

Dissidences

Hispanic Journal of Theory and Criticism

Volume 1 | Issue 2

Article 6

November 2012

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Recommended Citation

Heneghan, Dorota (2012) "Shopping Angels: Fashion, Gender, and Modernity in Galdós' *La de Bringas*," *Dissidences*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 2 , Article 6.

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Keywords / Palabras clave

Galdós, La de Bringas, Fashion, Spain, Gender

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Hispanic Journal of Theory and Criticism

Shopping Angel:

Fashion, Gender, and Modernity in Galdós' La de Bringas

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When La de Bringas, Galdós' fifth novel of the "Contemporary Series," was completed in May 1884, critics could hardly contain their lack of enthusiasm. They criticized exaggerated attention to detail, the story's prosaic nature, and the unappealing protagonist, Rosalía de Bringas. Luis Alfonso complained in his July 1884 review in La Época that the entire novel does not have "otro tema que las trampas, enredos y bellaquerías de la protagonista para gastar más en trapos y moños de lo que puede" (qtd. in Bly 13). Under the pseudonym Orlando, another critic questioned in an 1884 review in Revista de España the profusion and purpose of so many trivial objects:

Unos no han podido salir del laberinto en que Pérez y su acompañante se meten en busca de Don Francisco Bringas; a otros se les ha atragantado el cuerpo de pelo que éste fabrica ... muchas personas de ambos sexos se han visto punto menos que ahogados entre tanta cinta, tanto lazo y tanto trapo (...) ¿Para qué se habrá pretendido hacer con materiales tan ínfimos y deleznable una novela (qtd. in Bly 13).

Why, indeed, was so much space given to describing ordinary and inessential objects or, to borrow the late Naomi Schor's expression, "bad details" (59)? What did all the ribbons, lace, clothing, and other sartorial goods mentioned in Orlando's review, mean in La de Bringas? What role did they play in Galdós' artistic recreation of reality and in the literary construction of his protagonist?

Although clothing and accessories play a vital role in Galdós' novels, only a few studies have analyzed their deeper significance in his narratives (see Wright). In La de Bringas, a novel replete with references to fashionable clothing and luxurious accoutrements, 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 [1]. 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.

In the following pages, I propose to study the role of clothing and accessories in Galdós' construction of gender in La de Bringas in the context of nineteenth-century fashion. I will examine how Galdós used fashion to enrich the cultural images of his character, and how these images challenge the stereotypical representation of gender in nineteenth-century society and literature. More specifically, I aim to analyze how Galdós' extraordinary portraits of bourgeois woman, presented in the context of her insatiable vanity and passion for fashionable dresses and accessories, challenge the traditional nineteenth-century image of middle-class women as domestic angels. In particular, I shall examine how Galdós used exalted religious rhetoric and euphemism implemented in describing clothing and the protagonist's fascination with it to poke fun at the traditional discourse of domesticity and the heavily-promoted image of bourgeois woman as domestic angel. I want first to interpret the fashionable outfits of Galdós' protagonist, composed artistically from various fabrics and luxurious accessories, not as evidence of her frivolity or social ambition, but rather as an image of modernity embodied in the complex and creative nature of her persona. The second part of my analysis will explore what clothing and accessories meant in this novel in the context of the nineteenth-century commodity culture and the cult of consumption. I propose to take a close look at the description of modern shops presented in La de Bringas as places of sartorial seduction and to explore the impact of modern commodities such as ready-to-wear clothing, on the literary construction of woman in the context of modern life.

Before the nineteenth century, the image of a woman of fashion presented by Spanish Renaissance and Baroque moralists and social commentators was mainly negative. In the sixteenth century, Francisco de Osuna in Norte de los estados en que se da regla de vivir a los mancebos, y a los casados, y a los viudos, y a todos los continentes y se tratan muy por extenso los remedios del desastrado casamiento, enseñando, que tal ha de ser la vida del cristiano casado (1531) attributes women's penchant for adornment and fine dressing to vanity and an innate desire for ostentation and imitation:

Las mujeres son como las monas, que imitan mucho y ninguna cosa a derechas. Ninguna mujer verás que imita el buen miramiento de otra; ni su mesura; ni el moderado vestir; ni otra virtud; más viendo una mujer que sale su vecina con algo nuevo; luego se le antoja que meresce más que la otra; y como la mona trabaja por imitar el vestuario ajeno (qtd. in Vigíl 190).

