing to wear the dress as confirmation of his theory, furthering her constructed duplicity. The primo marido, however, eventually allows her to reconcile her actions through the garment. Each time she returns to the past wearing the damaged gown, she demonstrates that she is permitting her indigenous lineage to maintain its place in her 1960s world. Furthermore, his reaction to her unfaithfulness differs from Pablo’s: she admits to the primo marido “ya sabes que tengo miedo y que por eso traiciono...” and he responds “ya lo sé” and bows his head (Garro 271), as if assuming a portion of the blame.

Pablo’s assumption of the role of the white conquistador in his crafted narrative about his wife’s sexuality allows him to further box her into the overtly-promiscuous standard to which he holds her on a European level: the harlot. Historically, the Spanish conquistadors confused Aztec women with their image of the harlot due to their shared physical characteristics, their ornamental style of hair and makeup, and their—perceived—luxurious vesture (Evans 173). Laura steadily acquires various aspects of this association throughout Garro’s story: her hair becomes ragged and her dress disheveled and patterned with designs. While unkempt hair and dirty clothing are far from what the Europeans were accustomed to noting as “ornamental” and “luxurious dress,” considering that Laura returns to Tenochtitlan during conquest battles, they are clearly emblematic of this perception. During combat, with little resources and no time to perfect the desired look, disarranging Laura’s hair and damaging her attire with elements of war would have been the most accessible means of re-creating her outfit to fit in with the Nahua population. Through this additional association, Pablo can further ostracize and shame his wife.

The discrepancies in the two men's constructions of and reactions to Laura's betrayals accentuate their respective views on feminine sexuality. Laura has almost free agency with the primo marido, who trusts she will return to him in her same disheveled dress. Pablo attempts to quit Laura of all abilities save for her mystic powers to time travel (of which he has no knowledge) by incarcerating her for wearing this clothing at all. Thus, Laura can be sexual in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, while in the 20<sup>th</sup> she becomes representative of mestizo society's view of the dangerous sensuality of women that stems back to the paradigm of la Malinche as the "Desirable Whore/Terrible Mother" (Cypess 9). Laura effectively becomes a symbol for the patriarchal view of Mexican woman than has developed in reaction to the infamous 16<sup>th</sup> century interpreter. The fact that it is Laura's sexuality as constructed by her mestizo husband and not her actual sexuality is emblematic of the blind eye turned towards reason and the overarching presence of these negative associations in society. This role of Laura and her dress demonstrates Garro's rejection of this centuries'-old stereotype.

Due to its dual nature of representing both historical and present-day Mexico, the dress, and with it Laura, is suspended in a liminal, temporal space. In its final state of disarray, it pertains to the era of the conquest, however, in being covered while in this state, it permits Laura to remain in her 20<sup>th</sup> century realm a little longer. This places it squarely amongst the past and present and allows her to assume varying degrees of allegiances in both. In whatever period she is currently physically in, it constantly serves as a reminder of the one left behind. Furthermore, it is the only object that travels with Laura on her temporal journeys: its presence is almost required for said sojourns, giving

it a mythical ability of its own and thus placing it in-between the two eras and assigning it the great task of reconciler and moderator.

In being a liminal object, the dress causes Laura's own transient state and allows her to be ostracized and othered in both times. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the European and mestizo-based garment puts her on par with la Malinche as well as las Tlaxcaltecas, who aided the Spaniards and were instrumental in the conquest of Tenochtitlan. In wearing apparel of this influence, especially during a battle in which the Nahua were quickly losing ground, general citizens, and manpower —“las filas de hombre caían una después de la otra, en cadena como si estuvieran cogidos de la mano y el mismo golpe los derribara a todos. Algunos daban un alarido tan fuerte, que quedaba resonando mucho rato después de su muerte” (Garro 281) –, Laura demonstrates her betrayal. She abandons her indigenous culture and life for a more comfortable, modern version in the 20<sup>th</sup> century—one constructed upon a foundation driven by the power of the Spaniards—as if she had deliberately allied herself with the contemporary mestizos and aided them in the destruction of indigenous memory. The clothing, through its additional representation of her second marriage, also affirms to the native community that she presumably had sexual relations with her mestizo husband, underscoring her connection to la Malinche.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dress, once ragged, allows Laura's family to ostracize her, label her as immoral, and treat her as an insane, lesser individual within their shared home. While there are clearly other rifts between Laura and her married family, the gown is the focal point at which they direct their anger and even gives Pablo what he sees as an excuse to physically harm her: “golpeó la cómoda con el puño cerrado...se acercó a la señora y le dio una santa bofetada” (Garro 275). The atmosphere in the house is so tense in regards

to the garment that even Nacha and Josefina can sense the anxiety amongst their bosses. During Laura's confession to her, Nacha recalls "la noche en que volvieron" from Guanajuato "Josefina la recamarera y ella, Nacha, notaron la sangre en el vestido y los ojos ausentes de la señora" Laura. Margarita "parecía muy preocupada," and "en la mesa el señor se le quedó mirando malhumorada a su mujer" (273). The act of wearing—without cleaning—the garment creates a bellicose domestic space that parallels the war to which Laura continuously returns in Tenochtitlan.

The dress's symbolization of alleged inconstancy offers an excuse for both Pablo and Margarita to shun and reign superior over Laura. This ostracizing devolves into them treating her both as a child and a hysterical woman. Margarita screams at her "¡Por Dios, Laura, no te pongas ese vestido!" (Garro 276) and remarks to her son "¡pobre hijo mío, tu mujer está loca!" (279); eventually the two decide to lock her under house arrest given her frantic state and sudden disappearances. When she is finally allowed to leave the house, Margarita accompanies her: "la señora salía acompañada de su suegra y el chofer tenía órdenes de vigilarlas estrechamente" (280). This act of surveillance by the mother-in-law suggests that her family does not trust her and believes that only vigilance and proper, modern decorum will rid her of her evil ways and garment. The dress's role in this exclusion is evidenced as Garro introduces it at the story's onset in terms of Laura's insistence to Nacha that her family cannot know of her return whilst in this attire: "La señora Laura apareció con un dedo en los labios en señal de silencio. Todavía llevaba el traje blanco quemado y sucio de tierra y sangre" (269). That the story opens as such, upon Laura's last journey before her definitive move to the past, further emphasizes the

torridness of the contemporary relationships, fostered by her costume, that drives her back in time to the relative safety of the conquest battles.

Laura's altered white dress additionally serves to reflect the discrepancies in her marriages that ultimately stem back to the disparities in gender roles and perceptions that developed over time. In the modern era, the garment causes her relationship with Pablo to deteriorate rapidly as his anger at her stems from and is directed towards her wearing the outfit. This irritation eventually leads him to physically assault her and force her to flee her materially comfortable lifestyle for the protection of her materially-void first life and husband. Even with the battles raging in Tenochtitlan, the loss of her family and community at the hands of the Spaniards—as she notes about a visit with her primo marido “la casa estaba ardiendo y que atrás de mí estaban mis padres y mis hermanitos muertos” (Garro 277)—, Laura decides her domestically violent, modern life is the greater of two evils. She ultimately elects to live in a world where she has the potential to be killed by era-revolutionary weapons at any time in the Aztec capital, yet this risk is lesser than that of being hit by Pablo in Mexico City. Thus, the dress is emblematic of the severe negativity to which her second marriage has been reduced.

As the dress represents the unequal, violent, and estranged relationship with Pablo, it exemplifies the eventual state of the relationship with the primo marido, it becomes the manner through which she reconciles her betrayal with him. His reception to her is initially cold: Laura comments that he “quiso decirme que yo merecía la muerte” (Garro 271). However, each time the primo marido sees her returning to the 16<sup>th</sup> century wearing the unbleached, purposefully-donned outfit and allows it to be further embellished with war stains, he opens up more to her. This resolution is compounded



when Laura lets the primo marido remove the garment, cementing her decision to stay in the era of the conquest. That she permits the primo marido to take it off (but won't even consider taking it off for Pablo) is emblematic of her true sexuality and allegiance. The removal of her clothing suggests a consummation of her first marriage. While Garro never explicitly states if Laura has had relations with either man, it is significant that she only presumably does so with one in the story. There is a clear selection of the first husband over the second as well as a stark negation of the licentious nature to which she is ascribed in the 1960s. This non-promiscuous sexual act further demonstrates a reconciliation between the indio and his (now) mestiza wife, paralleling Garro's call for reconciliation between the modern mestizo nation and its roots.