Similarly, in La perfecta casada (1583) Fray Luis de León censures women's passion for luxury and excessive adornment as causing lust and moral corruption. In his lengthy diatribe against female delight in ostentatious clothing and make-up, he presents the fashion-conscious woman as self-absorbed, unproductive, and wasteful, while the ideal wife is modest, industrious, and thrifty. Likewise, in Verdades morales en que se reprehenden, y condenan los trajes vanos, superfluos y profanos; con otros vicios y abusos que hoy se usan; mayormente los escotados deshonestos de las mujeres (1678) Pedro Galindo emphasizes fashion's pernicious effects by describing how morality is negatively influenced by the seventeenth-century woman's art of dressing:

Si hay un traje notablemente provocativo es el de los escotados, pues con la gala, con el garbo, con los colores, y esplendor que comunican las aguas de rostro, y otros afeites, e invenciones, y a veces con otros ademanes, gestos ... se junta la desnudez, que es el mayor incentivo de la lujuria (qtd. in Vigíl 196-97).

With the exception of Fray Vincente Mexía, who, in his Saludable instrucción del estado del matrimonio (1566), does not disapprove of wives, adorning themselves in order to “querer usar del matrimonio en buena voluntad” (qtd. in Vigíl 191), most Spanish moralists and social commentators, such as Alonso de Carranza in Rogación en detestación de los grandes abusos en los trajes y adornos nuevamente introducidos en España (1636) in the seventeenth century, and Fray Antonio Arbiol in Estragos de la luxuria, y sus remedios, conforme a las Divinas Escrituras, y Santos Padres de la Iglesia (1725) in the eighteenth century, reiterate the traditional criticism of women's attraction to fashion and the display of luxury as synonymous with female depravity and moral corruption [2].

Although la moda was described consistently as threatening female virtue and economic prosperity until the end of the eighteenth century, as the nineteenth century advanced attitudes toward sartorial art and the image of a woman of fashion began to change [3]. Alongside articles comparing fashion to a “despótica innovadora que avasalla gustos y opiniones,” [4] “deidad caprichosa y voluble,” [5] or “el capricho de los caprichos, la más veleta de todas las veletas,” [6] more and more defenses of fashion began to appear. As early as 1840, an anonymous author described fashion in a popular Spanish women's magazine, Mariposa, as “hija ... del progreso y adelantado,” [7] and in 1866, María del Pilar Sinués de

Marco described it in El ángel del hogar as "la maga joven y graciosa, risueña ... y amable" [8]. Fashion, in fact, became a necessity in the nineteenth-century women's world. As Francisca Carlota del Riego Pica emphasized in her 1862 article, "La moda," published in La Violeta: "Que el seguir la moda o darla culto es una necesidad ... es una verdad tan reconocida que me parece inútil señalarla" [9]. Similarly, luxury became identified as an intrinsic component of the modern world, symbolizing progress and civilization, as Fernando Garrido described it in his article, "El lujo," in El Nuevo Pensil de Iberia in 1857: "El lujo es una necesidad natural en todos los seres, es la consecuencia del irresistible encanto del que nacen las artes y las ciencias, padre de la industria, alma del progreso y de la civilización" [10].

This new attitude toward fashion and luxury, presented in these articles in the context of necessity and progress, clearly demonstrates that in nineteenth-century Spain, as modern forms of commerce and advertising were developing, fashion could no longer be easily condemned. Moreover, transformations in the image of a fashionable woman portrayed by some writers as "mujer elegante ... segura de sí misma ... una creación moderna" [11] and by others as "sacerdotisa de la moda ... para la cual la moda es el oráculo," [12] indicate that fashion not only enhanced the cultural representation of femininity, but also challenged its traditional boundaries. For as much as such neo-Catholic authors as María del Pilar Sinués de Marco, Faustina Sáez de Melgar, Angela Grassi de Cuenca, Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer, and Joaquina García Balmaseda, advocated the conventional model of femininity, by advising middle-class women to dress simply and modestly, the angel of domesticity was, as Bridget Aldaraca observed, no longer "marketed with complete success" (114). This doesn't mean, of course, that neo-Catholic writers discouraged middle-class women from

dressing up. As fashion's popularity now made it harder to ignore or condemn, neo-Catholic writers began to tailor their views on fashion to fit the traditional image of femininity. In 1866, Sinués de Marco wrote in her article, "La mujer española," published in El ángel del hogar:

Hoy la moda en España no es considerada tal como debe serlo, y se la ofende atribuyéndola todos los desórdenes que ocasionan el lujo y la vanidad: día vendrá en que, más adelantada la industria y más desarrollado el sentimiento de lo bello y de lo justo, se la mira como a una buena y amable amiga, como a una útil consejera, como a una deidad hermosa y bienhechora que gusta que la mujer sea laboriosa, inteligente y cuidadosa de su persona, de su familia y de su casa (225-26) [13].

And years later, she added in her manual, La dama elegante (1892): "saber vestir bien es una ciencia muy útil, y hasta me atrevo á decir que es una ciencia indispensable en la mujer" (190). "Useful" and "indispensable," under the condition, of course, as she already highlighted in La mujer de nuestros días (1878), that "el arte de vestir bien, no consiste en gastar grandes sumas ... para ataviarse con elegancia ... solo hacen falta un poco de paciencia, de buen gusto y de habilidad" (36-37). In other words, as long as middle class women were willing "no adoptar más que las modas que convienen a la edad, a la figura y a la condición social," (192) and as long as vestir bien did not exceed the boundaries of the conventional model of femininity, the bourgeois angel was encouraged and even obliged to keep up with fashion.

However, if one is to believe that the bourgeois angels followed the advice of Sinués de Marco and dressed according to their means and social status, how should one understand

the constant criticism in her articles of "el uso de los adornos pomposos, de los colores fuertes, de las formas extraordinarias en los vestidos" (270)? If fashion did not disrupt the angel of domesticity's cultural image and fit so well into the traditional representation of gender, how should one interpret the contradictions in the writings of the neo-Catholic authors, who urged women to wear "trajes ... de forma sencilla y de color modesto" (Sinués de Marco 187) and not to "rendir un culto tan ciego a ese ídolo llamado Moda," [14] while dedicating long passages in their articles to advertising the latest, "verdaderos modelos de elegancia," [15] trying to convince readers that "cuando la Moda ejerce su imperio ... no hay más remedio que aceptar sus órdenes" [16]. How credible was this prescription for bourgeois simplicity and understated elegance in fashion magazines when flanked by colorful plates describing the newest seasonal outfits, advertisements of Parisian fabrics and accoutrements, always available, at a "precio módico," at "el nuevo establecimiento de Agaudó y Jarto" described by Joaquina García Balmaseda in Correo de la Moda as "un almacén muy surtido, cuya necesidad se hacía sentir por aquella parte de la población (2) [17]? And finally, how believable were the words of these women who themselves succumbed to sartorial temptations inconsistent with their own advice [18]? Rich contradictions arouse in talking about fashion and in the image of a woman of fashion. Besides being portrayed as an embodiment of female depravity and moral corruption, the woman of fashion was represented as both a domesticated woman, always "bien vestida y bien peinada ... agradable a los ojos de ... esposo y familia," [19] and as a worldly, sophisticated shopper, confident "en la elección de las telas y las joyas" [20]. This view of the fashionable woman, comfortable in the modern world where there was 'tanto que ver y admirar', showed that the cultural representation of femininity was changing in Spain during the nineteenth century. While the neo-Catholic writers sought to preserve the traditional

image of the bourgeois angels by praising the cult of domesticity and family, the angels of domesticity, seduced by the beauty of their fashionable wings, appeared to be escaping their domestic sanctuaries into a modern world whose shops and window displays of fashionable goods engendered their desire to move outside the unitary, static image of domesticated women, submissive wives, and dedicated mothers. Here was an opportunity to transform their looks, to create and to 'buy' a modern, individuated self.