The primo marido's method of removal of the garment further exemplifies his more delicate and caring nature: he barely lays a hand on the dress or Laura at all. Before fully quitting the garment, in one of her earlier journeys to the conquest, the primo marido "carició" Laura's gown "con la punta de los dedos" (Garro 272). When he does remove the costume in her last temporary journey back in time, he does so only with, again, "los dedos" (277), presenting a stark contrast to Pablo hitting Laura with his whole fist for only wearing it. Ultimately submitting to the Nahua culture, not the mestizo one, demonstrates the now-mestiza-seeming Laura's re-integration into indigenous society and a denunciation of the modern culture. The fact that Laura rejects someone with Pablo's caliber of a very influential and affluent businessman with connections to the president of Mexico (Montes Garcés 117) further compounds her refutation of the contemporary culture.

The dress demonstrates that there is a sliding scale in Laura's two marriages. Laura's relationship with Pablo worsens due to the garment while her partnership with the primo marido improves via the same vessel. They both cannot be on the same level simultaneously; as one improves, the other deteriorates. This is evidenced by the fact that when Laura meets Pablo, he reminds her of someone she had once known but can't quite remember. As her union with Pablo depreciates with time, this first encounter represents its best state: at the height of her second marriage, there effectively is no other husband. Laura is too far removed from her first life in order to recall the other man. As soon as she starts traveling back in time and reconciling her 16<sup>th</sup> century betrayal, her union with Pablo worsens rapidly, allowing her to fully abandon it. This leads to the height of her connection with the primo marido when she finally decides to reside only with him. The blossoming of the mutual relationship with the first husband causes Laura to realize the discrepancies in her modern union and to feel a "gradual estrangement" from Pablo (Nanfito 135-6). Eventually, the scale is fully tipped in favor of a life in Tenochtitlan.

Laura's dress also gives Garro a space on which to comment on gender stereotypes. Pablo's treatment of and beliefs surrounding his wife are emblematic of his adherence to the prevailing machista attitude often found in contemporary, mestizo men. This outlook is reminiscent of the conquistador's views of indigenous women: they saw these figures as exotic and whose function lay in their erotic value, as they served as a fetishized release to the European males an ocean away from their docile and proper Spanish wives. This exoticism is based, in part, in the constructed physical resemblance of the Nahua women to the figure of the European harlot and a belief that natives had an "uncontrollable sexual drive" (Young 181). This association is heavily misplaced,

however. Although the harlots were overtly-sexual beings, the connection between the Nahua women and these figures was based solely on outward appearance—their shared affinity for ornamental hair, attire, and makeup—rather than a demonstration of this same, explicit carnality by indigenous women (Evans 173). This paradigm would then be accredited to them, by the invaders, due to their resemblance to the harlot figure and the Spaniards' desire to fulfill their “[feared]” carnal fetishes of the exotic, native woman (Young 149). Pablo sees Laura’s new, ragged appearance as emblematic of this same image. Unlike the conquistadors who celebrated this sexual attribute however, Pablo shuns this self-created characteristic of his wife as it does not resonate with his moral values.

Pablo then attempts to control Laura and reign in her embarrassing behavior. While he cannot stop her from wearing the dress, he can lock her indoors and prevent society from seeing her in it. In this, he quits her of her earthly abilities. In fact, the only way that Pablo would have been able to remove the costume would have been through a suggested sexual act; the fact that he makes no attempt at this demonstrates his refusal to take part in his wife’s promiscuity. On the other hand, the primo marido is much more lenient with his wife’s freedom, as evidenced by the erotic act suggested by his confiscation of her garment. Furthermore, he treats her as an equal, as shown by his assumption of part of her guilt. Garro’s distinctions amongst the perceptions of these two men in regards to feminine sensuality force readers to reconsider the mestizo perception of la Malinche as well as their general stance on the taboo subject of feminine carnal agency.

Just as the dress serves to differentiate between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and places Laura in a liminal space among between the two temporal worlds, it ultimately acts to unify her lives and the two eras. It serves as the talisman that allows her mystic, time-traveling abilities to flourish, linking her amid the two epochs. The article is striped with stains just as the light that accompanies each temporal journey occurs when “el sol se vuelve blanco y uno está en el mismo centro de sus rayos.” The first time this phenomenon of time travel occurs to Laura in the story, she “en ese momento, [miró] el tejido de [su] vestido blanco y en ese instante [oyó] [los] pasos [del primo marido]” (Garro 270). The fact that she instinctively reacts to her temporal journey by looking at her wears indicates a connection of the garment to the time-travel producing light and their combined function as a talisman. It is the only physical object that accompanies her journeys and is subsequently physically altered in both eras, demonstrating its role in the unification of her two worlds.

As the garment is eventually eternalized as a mixture of both cultures, it ultimately stands as a combination of both of her lives and thus a metaphor for the mestizo race as a whole: something rooted in both European and indigenous lineages. It serves as a forced reminder that mestizos are, at least in part, indios and emphasizes Garro’s stress on integrating the historical reality of the nation-state within its modern development. The dress then serves as a vessel for Garro to call for a unification and reconciliation of the Mexican nation of history, race, and gender. Laura’s confessions and testimony to Nacha serve to eradicate the boundaries amid the two temporal worlds (Nanfito 130), augmented by her successive journeys (131) between, although physically the same space, completely different worlds. The outfit calls to attention the true, national heritage of

Mexico, while discouraging a continuation of the narrative of the mestizo people as being born of a whorish traitor.

As the dress acquires its native aspects and helps to reconcile Laura's betrayal through the acquisition of dirt and blood—literally the ground beneath the conquest and the corporal mixture of the Spaniards and Nahuas—these elements take on immense symbolism. They are not arbitrary stains: they represent the nation's beginnings in the violence of the conquest. They are the earth of the native land conquered by the whites and the blood of the two warring factions mixed in battle, shed fighting to defend it: the ground and the blood of the mestizos. As the ground is foundational, this mixture of stolen land and combatant bodies demonstrates that these spots are part of the same physical, literal mixture upon which the modern state was established. The imperfections on the garment thus serve as “a constant reminder of the injury inflicted by the Spanish conquistadors on the body of the Mexican nation” (Montes Garcés 123): they represent a national guilt.

“La culpa es de los Tlaxcaltecas” deals with some of the most controversial themes in Mexican history and present culture. Garro's stance is not left unnoticed throughout the story: she proposes a re-envisioning both of la Malinche and Mexican women, as well as for the acknowledged integration of the indigenous presence in current Mexican lineal and cultural heritage. Through the magical realism of Laura, Garro explores these contested themes, however the plain white dress Laura wears now serves to further accentuate, problematize, and develop these ideas and the issues surrounding them. The garment illuminates the relationship between the history of Mexico and its modern culture, the contested perceptions of femininity and female sexuality based off of

the centuries' old perception of la Malinche, as well as the (mis)understanding of the past and present and the indigenous and European-influenced mestizo culture. It serves to subtly hint at the profound need for a reconciliation of history and actuality and a reassessment of Mexican gender perceptions.

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**Habituarse al hábito: propiedad, igualdad y comunidad en  
las *Constituciones* teresianas**

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Jamás ha de haver espejo ni cosa curiosa,  
sino todo descuido de sí.

*Constituciones 3.7*

Las investigaciones de Max Weber, Pierre Bourdieu y Giorgio Agamben han rescatado el concepto aristotélico y escolástico de *habitus* para, desde la óptica de la sociología y la biopolítica, dar cuenta de la indisociabilidad entre disposiciones internas y conducta externa, entre práctica y ser. Partiendo de la capital obra de Agamben, *Altissima povertà. Regole monastiche e forma di vita (Altísima pobreza. Reglas monásticas y formas de vida)*, la finalidad de este ensayo es: a) recuperar la etimología de *habitus* según su formulación pre-escolástica, b) ponderar el impacto de este hábito en los debates religiosos del siglo XVI y c) mostrar el modo en el que las *Constituciones* de Santa Teresa de Jesús se sirven de la apariencia y el hábito – vestimenta y conducta– para articular, reavivando la disputa paleocristiana entre cenobitas y anacoretas, un nuevo tipo de vida en *koinonia* (gr. *κοινωνία*, “comunidad”) opuesta al individualismo de la Reforma.