Rosalía Bringas and the Dream Worlds of Fashion

Let us turn to the literary world of Galdós to examine fashion's role in the artistic construction of gender in La de Bringas and how the narrative uses sartorial goods to enrich the cultural images of Rosalía Bringas. Sartorial goods are omnipresent in La de Bringas. Dispersed throughout the novel, seemingly without purpose and order, the articles of clothing persistently mark their presence in the story by aggressively invading the domestic space of the Bringas family. Clothing is the recurring topic of the protagonist's conversations with Milagros, and, above all, constantly occupies Rosalía's mind. Mute and meaningless on the surface, clothes convey Rosalía's fantasies and intimate desires for the unusual. The scenes describing the protagonist before her mirror composing and recomposing her image from colorful fabrics and fashionable accessories, discussing with Milagros a new outfit for the coming season, and "haciendo reformas, combinando trapos e interpretando más o menos libremente lo que traían los figurines" (Galdós 93) [21], show sartorial goods as a rich source for her aesthetic creativity, material imagination, and intimate pleasure. However, Rosalía's unseemly passion for "el gros glasé, color cenizas de rosa," (Galdós 95) "glasé verde naciente," (Galdós 95) or "botones verdes," (Galdós 95) out of

which she creatively invents and puts together her 'look,' plays a bigger role in the novel beyond merely conveying her private feelings. In fact, by employing exalted religious rhetoric and euphemism in describing clothing and the protagonist's fascination with it, Galdós pokes fun at the traditional discourse of domesticity and the conventional image of bourgeois woman as domestic angels.

Religious rhetoric is introduced early in the novel. We are told that "los regalitos de Agustín Caballero" (Galdós 92) which Rosalía received in the past, "fueron la fruta cuya dulzura le quitó la inocencia" (Galdós 93) and that "por culpa de ellos un ángel con espada de raso ... la echó de aquel Paraíso en que Bringas [her husband] la tenía tan sujeta" (Galdós 93). Through the ironic reference to the Garden of Eden and to the sin of biblical Eve, the novelist mocks the centuries-old, but nonetheless still current Catholic and neo-Catholic view equating women's passion for sartorial luxury with sin. By evoking the figure of the biblical serpent, portrayed ironically as "la serpiente de buena fe," (Galdós 92) the theme of sin, presented euphemistically as one of "las más peligrosas vanidades que pueden ahuecar el cerebro de una mujer," (Galdós 93) and the expulsion from paradise as the consequence of the consumption of "la fruta prohibida," (Galdós 92) Galdós parodies the vocabulary and style of thought characteristic of nineteenth-century conservative intellectuals [22]. However, if the symbolic expulsion from Paradise of Francisco's wife took place in Galdós' previous novel, *Tormento* (1884), in *La de Bringas*, his angel of domesticity appears to move even further away from her domestic life. It is worth stressing that Paradise is also the author's ironic allusion to the commonly-idealized domestic sphere in the traditional discourse of gender. Although Rosalía is physically present in her home playing her role of submissive wife and dedicated mother, the happiest times in her life, we are told, have

nothing to do with the intimacy of her house, marriage, or motherhood, but with the world outside, with clothing and shopping:

Ratos felices eran para Rosalía estos que pasaba con la marquesa discutiendo la forma y manera de arreglar sus vestidos. Pero el gozo mayor de ella era acompañar a su amiga a las tiendas, aunque pasaba desconsuelos por no poder comprar las muchísimas cosas buenas que veía. El tiempo se les iba sin sentirlo (Galdós 97).

In fact, the times she spends with Milagros, talking about the newest fashion, planning to alter her wardrobe for the season, or shopping, are the only episodes in the novel when Galdós' protagonist seems to be transformed into a different person. In those few unguarded moments, Rosalía acts spontaneously. In these instances, she can not cover up her true feelings. Unintentionally she reveals her genuine fascination, passion, and desire for clothing to the outside world. Clothing, as critics have observed, gets the attention and affection throughout the entire story that Rosalía Bringas can not give her husband or her children (see Aldaraca). Galdós' irony toward the ideal angel of domesticity is also noteworthy in the description of clothing and Rosalía's passion for it in scenes when the protagonist cares for her incapacitated spouse. During the crisis of her husband's illness, the author portrays Rosalía stepping into the role of the perfect wife, full of "hastío verdadero de lujo" (Galdós 205) and "abnegación," (Galdós 205) that is, full of qualities that, by coincidence or not, echo the model woman depicted centuries earlier by Fray Luis de León. She seems the ideal angel of domesticity, as once described by Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer in her La mujer española: Estudios acerca de su educación y facultades intelectuales (1877), eager to "serve, soothe, nurture, and comfort others" (252):

Ello es que Rosalía, con la agravación del mal de su marido, se acercaba moral y mentalmente a él, apretando los lazos matrimoniales. [...] ¡Y con qué celo le cuidaba! ¡Qué manos las suyas, tan sutiles para curar! ¡Con qué gracia y arte derramaba el bálsamo de palabras tiernas sobre el espíritu del enfermo. Él estaba tan agradecido, que no cesaba de alabar a Dios por el bien que le concedía, inspirando a su compañera aquel admirable sentimiento del deber conyugal (Galdós 205).

But even here Galdós cannot resist parodying the traditional notions of gender. He lampoons Rosalía's brief moments of self-sacrifice and renunciation of luxury by making her temporarily blind husband see her not as a woman but as "un ángel" (Galdós 206). Rosalía's fleeting occasions of extraordinary sacrifice do not extend to putting aside her finery and "presentarse delante del señor Pez con el empaque casero más prosaico que se podría imaginar" (Galdós 205). Galdós' irony toward the ideal angel of domesticity intensifies as he describes his protagonist's 'submission' to her husband's authority. The influence of the domestic god, as the author ironically calls Francisco de Bringas, who kept her well under control in their paradise, has been replaced in Rosalía's life for some time now by the authority of current dogma and contemporary god, that is, fashion and Milagros. Even though Milagros' authority supposedly does not extend beyond matters of dressing, nevertheless, we are told from the start that Rosalía "elevó a Milagros en su alma un verdadero altar," (Galdós 92) that "una palabra de Milagros...era ya cuerpo jurídico para toda cuestión que ocurriera después," (Galdós 92) and, more importantly, that "[n]adie en el mundo, ni aun Bringas, tenía sobre la Pipaón ascendiente tan grande como Milagros" (Galdós 92).

The narrator-commentator's ironic attitude toward Rosalía's passion for sartorial art and the exalted religious rhetoric used in the novel to describe her frenzy for it, can be easily misinterpreted as Galdós' critique of female love for (see Jagoe). It is tempting to conclude from this attitude that the author disapproves of women's consumption of luxury and condemns the protagonist's spendthrift ways and, thus, should be included in the chorus of nineteenth-century, conservative intellectuals and social moralists. One also might interpret the protagonist's delight in finery from the feminist point of view and explain her obsession with clothing as "a visible manifestation of new and precarious albeit secretly experienced autonomy" (Aldaraca 52). But does the irony employed in describing clothing and Rosalía's love for her outfits necessarily express the author's moral approval or disapproval of luxury and his protagonist's passion for it? Could it also be that Galdós' manner of portraying Rosalía's unrestrained passion for luxurious attire is his way of portraying a more complex female subjectivity that in the rapidly-developing modern commodity culture took a different shape from the traditional representation of femininity encased in the dominant image of an angel of domesticity?

Galdós' literary portrait of Rosalía de Bringas clearly does not reiterate the characteristics of a conventional angel of domesticity. Throughout the novel the author mocks not only the qualities of the angel of domesticity, but also, as noted by Arthur Ramírez, the various images of angels themselves. Instead, the author's literary portrait of his protagonist takes on the features of a different angel, a modern angel painted years later by Paul Klee as Angelus Novus and described by Walter Benjamin as follows:

A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread [...] His face is turned toward the past. [...] A storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned. [...] This storm is what we call progress (257-58).

Like Klee's Angelus Novus, Galdós' protagonist resembles an angel who, while still turning her face toward tradition and past aesthetic ideals, is already being blown away from her Paradise by the irresistible storm of the finest commodities and latest innovations, toward the modern world. The position of Angelus Novus with his face turned toward the past, "as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating," immediately brings to mind the scene of Rosalía during her strolls with Pez, imitating the gestures and the bearing of the figures from paintings by Rubens, Veronese, and Van Loo that she had seen earlier in the Royal Palace [23].

El paseo por sitio tan monumental halagaba la fantasía de la dama, trayéndole reminiscencias de aquellos fondos arquitectónicos que Rubens, Veronés, Vanlío y otros pintores ponen en sus cuadros, con lo que magnifican las figuras y les dan un aire muy aristocrático. Pez y Rosalía se suponían destacados elegantemente sobre aquel fondo de balaustradas, molduras, archivoltas y jarrones, suposición que, sin pensarlo, les compelia a armonizar su apostura y aun su paso con la majestad de la escena (Galdós 106).