Pervive aún hoy en lengua española un refrán registrado paradigmáticamente en el *Guzmán de Alfarache* de Mateo Alemán, “Y aunque de pícaro, cree que todos somos hombres y tenemos entendimiento. Que *el hábito no hace al monje*; demás que en todo voy con tu corrección” (283-84; cursiva mía). Entendido normalmente como un sinónimo de otra paremia, “las apariencias engañan”, este dicho resurge en un momento clave de las *Moradas* donde Santa Teresa reflexiona: “Parecernos ha que las que tenemos hábito



de religión y le tomamos de nuestra voluntad y dejamos todas las cosas del mundo y lo que teníamos por Él ... que ya está todo hecho” (*Moradas* III.I.8). No sólo no se conforma con la primera impresión, sino que cuestiona la de Ávila la actitud de quienes piensan que el hábito basta para hacer a la monja. Es una “buena disposición”, pero no basta. Es un primer paso pero, por decirlo más estrictamente, sólo el hábito hace el hábito. Mas, ¿qué es el hábito del que habla Santa Teresa?

Mucho más que un tipo de vestimenta monacal, el hábito ha suscitado desde el siglo XIX una enérgica discusión teórica. El debate moderno sobre el concepto es en gran medida originado por *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (*La ética protestante y el espíritu del capitalismo*), obra en la que Max Weber atisba la descripción de un conjunto de fenómenos que en comentarios ulteriores subsumirá bajo el taxón del *habitus*. La elección de un término de clara impronta religiosa no es en el caso de Weber un acto azaroso. ¿A qué se refiere, pues, cuando habla del hábito?

Introducido como uno de los elementos que conforman la identidad nacional en el capítulo cuarto de *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (*Economía y Sociedad*) (1), el término permanece abierto a definición hasta que en el décimo capítulo, dedicado a “Die Erlösungswege und ihr Einfluß auf die Lebensführung”, esto es, “Los caminos de salvación y su influjo en los modos de vida” clarifica:

El *habitus* total religioso, calificado positivamente, puede ser una pura donación de la gracia divina, cuya existencia se manifiesta en esa orientación general hacia lo religiosamente exigido, en un modo de vida llevado *metódicamente* en forma unitaria. O

puede ser, por el contrario, adquirible en principio ‘ejercitándose’ en el bien. Pero este mismo ‘ejercicio’ puede dar sus frutos mediante una dirección *metódica* racional de toda la vida y no en virtud de acciones aisladas en conexión entre sí. (*Economía y sociedad* X.2, 424) (2)

En su redacción original, el texto prelude el léxico wittgensteiniano (y luego agambeniano) de las formas de vida al referirse, como el capítulo X mismo, a las “*Lebensführung*”, traducido como “modo de vida” o, más estrictamente, “dirección vital”. Anticipa, también, la aproximación de Foucault y Bourdieu a las prácticas vitales o ejercicios como actos constitutivos de realidad. Nótese que en el caso religioso habla no tanto de hacer el bien, sino de “la ejercitación del bien”. Entendido como “*metódica* racional de toda la vida”, el *habitus* es el camino de práctica del bien y producción del yo elegido por los ascetas.

En la obra weberiana el hábito evoca también, de modo análogo al sentimiento colectivo nacional, la voluntad de los credos por diferenciarse no sólo en las creencias, sino también en los aspectos estéticos más ostensibles de su cosmovisión: cánones de representación, actitud iconográfica, relación con las artes y, en el plano personal, vestimenta entendida como arquitectura del yo (3). El fenómeno religioso constituye un promontorio privilegiado para observar el hábito porque los prosélitos abrazan deliberadamente un hábito, vida y vestimenta que al mismo tiempo los diferencia del *otro* y los define como *uno*. Como las murallas de la polis griega, el hábito (túnica, vello facial, velo, tonsura, calzado...) demarca las fronteras entre lo que se es y lo que no se es, constituyendo la identidad de quienes habitan –nótese la etimología– la ciudad en

oposición a los forasteros extramuros (4). Más aún, muralla y hábito exaltan los aspectos comunes de quienes lo comparten: *habitar es ser* la polis.

En tanto que producción de entidades colectivas, el *habitus* encarna la identidad en el sentido lógico de id-entidad. La racionalización de la vida según el hábito reconoce la individualidad de los integrantes, pero supera las diferencias del mundo terrenal (las riquezas, los dones, la belleza...) en pos de una igualdad radical. Por su función niveladora, el hábito deja atrás los desequilibrios del siglo y, desde una renovada igualdad, la conjuga en una entidad que vale más que la suma de las mónadas componentes. Del mismo modo que la polis es más que la enumeración de todos los ciudadanos (y no ciudadanos) atenienses, la comunidad conseguida por el hábito hace que, según avisa Santa Teresa, “quedará bien pagado el dejar el gusto de la soledad” (*Fundaciones* V.13, 692) 5. Si compartidas, las prácticas vitales que el *habitus* entraña son fuente de subjetividad transpersonal, de comunidad.

Más aún que el weberiano, el trabajo conceptual de Pierre Bourdieu eleva el *habitus* a la categoría de herramienta teórica indispensable para los estudios sociológicos contemporáneos (de ahí que gran parte de los ensayos recientes partan de un diálogo con sus postulados, como hacen La Corte, McMillan, Schäffer, Swartz o Wacquant). Por concentrar en un único descriptor las dimensiones interna y externa de la vida, la noción de hábito de la tradición francesa permite a Bourdieu contestar a Claude Lévi-Strauss y expandir la discusión foucaultiana sobre los ejercicios vitales llevando la idea de prácticas constituyentes más allá del ámbito de la vida regulada –literalmente, por la Regla religiosa– hacia las existencias reguladas y autorreguladas de las sociedades biopolitizadas. Transgrediendo el originario ámbito cenobítico de la regla explícita –y

conscientemente buscada—, Bourdieu abre la puerta al estudio de aquéllos hábitos que, pese a carecer de regla visible, están tan o más regulados que los monacales:

Los condicionamientos asociados a una clase particular de condiciones de existencia producen *habitus*, sistemas de *disposiciones* duraderas y transferibles, estructuras estructuradas predispuestas a funcionar como estructuras estructurantes, es decir, como principios generadores y organizadores de prácticas y de representaciones que pueden ser objetivamente adaptadas a su meta sin suponer el propósito consciente de ciertos fines ni el dominio expreso de las operaciones necesarias para alcanzarlos, objetivamente ‘reguladas’ y ‘regulares’ sin ser para nada el producto de la obediencia a determinadas reglas, y, por todo ello, colectivamente orquestadas sin ser el producto de la acción organizadora de un director de orquesta. (*El sentido práctico* 86) (6)

Estas “structures structurantes” generan y organizan la realidad de un modo más sutil que la mera obediencia de la regla. La notoriedad del principio analizado por Bourdieu se debe a que, superadas con el siglo XVIII las sociedades de control tradicional analizadas por Foucault en *Surveiller et punir (Vigilar y castigar)*, no hace falta postular una cabeza de mando ni una vertical superestructura opresiva como la presentada para la España aurisecular por José Antonio Maravall en *La cultura del Barroco*. Sin necesidad de imaginar conspiraciones ni directores de orquesta en la sombra, el *habitus* organiza la vida mediante un sistema generador de ejercicios, atuendos y prácticas. En línea con el análisis de Bourdieu y la perspectiva conventual teresiana, el hábito mismo es orquesta y director.

Un reseñable aspecto de la labor de Weber y Bourdieu es que su modernización del concepto incorpora la tensión semántica del étimo desarrollada en el mundo clásico. “Latin *habitus*, noun of action (*u*-stem), <*habēre* to have, (reflexive) to be constituted, to be”, en palabras del *Oxford English Dictionary* (voz “habit”). Complementariamente, el *Oxford Latin Dictionary* recoge de modo exhaustivo su uso clásico en las obras de Cicerón, Plinio o Quintiliano:

*habitus-us, m.* [habeo + -tv̄s]<sub>[SEP]</sub>

1 State of being, condition: a (of the body). b (of other material things). c (of non-material or abstract things, circumstances, etc.).