Just as the draperies of Rubens and Veronese, Baudelaire tells us in "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863), will not teach the modern artist "how to depict moire antique, satin à la reine or any other fabric of modern manufacture," (13) neither will they teach Galdós' protagonist how to compose her looks from the aristocratic manner and style of such figures. For, as Baudelaire reminds his readers later in the essay, "the gesture and the bearing of the woman of today give to her dress a life and a special character which are not of the woman of the past" (13). In order to adopt a new mode of representation, Rosalía must turn to the current ideals of feminine beauty advertised in women's fashion magazines, displayed and offered for sale in modern department stores.

Galdós' description of Rosalía's love for sartorial novelties and her frequent visits to Sobrino Hermanos as well as to other shops in the Madrid of 1868, raises some other intriguing questions with regard to his novelistic representation of femininity. What roles do the sartorial goods and the modern commercial world play in Galdós' literary construction of woman in La de Bringas? How do the nineteenth-century emerging commodity culture and the cult of consumption influence the artistic representation of gender in his novel?

Galdós' depiction of the commercial world of the Sobrino Hermanos shop and other shops in La de Bringas brings immediately to mind the literary portrait of the commercial world in Zola's Au bonheur des dames (1883). Like Zola's fictional Ladies' Paradise, set in Paris between 1864 and 1869 and modeled on the well-known, nineteenth-century department store, the Bon Marché, Galdós' Sobrino Hermanos and other stores in La de Bringas, set in Madrid in 1868, are presented as modern establishments with advanced retailing techniques. These are the literary representation of nineteenth-century modern department stores or, as

Michael B. Miller once described them, a "fantasy land of colors, sensations, and dreams" (169) with fixed prices, credit, gallant male attendants, and 'free entry' for customers to examine the goods on display without obligation [24]. And so from Galdós' scene of Rosalía buying her shawl in the Sobrino Hermanos store, we learn that she bought the magnificent garment at the fixed price without bargaining, as she might have done before. "Preguntó con timidez el precio y no se atrevió a regatearla" (Galdós 98). From the same episode we also learn that the Sobrino Hermanos shop offered the option of credit, one of the strongest incentives for Rosalía to buy the expensive shawl:

No se prive usted de comprarla ... No le pasarán a usted la cuenta hasta dentro de algunos meses, a la entrada del verano, y quizá a fin de año. La idea del largo plazo hizo titubear a Rosalía, inclinando todo su espíritu del lado de la compra... (Galdós 99).

When we see Rosalía later on in the novel browsing unchaperoned in "las tiendas conocidas" (Galdós 243) during the summer, we discover that despite financial worries, she continues to take advantage of the 'free entry' to the stores. There, the shopkeepers "con infernal amabilidad" (Galdós 263) would show her "telas diversas y cositas de capricho" (Galdós 244) and she would fall "en la tentación, unas veces porque se le presentaban verdaderas gangas, otras porque el género le entraba por el ojo derecho, encendiendo todos los fuegos de su pasión trapística" (Galdós 244).

However, the shopping episodes from La de Bringas show that, unlike the author of Au bonheur des dames, Galdós does not spend much time describing modern sales techniques,

the physical dimensions, or even geographic location of the stores [25]. Instead, he concentrates more on recreating the atmosphere in the shops and the impact of the commercial world and of the sartorial novelties on his protagonist's outward appearance and above all, on her emotions and mind. The literary world of modern shops creates a special mood in Galdós' novel. This differs from the atmosphere in the Madrid shops from the beginning of the nineteenth century humorously recreated by Carlos Frontaura in Las tiendas (1826) and by Mesonero Romanos in his social sketches, Panorama matritense (1835) [26]. The episodes of Rosalía Bringas' frequent escapades "de tienda en tienda" (Galdós 104) to have a quick look at the newest seasonal merchandise, reflect quite faithfully the atmosphere of the new commercial world portrayed in Zola's notes for Au bonheur des dames:

Department stores tend to replace the church. This derives from the religion of body, of beauty, of flirtation and of fashion. They [women] go there to pass the time as they would in a church: an occupation, a place where they become excited, where they struggle with their passion for clothes and their husband's budget, and finally with the whole drama of existence, the above and beyond of beauty (11).

Indeed, department stores and the cult of novelty seem to replace church and old religion in *La de Bringas* by becoming new temples of ecstasy and delight in the female world, temples to which Galdós' protagonist makes her pilgrimage in order to worship her new deity: fashion. The modern shop, described by Zola in Au bonheur des dames as "the cathedral of modern commerce," (275) is in Galdós' narrative a place where, as in church, all pretence to rationality is abandoned. It is a place where a "woman is both goddess and worshipper at

the altar of fashion," (XV) as Kristin Ross notes in her introduction to Ladies' Paradise, and where euphoric loss of self through surrender to the cult of novelty is encouraged. Rosalía's escapades to "dar una vuelta por las tiendas" (Galdós 243) mainly promise genuine excitement and ecstasy fueled by carefully orchestrated displays of clothes. The need to frequent the Sobrino Hermanos store and the urge to acquire and consume the content of "las cajas blancas ... donde se archivan los sueños de las damas" (Galdós 98) seem to replace the need for church and Holy Communion. The act of getting new clothes seems to relieve the protagonist's sufferings, bestow her with a new body, a new look, and allow her to leave the new temple of commodity with the perennial promise of becoming a different person.

Interestingly, the real church is presented in La de Bringas as a "teatro de tercer orden" (Galdós 134) where the protagonist feels only boredom and despair from the tedious proceedings. The Maundy Thursday observance at the royal palace is described as a "comedia palaciega" (Galdós 86) with the characters as actors on stage dressed up in their pompous costumes clumsily performing pious acts. The elaborate and enticing surroundings of Sobrino Hermanos shop and other stores, on the other hand, appear in the novel paradoxically as the only place where the genuine emotions of Galdós' heroine come alive. The sensations the protagonist experiences from seeing the desired novelty ("en sus hombros los nervios le sugirieron tan al vivo la sensación del contacto y peso de la manteleta" {Galdós 98}) or even from imagining a fashionable hat ("[s]intiendo un bulle-bulle en su cabeza y representándose, con admirable poder de alucinación, el conjunto y las partes todas del bien descrito sombrero" { Galdós 103}) seem more sincere and natural than any emotions she might experience before a relic or altar.

It is worth noting that as early as 1879, women's intoxication with commodities and their behavior in the elegant, seductive surroundings of department stores intrigued not only writers but also psychiatrists such as Charles Lasègue, Legrand du Saulle, Paul Dubuisson, and Roger Dupouy. In his studies on female shoplifting in Parisian department stores, Legrand du Saulle drew attention to the dream-like atmosphere of the stores in which women could live out their fantasies of effortless consumption. By describing the sensuous, boudoir-like aura of these store interiors, the French psychiatrist identified it as an ideal condition and, in effect, a cause of women's unpremeditated, almost savage impulse to seize the luxury goods on display. In his essay, "Hystériques," (1883) du Saulle observed the following with respect to the behavior of female shoppers:

These immense galleries, as freely accessible to the idle in search of distractions or adventures as to serious shoppers, enclose and expose...the richest cloths, the most luxurious dress articles, the most seductive superfluities. Women of all sorts, drawn to these elegant surroundings by instincts native to their sex, fascinated by so many rash provocations, dazzled by the abundance of trinkets and laces, find themselves overtaken by a sudden, unpremeditated, almost savage impulse (qtd. in Miller 437).

At the turn of the century, women's intoxication with commodities and shoplifting, codified as a "modern disease," (52) as pointed out by Rita Felski, continued to be a popular research topic for psychiatrists. In 1902, Paul Dubuisson dedicated an entire book, Les voleuses de grands magasins (Department Store Thieves), to the study of kleptomania in bourgeois women. Dubuisson interviewed many respectable middle-class women of leisure who would describe their experiences of shopping in the Parisian department stores, their visual seduction by luxurious commodities on display, and their thirst for possession as follows:

Once plunged into the sensuous atmosphere of the *grand magasin*, as told ...by a very respectable provincial lady recently arrived in Paris and whose first outing had been a double visit to the Bon Marché and the Louvre, I felt myself overcome little by little by a disorder that can only be compared to that of drunkenness, with the dizziness and excitation that are peculiar to it. I saw things as if through a cloud, everything stimulated my desire and assumed for me, an extraordinary attraction. (...). It was like a monomania of possession (qtd. in Miller 413).