2 Expression, demeanour, manner, bearing. b physical attitude, posture.

3 Style of dress, toilet, etc., ‘get-up’ (esp. proper to a particular class or occasion).

4 Physical character. b character, constitution (of non-physical things).

5 Physical make-up, build, form (with emphasis on visual aspect). (*OLD*, 782-83).

Este plexo de acepciones evidencia la proliferación de sentidos derivados del étimo griego que *habitus* vierte, ἕξις (gr. *héxis*, “posesión”, “estado”, “hábito”), el cual es en gran medida legado a través de las categorías de la *Lógica* aristotélica. En el libro I define Aristóteles el octavo de sus predicamentos precisando los tipos de cualidad decibles, entre las que “una especie de la cualidad podría llamarse *estado* [*héxis*] y *disposición*. El estado difiere de la disposición por ser más estable y duradero: tales son los conocimientos y las virtudes ... se tiende a llamar *estado* a aquellas cosas que son más

duraderas e inamovibles” (*Lógica* I, 8b28-9a13). Evidenciando la vigencia del pensamiento aristotélico, Santa Teresa conectaría de nuevo las ideas de hábito y virtud avisando en sus *Moradas*: “Y creedme que no está el negocio en tener hábito de religión o no, sino en procurar ejercitar las virtudes” (III.II.6). El hábito es el ejercicio de las virtudes, y sin ese componente práctico no se puede apropiadamente hablar de hábito. En el tratado aristotélico la intercambiabilidad entre los sentidos de “estado”, “costumbre” y “posesión” se expresa particularmente en la sección 11b17-11b23, contribuyendo al fondo común que propició la traducción latina como *habitus*. Percibiéndolo juiciosamente, en su rigurosa edición de la *Lógica* aristotélica para Gredos Miguel Candel Sanmartín anota: “*héxis*, tradicionalmente traducido por ‘*hábito*’. El sentido de este término en Aristóteles parece ser el de ‘actividad que forma parte del ser de quien la ejerce’, es decir, de naturaleza más intrínseca” (*Lógica* II, 435, nota 295). O, por emplear la expresión de Bourdieu, un “*habitus générateur*” (*La sense pratique* 21). El hábito es, pues, la generación de realidad mediante la práctica.

Partiendo del sustrato aristotélico, cada una de las aproximaciones modernas enfatiza diversas vetas ya presentes en la etimología grecolatina. Por un lado, la perspectiva weberiana subraya, como las acepciones 1 y 5 del *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, el isomorfismo entre lo interno y lo externo. Del otro, las acepciones 2, 3 y 4 legitiman un análisis basado en la corporalidad y la naturalización de posturas, ejercicios y costumbres. Sobre todo desde la incursión de las teorías biopolíticas, el *habitus* se entiende no como la expresión conductista de la esencia, sino como la producción de vida(s) mediante la conducta. Este sentido casi sartreano de existencia precediendo a la esencia –aunque el resultado no sea, en el caso biopolítico, una esencia– es precisamente

la razón de ser principal del más influyente tipo de hábito: el monacal. Y es justo a éste al que Giorgio Agamben dedica su obra *Altissima povertà. Regole monastiche e forma di vita*.

Tomando la expresión de Wittgenstein en las *Philosophische Untersuchungen (Investigaciones filosóficas)*, Agamben estudia el poder constitutivo de las prácticas o formas de vida –*Lebensformen*– en el contexto religioso. Más precisamente, se preocupa por la capacidad del hábito para producir vidas. Centrándose en la voluntad de renuncia nuclear a la cosmovisión franciscana, Agamben denota el modo en el que lo interno y lo externo, la apariencia y el ser, y el vestido y la persona se interdeterminan. El contexto cenobítico le resulta, además, de particular interés por tratarse las comunidades cristianas primitivas de movimientos que al mismo tiempo subvierten el orden terrenal establecido y fundan una nueva colectividad con reglas propias en la que todo miembro vale exactamente lo mismo que los demás. Y es justo eso lo que sus émulos medievales en la forma de las órdenes religiosas construyen.

Fascina a Agamben el hecho de que, nacido como un movimiento en los márgenes, el Cristianismo busque desde sus comienzos la manera de diferenciarse de los otros credos y en cierto modo abstraer a sus fieles de la vida imperial. La constitución de esta alteridad interior se apoya en una nueva forma de vida que conforma ritos –bautismo, comunión, sacramentos...–, prácticas –comunidades y en ocasiones compartición de bienes según el ejemplo de Hch 4, 22-27...– y expresiones –lingüísticas, pero también estéticas e indumentarias–. Especialmente durante sus primeros cuatro siglos de existencia, el Cristianismo se define mediante identidad –lo que sus partícipes desean tener en común– y diferencia –lo que a diferencia de los otros, son y dejan de ser–. La

máxima expresión de este proceso son los desarrollos en el dogma teológico y el surgimiento de las comunidades religiosas en el siglo IV, constituyendo éstas la primera manifestación regulada del hábito cristiano. Apunta Agamben al respecto:

In the context of the monastic life, the term *habitus* –which originally signified ‘a way of being or acting’ and, among the Stoics, became synonymous with virtue (*habitus appellamus animi aut corporis constantem et absolutam aliqua in re perfectionem*, ‘By habit we mean a stable and absolute constitution of mind or body’; Cicero, *De invention* 1.25.36)– seems more and more to designate the way of dressing. It is significant that, when this concrete meaning of the word begins to be affirmed in the post-Augustan age, it is not always easy to distinguish it from the more general sense, all the more so in that *habitus* was closely associated with dress, which was in some way a necessary part of the ‘way to conduct oneself’. (13) (7)

La investigación de Agamben constata el origen monástico de la acepción “modo de ser o actuar” del término *habitus*. Destaca, adicionalmente, el complejo modo en que el sentido material o estético del vestido –el hábito como ropajes– se entrelaza con el moral –el hábito como costumbres y acciones vitales–. Atando ambos niveles, el término wittgensteiniano de *formas de vida* permite a Agamben hablar del hábito como una mirada holística sobre la existencia conventual: la forma de vestir es la forma de ser. En el contexto religioso, este isomorfismo entre lo externo y lo interno es evidenciado por la importancia atribuida al acto solemne de investidura. Como el propio vocablo indica, el vestido no es sólo un ropaje, sino que en la *toma del hábito* se adopta una nueva forma



de vida. La trascendencia del gesto es, en el caso hispano, subrayada por las palabras de Santa Teresa en su *Libro de la vida*, quien el 2 de noviembre de 1536 tomara el hábito en una ceremonia que su parroquia revive anualmente: “En tomando el hábito, luego me dio el señor a entender cómo favorece a los que se hacen fuerza para servirle” (*Vida* IV.2). La narración de su “mudanza” de ropas y costumbres desarrolla la misma convicción en la total coincidencia entre vestimenta, costumbres y forma de vida que años más tarde transmitirá a sus hermanas de orden. El mismo fenómeno lo percibe Agamben en un pasaje capital:

To inhabit together thus meant for the monks to share, not simply a place or a style of dress, but first of all a *habitus*. The monk is in this sense a man who lives in the mode of ‘inhabiting,’ according to a rule and a form of life. It is certain, nevertheless, that cenoby represents the attempt to make habit and form of life coincide in an absolute and total *habitus*, in which it would not be possible to distinguish between dress and way of life. The distance that separates the two meanings of the term *habitus* will never completely disappear, however, and will durably mark the definition of the monastic condition with its ambiguity. (16) (8)

En línea con las teorías de lo común desarrolladas por Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Nancy, Roberto Esposito o Antonio Negri, Agamben enfatiza el poder del “abitare insieme”, del cohabitar de las órdenes religiosas para constituir colectividades humanas auto-organizadas. El *habitus* es, entonces, la total coincidencia entre forma de vida y hábito monacal.

Uno de los aspectos más llamativos, señala Agamben, es el hecho de que el ideal monástico, que comienza como un gesto de aislamiento individual respecto al mundo, produzca desde su misma concepción formas colectivistas de vida (*Altissima povertà* 19). San Basilio, San Pacomio y Santa Sinclética sientan las bases no sólo de una reclusión compartida sino, más aún, de una vida cuya finalidad primordial es la superación del individuo en favor de la unión. Formulada por los padres griegos de la Iglesia como una extensión de la polis, esta unión o *koinonía* es entendida como la creación de una comunidad de iguales que ya no necesita de una frontera física para definirse: superando los vicios y debilidades individuales, el hábito conventual vuelca la existencia terrenal al servicio del otro, del co-habitante.

Justo en el mismo momento en el que se teorizan la soberbia y el egocentrismo como pecados capitales y, en el fondo, el signo de Satanás, los cenobitas imaginan un modo de vida en el que la realización personal sólo se obtiene mediante la negación de lo propio y la desinteresada entrega al otro. La vida, la co-habitación bajo el hábito común, sirve además como mecanismo de control mutuo; como garante de que ninguna de las hermanas o hermanos incurra en la satisfacción egoísta de la soberbia. Hábito significa vivir juntos, pero también vivir para el otro. De ahí que, comentando la Regla de los Cuatro Padres de Pricoco, afirme Agamben que “Communal habitation is the necessary foundation of monasticism. Nevertheless, in the earliest rules, the term *habitation* seems to indicate not so much a simple fact as, rather, a virtue and a spiritual condition ... not only a factual situation, but a way of life” (250 (9)). Es justo en el marco del debate sobre este habitar común cuando Santa Teresa de Jesús produce y construye su obra, cambiando irremisiblemente el curso del *habitus* de la representativa orden carmelita, que por

mediación de los hermanos menores descalzos –también una producción castellana– tanto comparten con la tradición teresiana.

Los tres episodios más decisivos para el desarrollo de la orden carmelita están marcados por análogos debates en torno a las formas cenobítica –comunitaria– y anacorética –aislada– de vida religiosa y laica. Si el siglo IV marca el nacimiento de las primeras comunidades en Egipto y, en el caso del Monte Carmelo, Siria, el siglo XIII lo define la legislación del hábito carmelita por medio de la *Regla* de (San) Alberto Avogadro de 1214 y su canonización de manos de Inocencio IV en 1247. El siguiente gran punto de inflexión es la reforma carmelita de manos de Santa Teresa de Jesús, quien en 1562 fundó la *Ordo Fratrum Discalceatorum Beatissimae Mariae Virginis de Monte Carmelo* como invectiva contra la laxitud individualista de su presente. Frente al hedonismo y el egoísmo que percibe en las “comunidades” religiosas del XV y principios del XVI, Teresa exalta la vida simple en el Monte Carmelo y la regla originaria de Alberto Avogadro como vía para recuperar el *habitus* de humildad y simpleza ejemplarizado por San Brocardo como vida despegada de sí y dedicada por entero al otro. (10)

Entre 1209 y 1214, Alberto Avogadro legisla el hábito carmelita participando de una longeva tradición propia del género de las *regulae* consistente en reglar el uso y tipo de vestimenta mediante una descripción literaria de la misma. En concreto, la *Norma carmelita primitiva* detalla el hábito carmelita siguiendo el topos del *miles christianus*, esto es, del soldado cristiano. Amonesta así a las hermanas a:

poneros las armas que Dios os da para poder resistir a las estratagemas del diablo (Ef 6,11). Abrochaos el *ceñidor* de la castidad (Ef 6,14). Protegeos con el *peto* de

piadosas consideraciones [. . .] Por *coraza* vestíos la justicia (Ef 6,14) [. . .] Tened siempre embrazado el *escudo* de la fe [. . .] Tomad por *casco* la salvación (Ef 6,17) [. . .] Que la *espada* del Espíritu, toda palabra de Dios (Ef 6,17) [. . .] Y cuanto hagáis, realizadlo por la *palabra* del Señor (Col 3,17; 1Co 10,31). (§16; cursiva mía)

Estas metáforas bélicas y espirituales actúan como preceptos morales materializados en aspectos minuciosos del vestido. Nótese la disrupción del canon descriptivo de la *descriptio puellae* proponiendo, frente al modelo salomónico del “Cantar de los Cantares” que luego adaptaría el petrarquismo, una descripción ascendente netamente platónica. En lugar de un descenso hacia lo carnal, la regla asigna a cada una de las sedes del alma platónica una pieza de vestimenta adecuada para su control y perfeccionamiento. Actuando como una escala desde lo más terrenal –el alma concupiscible sita en el bajo vientre– hacia el área agonística del valor –el pecho que al alma irascible alberga– y, trascendiendo ya la corporalidad, la palabra como expresión fiel del alma racional y puente hacia lo divino. De acuerdo a este ejemplo, la regla ejerce las funciones de un tratado metafísico encarnado. Más aún, como el hábito en sentido aristotélico, la regla produce realidad mediante la práctica, fijando un estado del ser y haciendo del *habitus* una segunda naturaleza que no atiende a diferencias, pues todas y cada una de las almas valen lo mismo. La práctica de la orden propicia una existencia que, mediante la indumentaria y la mudanza de las costumbres, busca elevar a las hermanas desde la carnalidad hacia la eternidad.

En lo más alto de esta escala del hábito cabe subrayar que la “palabra” aparece como un elemento indumentario más, sugiriendo que el verbo y el Verbo son tanto espíritu como carne, tanto idea como práctica. Esto es relevante porque junto al resurgir

neoplatónico, los motivos agonísticos –siempre deudores de la *Psychomachia* de Prudencio– son reformulados con motivo del auge templario en la era carolingia y recuperados en el contexto de las Guerras Europeas de Religión. Dentro y fuera del monasterio, el hábito religioso es el de la permanente doble batalla contra el enemigo exterior y, sobre todo, el interior: “Porque una persona siempre recogida [en soledad], por santa que a su parecer sea, no sabe si tiene paciencia ni humildad, ni tiene cómo lo saber. Como si un hombre fuese muy esforzado, ¿cómo se ha de entender, si no se ha visto en batalla?” (Santa Teresa, *Fundaciones* V.15, 692). Este aviso de Teresa remite directamente a las admoniciones de San Basilio en su *Asketikon*, para quien la vida en soledad tiene más de jactancia que de verdadera renuncia, debiendo librarse la batalla contra el ego siempre en comunidad.

El hábito, para Santa Teresa, forma comunidad. Inscribiéndose en el legado del Carmen que anhela reavivar, el vestido se ofrece en el Siglo de Oro español como un sustituto de la sangre. Acompañando a la crisis nobiliaria ya perceptible en los albores de la Era Moderna, la nobleza no es transmitida por la sangre, sino merecida por el ejercicio de la virtud (11). Frente al exclusivismo de una ordenación social basada en la condición natalicia, Santa Teresa defiende la capacidad de toda alma para, mediante la adopción del hábito correcto, ganarse la inmortalidad. Dentro del convento, no hay noblezas ni riquezas, mejores ni peores, sino iguales pugnando por obtener un fin mismo y compartido:

todas las que traemos este *hábito* sagrado del Carmen somos llamadas a la oración y contemplación (porque éste fue nuestro principio, de esta *casta* venimos, de aquellos

santos Padres nuestros del Monte Carmelo, que en tan gran soledad y con tanto desprecio del mundo buscaban este tesoro. (*Moradas* V.1.3; cursiva mía)

Frente al clasismo restrictivo de abadesas como Marguerite Porete o Hildegarda de Bingen, para quienes existen almas naturalmente nobles y otras naturalmente bajas, Santa Teresa exhorta a sus hermanas a ganarse el tesoro –la tríada platónica bien, belleza y verdad– por la vía del hábito (12). Un hábito que iguala lo diferente para buscar el bien y la verdad es, en su parquedad, signo de inigualable belleza. Consecuentemente, el hábito de las hermanas debe ensalzar lo común a todas las almas, no lo individual; lo práctico, no lo deseado ni agradable; la igualdad entre las almas y no los desequilibrios de la fortuna terrenal. Por permitirnos apreciar la minuciosidad de la santa, merece la pena una transcripción íntegra de la más detallada enumeración del indumento descalzo:

El *vestido* sea de jerga u sayal negro sin tintura, y échese el menos sayal que se pueda para ser *hábito*; la manga angosta no más en la boca que en el principio; sin repliegue, redondo, no más largo detrás que delante, y que llegue hasta los pies. Y el escapulario de lo mismo, cuatro dedos más alto que el hábito. La capa de coro de la misma jerga blanca en igual del escapulario, y que lleve la menos jerga que se pueda, atento siempre a lo *necesario* y no a lo *superfluo*. El escapulario trayan siempre sobre las tocas. Sean las tocas de sedeña y no plegadas. Túnicas de estameña y sábanas de lo mismo. El calzado, alpargatas, y por la honestidad, calzas de sayal u de estopa. Almohadas de estameña, salvo con necesidad, que podrán traer lienzo. Las camas sin ningún colchón, sino con jergones de paja [. . .] En vestido ni en cama jamás haya cosa de color, aunque sea cosa tan poca como una faja. Nunca ha de haver zamorros; y si

alguna estuviere enferma podrá traer del mesmo sayal un ropón. Han de traer cortado el *cabello*, por no gastar tiempo en peinarle. (*Constituciones* 3 3-7; cursiva mía).

Pese a haberse trascendido ampliamente en tiempos de la santa el sentido meramente indumentario del hábito, llama la atención el detallismo con el que Teresa se ocupa de los aspectos más materiales del convento. Del mismo modo que su teoría del alma armoniza elementos neoplatónicos con rasgos de hilemorfismo o carnalidad aristotélica, su propuesta reguladora atañe por igual a la dimensión inmaterial y a la más carnal, o incluso textil, de la vida en común.

El *habitus* concebido por Santa Teresa no es un mero ingenio teórico, sino una serie de medidas que regularon y regulan las vidas de las hermanas y hermanos en comunidad. Su cuidadosa confección de elementos indumentarios y prácticas vitales tiene como fin principal la supresión de las diferencias terrenales y la asistencia desde el plano material al alma en su pugna contra las bajas pasiones y los vicios humanos, complementando así a la lectura y la oración. Si los pioneros ascetas eligieron en el siglo IV los desiertos norafricanos para minimizar los riesgos terrenales, Teresa hace de cada hábito un desierto desde el que cada hermana puede combatir el mal, su mal interior, en mayor igualdad de oportunidades. Y, a diferencia de los desiertos sabulosos, exhorta a las sórores –ahora iguales– a luchar juntas por un fin común: “Mas bien sabe Su Majestad que sólo puedo presumir de su misericordia, y ya que no puedo dejar de ser la que he sido, no tengo otro remedio, sino llegarme a ella y confiar en los méritos de su Hijo y de la Virgen, madre suya, cuyo hábito indignamente traigo y traéis vosotras” (*Moradas* III.1.3). Entendido como su propia versión de la *imitatio Christi*, Teresa diseña su hábito de acuerdo a la imagen presente de su madre celeste. Frente a la nobleza de

sangre requerida por Porete y Hildegarda, la de Ávila invita a toda alma a dignificarse mediante la adopción del hábito mariano. En este caso, llevar el hábito es imitar la negación de sí y la incondicional entrega de María al otro.

Como las murallas de la polis griega, el hábito iguala, diferencia y construye identidad. Mientras la sencillez, la abnegación, la mesura y la dignidad son rasgos comunes a los proyectos religiosos desde los orígenes del Cristianismo, el particular momento en el que Santa Teresa escribe impele a decantarse entre dos proyectos vitales, entre dos hábitos, el más bien comunitarista y el más bien individualista. Pese a la importancia de figuras reformistas como Casiodoro de Reina y Cipriano de Valera o el erasmismo estudiado por Marcel Bataillon, el caso hispánico evidencia una vehemente defensa del hábito entendido como renuncia a la voluntad individual en favor de la comunitaria. El hábito como renuncia de sí.

De un modo análogo a los debates polemicista y apologista de los primeros siglos de nuestra era, el contexto de las Guerras de Religión durante el nacimiento de la Era Moderna permite observar el modo en el que, por atravesar una fase de honda redefinición interna similar a la del siglo IV, se reaviva el debate entre el *habitus* individualista y el colectivista. Más importante aún: no son el vestido y las costumbres meros reflejos del debate teológico y político temprano-moderno, sino elementos centrales del mismo. De hecho, una aproximación desde la noción de *habitus* muestra que el modo en el que protestantes y católicos entienden las formas de vida religiosas –el doble hábito como apariencia y conducta– determina el curso espiritual y político de Occidente. ¿Debe el hábito individualizar u homogeneizar? ¿Integrar en lo secular o aislar del mundo? ¿Cuál



ha de ser el hábito de los seculares? Y, avanzado el conflicto, ¿de qué modo debe el hábito de protestantes y católicos expresar su excluyente posesión de la verdad?

El desarrollo de la idea de hábito puede explicarse apelando únicamente a un momento muy específico: la defensa oral –die *Verteidigungsrede*, o apología– pronunciada por Lutero el 18 de abril de 1521 en la Dieta de Worms (13). Convocado ante Carlos V y los grandes oficiales de la Iglesia, Martín Lutero respondió a las acusaciones diciendo:

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen. (*Verteidigungsrede auf dem Reichstag zu Worms*) (14)

Cuando Lutero reclama que sólo las escrituras y “mi conciencia” le bastan para acercarse al Verbo divino, el tribunal de Worms percibe una consecuencia inaceptable: la relación inmediata entre infinitud y finitud minimiza el valor de la vida como camino hacia el Bien, como también mitiga el rol de la comunidad –tradicional y presente– en la construcción de una ciudad celeste en la Tierra. Pero lo que sin duda no pudieron aceptar fueron las palabras de Lutero en su *Comentarios* a los salmos: “in his enim, quae sunt fidei, quilibet Christianus est sibi papa et Ecclesia” o “in these matters of faith, to be sure, each Christian is for himself Pope and Church” (*Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 5:407, “Psalmus tertius decimus” 35). Lo fascinante es que tanto protestantes como católicos

claman ser los herederos directos del magisterio y hábito patrístico. El conflicto se debe a la diferente interpretación que unos y otros hacen del contenido doctrinal, pero también al peso histórico atribuido a las doctrinas añadidas por los Padres de la Iglesia. Desde el punto de vista de Roma, la práctica vital y teórica de los primeros cristianos deviene precisamente un hábito compartido, esto es, las costumbres con las que se teje la tradición eclesiástica. Por contra, el luteranismo ve en este tejido de costumbres un denso manto que oculta y distorsiona la auténtica figura de la doctrina bíblica. De este modo, los divergentes sentidos de tradición resultan en dos tipos de hábito, el que vincula al individuo directamente con la Biblia y el que toma como modelo exegético y vital las primeras comunidades cristianas (15). La discusión exegética es la más visible, pero la colisión entre estas dos cosmovisiones puede estudiarse también a través de los enfrentados modelos de *habitus*, de forma de vida, que reformistas y católicos desean para la cristiandad.

Pese a que estudios más mesurados como *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* de Keith Mathison subrayen la existencia de una vocación comunitaria –no individualista– en Lutero, lo cierto es que tanto Roma como los propios luteranos y calvinistas que vinieron después articulan sus posturas en torno a la exaltación (o refutación, en el caso católico) del poder del individuo aislado para aprehender las enseñanzas bíblicas. El hábito de lectura es aquí anverso del hábito personal. Dentro del mundo de la Reforma la llamada de Lutero a la exégesis autónoma da lugar a modelos incrementalmente más individualistas a los que intérpretes menos polemicistas como Michael G. Baylor se refieren como la “Reforma Radical”. Mientras Lutero retrocede a los orígenes para buscar un ejemplo de hermenéutico basado en la interpretación cenobítica, individual y aislada,

de los textos, los católicos del siglo XVI persiguen un modo vital que anhela ser una sistematización urbana y moderna del primitivo colectivismo de los apóstoles (16). Coherentemente con el la voluntad pública de Trento, el trabajo plasmado por Santa Teresa en sus *Constituciones, Moradas y Fundaciones* deja claro que, frente a las teorías del sujeto como autoafirmación triunfantes en el norte –Lutero, y más adelante Descartes, Locke o Fichte...–, Teresa propugna un modo de realización de sí que pasa por la negación de lo propio. Por la superación de la individualidad mediante la negación de la misma. Pese a ser su mística de cariz íntimo y personal, su ideal de hábito es, ante todo, comunitario –productor de *koinonia*–. Veamos el modo en el que el *habitus* teresiano es vía de negación de sí.

Mediante una sugerente expresión, Santa Teresa de Jesús exige para sus conventos que “Jamás ha de haver espejo ni cosa curiosa, sino todo descuido de sí” (*Constituciones* 3 3-7). Narciso es su gran enemigo, y la propia imagen algo a superar, pues sólo en manos del otro adquiere valor el yo. Privándolas de espejos, Teresa recuerda constantemente a sus sórores que el campo visual del ojo humano es la parte del plan divino mediante la que el Creador les recuerda a quién hay que atender, valorar y servir. En un modelo ideal, el ser humano no debería conocer su propia imagen, que sólo causa vanidad, egoísmo y olvido del prójimo.

Coherentemente, siguiendo el magisterio de San Pacomio y San Basilio, Teresa se cuida de no enfatizar innecesariamente el valor personal, algo muy visible en las bien estudiadas técnicas místicas de autodegradación y *captatio benevolentiae*. De ahí que, paradójicamente, su vestimenta sea ante todo una de desnudez, de negación del hábito mismo: “no hay duda sino que si persevera en esta desnudez y dejamiento de todo, que

alcanzará lo que pretende” (*Moradas* III.I.8). Es obvio que el necesario pudor y humildad de las religiosas no permitirían una desnudez total entendida como ausencia de ropajes, pero la fijación de Santa Teresa por el desprendimiento permite entender de un modo renovado las decisiones indumentarias tomadas por los carmelitas, representando el color pardo al mismo tiempo el yermo desierto y la negación del ornamento, la piel sobre la piel misma. En la misma línea que Aristóteles y Agamben, el hábito carmelita es una herramienta para desprenderse del ego y entregarse a una vida virtuosa centrada en el otro: “Por éstas entenderéis si estáis bien desnudas de lo que dejasteis; porque cosillas se ofrecen, aunque no de esta suerte, en que os podéis muy bien probar y entender si estáis señoras de vuestras pasiones. Y creedme que no está el negocio en tener hábito de religión o no, sino en procurar ejercitar las virtudes” (*Moradas* III.II.6). Con el fin de elevar esto del plano individual del castillo interior al interpersonal del convento, Teresa explicita en sus *Constituciones* el vínculo entre la regulación de la apariencia, la rutina y el sentido de la existencia. Su teoría del *habitus* es también una teoría política del alma.

En oposición frontal a sus coetáneos, los carmelitas recuperan el principio fundamental de la *Regla* agustiniana: “Et non dicatis aliquid proprium, sed sint vobis omnia communia, et distribuatur unicuique vestrum a praeposito vestro victus et tegumentum” (“Call nothing your own, but let everything be yours in common. Food and clothing shall be distributed to each of you by your superior” [*Regula* I 3]). El eco es incuestionable tanto en la *Regla primitiva* como en las *Constituciones* teresianas. Requiere aquélla: “Ningún hermano considerará nada como suyo propio. Tenedlo todo en común” (*Norma carmelita primitiva* §10), y desarrolla Teresa: “En ninguna manera posean las hermanas cosa en particular ni se les consienta, ni para el comer, ni para el

vestir, ni tengan arca, ni arquilla, ni cajón, ni alacena, si no fueren las que tienen los oficios de la Comunidad, ni ninguna cosa en particular, sino que todo sea en común” (*Constituciones* III.3). Los textos públicos de Santa Teresa constituyen su esfuerzo más acabado por formular una metafísica del alma que, por reconocer las innovaciones en materia de subjetividad de los siglos XI y XII, ya no es puramente feudal, pero se resiste a elevar al sujeto autónomo moderno a la categoría de sujeto político incuestionable, como ocurrirá en el norte de Europa. Frente a esto, Teresa funda y legisla unas comunidades en las que, mediante su meticulosa confección de un hábito común, desarrolla la individualidad para superarla en pos de la constitución de una unión humana superior: “Huya siempre la singularidad cuanto le fuere posible, que es mal grande para la comunidad” (*Avisos* 859) (16). Con Agustín, sólo cuando “todo sea en común” conocerá el ánimo la unanimidad –la unidad de las almas– que han sido llamadas a establecer como preludio de la unión celeste.

La atención prestada a la cuestión del hábito se debe en última instancia al poder creador que la propia Biblia le atribuye en Eph 4, 24: “induite novum hominem qui secundum Deum creatus est in iustitia et sanctitate veritatis” (“Y vestir el nuevo hombre que es criado conforme a Dios en justicia y en santidad de verdad”). Unida a su alto poder explicativo, tan longeva filiación justifica que el estudio del *habitus* represente una constante en los estudios políticos y sociológicos contemporáneos. En esta línea, el trabajo de Agamben aspira a iluminar la raigambre religiosa del término para reivindicar el poder de las comunidades espirituales para constituir formas originales de ordenación humana. Su interés por los paradigmas alternativos de colectividad es satisfecho por el caso franciscano que analiza, pero también lo sería por la enérgica labor legisladora de

Santa Teresa de Jesús, quien sistematiza el *habitus* vital más influyente de la tradición española.

Por representar la puesta en práctica de los principios que oponen al mundo de Trento y al norte de Europa, el modelo comunitarista de Santa Teresa tiene el valor de estar fundado sobre una original formulación del sujeto moderno que, sin negar la individualidad, la emplea como base para una igualdad impuesta sobre las diferencias de cuna. Frente al determinismo social feudal, la de Ávila otorga las mismas oportunidades a cada alma, responsabilizándolas a ellas de la obtención o no de su unión con lo divino. Para nivelar las diferencias entre individuos y asistir en esta pugna por la inmortalidad, la santa diseña un *habitus* –tanto indumentaria como relación de costumbres reguladoras– que, en expresión de Bourdieu, genera formas de vida. Desde la más pura materialidad del sayo y el calzado, el *habitus* teresiano propicia una forma de vida, una *κοινωνία*, igualitaria y comunitaria que hace suyo el aviso de San Juan de la Cruz: “Pues no temes el caer a solas, ¿cómo presumes de levantarte a solas? / Mira que más pueden dos juntos que uno solo” (*Avisos* 154).

### Notas

(1). El hábito condicionado aparece como cimiento privilegiado de los “sentimientos colectivos”: “los sentimientos colectivos que se designan con el nombre genérico de ‘nacionales’ no son unívocos, sino que pueden ser nutridos por diferentes fuentes: pueden representar un papel importante las diferencias en la articulación social y económica y en la estructura interna del poder, con sus influencias sobre las costumbres, pero no necesariamente [. . .]; los recuerdos políticos comunes, la confesión religiosa, la comunidad de lenguaje y también el *habitus* condicionado racionalmente” (Weber, *Economía y sociedad* IV.4, 326).

(2). El texto alemán dice: “Der religiös positiv qualifizierte Gesamthabitus kann dabei entweder reines göttliches Gnadengeschenk sein, dessen Existenz sich eben in jener generellen Gerichtetheit auf das religiös Geforderte: einer einheitlich methodisch orientierten Lebensführung äußern. Oder sie kann umgekehrt durch ‘Einübung’ des Guten im Prinzip erwerbbar sein. Auch diese Einübung kann aber naturgemäß nur durch

rationale methodische Richtung der Gesamtlebensführung, nicht durch einzelne zusammenhangslose Handlungen erfolgen” (*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* X.2, 358)

(3). Weber dedica un iluminador párrafo a los contrastes entre credos: “la palabra *Beruf* (‘vocación’, profesión, oficio) y la valoración de la virtud profesional como forma única de vida agradable a Dios es esencial al luteranismo desde un principio. Pero las ‘obras’ no entran en consideración a título de base real de la salvación del alma, como en el catolicismo, ni a título de razón de conocimiento del ‘renacimiento’, como en el protestantismo ascético; y como, en general, el *habitus* afectivo de saberse albergado en la bondad y gracia del Señor siguió siendo la forma dominante de la certeza de salvación, así también la actitud respecto al mundo fue un paciente ‘acomodarse’ a sus reglas, en marcada oposición con todas aquellas formas del protestantismo que exigían una prueba para la certeza de salvación (en los pietistas, *fides efficax*; en los *charidschidas* islámicos, *amal*) en obras buenas, o un modo específicamente metódico de llevar la vida” (*Economía y sociedad* X, 447-48).

(4). En “Pólis y Caos. El espacio de lo político”, Jesús Ezquerro Gómez elabora un análisis brillante: “La *pólis*, no es sólo una mera cantidad (numerable) de ciudadanos, una multitud; es también una *unidad*, un todo. Esa unidad se denomina en griego *koinonía*, *comunidad*. ‘Toda *pólis*’ —leemos en la *Política* aristotélica— ‘es una cierta *comunidad*’. Pero ¿qué es lo *común* (*tò koinón*) que funda la *comunidad* (*koinonía*)? Según Aristóteles, aquella *acción* (*práxis*) que *une* a los elementos *actores* de la misma con los que la *padecen*” (22).

(5). Acaso la más capital disquisición sobre identidad y diferencia como elementos definitorios sea la del quinto libro de la *Metafísica* aristotélica, donde explica el filósofo: “la identidad es una especie de unidad de ser, unidad de muchos objetos, o de uno solo tomado como muchos; ejemplo: cuando se dice: una cosa es idéntica a sí misma, la misma cosa es considerada como dos.<sup>[1]</sup> Se llaman heterogéneas las cosas que tienen pluralidad de forma, de materia, o de definición; y en general la heterogeneidad es lo opuesto a la identidad. Diferente se dice de las cosas heterogéneas que son idénticas desde algún punto de vista, no cuando lo son bajo el del número, sino cuando lo son bajo el de la fortuna, o del género, o de la analogía. Se dice también de lo que pertenece a géneros diferentes de los contrarios, y de todo lo que tiene en la esencia alguna diversidad” (V.IX 208-11). Curiosamente, los términos empleados por Aristóteles para introducir en el libro previo el concepto de identidad son “vestido” y traje”, taxones que le permiten discutir sobre las relaciones de homonimia, identidad y sinonimia: “Si hombre y no-hombre no significasen cosas diferentes, no ser hombre no tendría evidentemente un sentido diferente de ser hombre. Y así, ser hombre sería no ser hombre, y habría entre ambas cosas identidad, porque esta doble expresión que representa una noción única, significa un objeto único, lo mismo que vestido y traje. Y si hay identidad, ser hombre y no<sup>[2]</sup> ser hombre significan un objeto único; pero hemos demostrado antes que estas dos expresiones tienen un sentido diferente” (IV.II 157 y *Lógica* I, 1a1-1a16).

(6). El texto francés original de 1980 dice: “Les conditionnements associés à une classe particulière de conditions d’existence produisent des *habitus*, systèmes de *dispositions* durables et transposables, structures structurées prédisposées à fonctionner comme structures structurantes, c’est-à-dire en tant que principes générateurs et organisateurs de pratiques et de représentations qui peuvent être objective-ment adaptées à leur but sans supposer la visée consciente de fins et la maîtrise expresse des opérations nécessaires pour les atteindre, objectivement ‘régées’ et ‘régulières’ sans être



en rien le produit de l'obéissance à des règles, et, étant tout cela, collectivement orchestrées sans être le produit de l'action organisatrice d'un chef d'orchestre" (*La sense pratique* 88).

(7). El original italiano permite apreciar la fructífera apropiación de fuentes y terminologías clásicas, como en el caso de su célebre "homo sacer": "È nel contesto della vita monastica, che il termine *habitus*, che significa in origine 'modo di essere o di agire' e, nella Stoa, diventa sinonimo di virtù (*habitu[m] appellamus animi aut corporis constantem et absolutam aliqua in re perfectionem* Cic., *Inv*, 25, 36), tende sempre più a designare il modo di vestire. È significativo che, quando questa accezione concreta del termine comincia ad affermarsi in era postaugustea, non sia sempre facile distinguersela dal senso più generale, tanto più che l'*habitus* era spesso accostato alla veste, che era parte in qualche modo necessaria del 'modo di atteggiarsi'"(25).

(8). "Abitare insieme significa dunque per i monaci condividere non semplicemente un luogo e una veste, ma innanzitutto degli *habitus*; e il monaco è, in questo senso, un uomo che vive sul modo dell' 'abitare', cioè seguendo una regola e una forma di vita. È certo, tuttavia, che il cenobio rappresenta il tentativo di far coincidere abito e forma di vita in un *habitus* assoluto e integrale, in cui non fosse possibile distinguere fra veste e modo di vita. La distanza che divide i due significati del termine *habitus* non scomparirà, però, mai completamente e segnerà durevolmente con la sua ambiguità la definizione della condizione monastica" (27)

(9). "L'abitazione comune è il fundamento necessario del monachesimo. Tuttavia nelle regole più antiche, il termine *habitatio* sembra indicare non tanto un semplice facto, quanta piuttosto una virtù e una condizione spirituale" (24). Con sus formas de vida, Agamben reformula la idea wittgensteiniana de las *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (*Investigaciones filosóficas*): "Puede imaginarse fácilmente un lenguaje que conste sólo de órdenes y partes de batalla.— O un lenguaje que conste sólo de preguntas y de expresiones de afirmación y de negación. E innumerables otros. — E imaginar un lenguaje significa imaginar una forma de vida" (19); "La expresión «juego de lenguaje» debe poner de relieve aquí que hablar el lenguaje forma parte de una actividad o de una forma de vida" (23); "Verdadero y falso es lo que los hombres dicen; y los hombres concuerdan en el lenguaje. Ésta no es una concordancia de opiniones, sino de forma de vida" (241).

(10). En *El peso de la Iglesia*, Enrique Martínez enfatiza que la proliferación de órdenes religiosos reformistas en los siglos XIV y XV debe entenderse como una reacción frente a la relajación de las reglas en la Baja Edad Media. La intención sería constante: regresar al modo de vida paleocristiano, recuperar el sentido primigenio de la regla y constituir a cabo un hábito vital de dignidad apostólica.

(11). Como tantas otras cosas, debo esta apreciación al trabajo de Víctor Pueyo Zoco. Al respecto de esta problemática destacan: "Las *Coplas a la muerte de su padre* de Jorge Manrique: una lectura marxista" y *Góngora: hacia una poética histórica*.

(12). Así lo critica Tenxwind von Andernach a Hildegard von Bingen en una carta de 1148 donde muestra su descontento por el elitismo del convento, incompatible con el universalismo cristiano: "Würden nur Frauen aus angesehenem und adligem Geschlecht in Eure Gemeinschaft aufgenommen [. . .] sind wir sehr bestürzt und von der Ungewissheit großen Zweifels verunsichert, wenn wir schweigend im Geiste erwägen, dass der Herr in der Urkirche bescheidene und arme Fischer erwählt hat" ("Only women from a respectable and noble family would be accepted into your fellowship ... We are



greatly disturbed by the uncertainty of great doubt, when we quietly think in our minds that the Lord chose humble and poor fishermen in the early Church” [*Letter to Hildegard in ca.1148*]. Y en el caso de Marguerite Porete son sus propias palabras en *Le miroir des âmes simples et anéanties*: “Ceste Ame a son lot de franchise affinee ... Elle ne respont a nully, se elle ne veult, se il n’est de son lignage; car ung gentilhomme na daigneroit respondre a ung vilain” (“The Soul has her allowance of pure freeness ... She responds to no one if she does not wish to, if he is not of her lineage. For a gentleman would not deign to respond to a peasant” [85 6-10]). Max Weber dedica algunas frases muy vehementes contra la idea del exclusivismo universalista: “La predestinación otorga al ‘agraciado’ la medida más alta de certeza de salvación, una vez que está seguro de pertenecer a la aristocracia de los elegidos” (*Economía y sociedad* X, 450).

(13). Frente a ello, el Concilio de Trento, y sobre todo la bula *Circa pastoralis*, de Pío V en 1566 respondieron de modo que “Se exigió a los superiores la observancia de la vida comunitaria” (Enrique Martínez Ruiz, *El peso de la Iglesia* 251).

(14). “Wenn ich nicht mit Zeugnissen der Schrift oder mit offenbaren Vernunftgründen besiegt werde, so bleibe ich von den Schriftstellen besiegt, die ich angeführt habe, und mein Gewissen bleibt gefangen in Gottes Wort. Denn ich glaube weder dem Papst noch den Konzilien allein, weil es offenkundig ist, daß sie öfters geirrt und sich selbst widersprochen haben. Widerrufen kann und will ich nichts, weil es weder sicher noch geraten ist, etwas gegen sein Gewissen zu tun. Gott helfe mir, Amen” (*Verteidigungsrede*).

(15). En el marco del debate sobre las *quinque solae*, el principio *sola scriptura* – la Biblia como fuente única, perspicua y suficiente de revelación– enfrenta a luteranos, para quienes las doctrinas extrabíblicas no añaden nada sustancial, y romanos, que defienden el poder revelador de la dogmática patristica y eclesiástica.

(16). San Basilio es el autor de la más vehemente defensa del comunitarismo cristiano, el *Asketikon*: “Community life offers more blessings than can be fully and easily enumerated [ . . . ] If anyone says that the teaching of the Holy Scripture is sufficient for the amendment of his ways, he resembles a man who learns carpentry without ever actually doing carpenter’s work or a man who is instructed in metal-working but will not reduce theory to practice. To such one the Apostle would say: ‘Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified’ (Rom 2:13). Consider, further, that the Lord by reason of His excessive love for man was not content with merely teaching the word, but, so as to transmit us clearly and exactly the example of humility in the perfection of charity, girded Himself and washed the feet of the disciples (John 13:5). Whom, therefore, will you wash? To whom will you minister? In comparison with whom will you be the lowest, if you live alone? [ . . . ] So it is an arena for the combat, a good path of progress, continual discipline, and a practicing of the Lord’s commandments, when brethren dwell together in community [ . . . ] It maintains also the practice characteristic of the saints, of whom it is recorded in the Acts: ‘And all they that believed were together and had all things in common’ (Acts 2:44) and again: ‘And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but all things were in common unto them’ (Acts 4:32)” (*Ascetical Works*, “The Long Rules” Q7.341-351).

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