Others, in their interviews in 1905 with Dubuisson's colleague, Roger Dupoy, likened their attraction to sartorial goods to fetishistic fantasies: "When I grab some silk, then I am just as if I were drunk. I tremble...I only think of one thing: to go into the corner where I can rustle it at my ease, which gives me voluptuous sensations even stronger than those I feel with the father of my children" (qtd. in Miller 413). Regardless of the discrepancies in psychiatrists' opinions as to whether nineteenth-century women's intoxication with commodities and shoplifting was linked to hysteria, monomania, or fetishism, the fact is that these explanations contributed significantly to the already popular image of women as insatiable shoppers, unable to resist the lure of commodities or to control their waves of desire. Meanwhile, the act of consumption and women's excitement and fascination with sartorial luxuries were commonly compared to sexual experience and were attributed almost exclusively to female displacement of erotic fantasies and desires.

The erotic driven nature of female consumption is, in fact, still the most popular interpretation among literary critics of Rosalía's obsession with sartorial items and her experience of shopping in the Sobrino Hermanos. Referring to the protagonist's act of

buying the exquisite shawl in the *Sobrino Hermanos*, Peter Bly suggests that the "physiological details of Rosalía's reactions...clearly point to a physical experience akin to orgasm" (59). In the opinion of Akiko Tsuchiya, the protagonist's physical sensations, as she tries on clothing at the store, "could be interpreted as those of sexual arousal" (38). According to Bridget Aldaraca, the intensity of Rosalía's desire "to possess the fabulous cape elevates her to a state of physical sensibility" (51) that could be only compared to "the first shy kiss of two passionate lovers" (51). However, by overemphasizing the sexualized representation of Rosalía's passion for luxurious goods and by dwelling on the erotic pleasure she derives from buying things, critics seem to focus more on the protagonist's bodily reaction and less on the role that the sartorial goods play in the act of consumption and ultimately in her character's cultural image. In other words, by devoting more attention to Rosalía's sexuality than to the features of the desired objects, most critics miss out on the intricate, intimate relationship between the protagonist and the rich, material world of sartorial artifacts that enhances the complex, creative nature of her persona [27]. According to Arjun Appadurai, we tend to regard "the world of things as inert and mute, set in motion and animated...only by persons and their words" (4) and to forget that objects in conjunction with the human body represent very complex cultural meanings [28]. Things have their own cultural biographies, mini-histories that, besides the obvious, convey more subtle meanings and "make salient," as pointed out by Igor Kopytoff, "what otherwise remains obscure" (67). Cultural artifacts, especially clothes, are "congealed memories of the daily life of times past," (Wilson 1) carriers of images, ideas, and "the moral and aesthetic feelings of their time" (Baudelaire 2). They are, as Carmen Burgos once wrote, "como viejas ruinas que nos hablan de otros amores, de otras alegrías, de otras juventudes que pasaron y que nos conmueven y nos asustan un poco" (29).

By describing Rosalía dazzled by the allure of goods inside and outside the stores while she wanders, like Baudelaire's flâneur, aimless and unhurried along the streets, drawing pleasure from the window displays, Galdós surely explores his heroine's voyeuristic relationship to commodities:

Pensando en estos y otros planes, recorría despacio las calles...detenía ante los escaparates de modas y de joyería, y hacía mil cálculos sobre la probabilidad más o menos remota de poseer algo de lo mucho valioso y rico que veía (Galdós 244).

Just as the gaze of Baudelaire's stroller is not the stare of an indifferent pedestrian, but the look of a passionate spectator absorbing his surroundings, the stare of Galdós' protagonist at the shop windows of fashion is unambiguously a look beset with longing and lacking, distance and desire. It is clear that Rosalía's eye is not, to borrow the expression from the nineteenth-century dress artist, Charles Blanc, simply "a passive organ of sensation," but rather "the pupil of judgment and feeling" (50). It is also obvious that the sartorial fripperies she sees in the window displays, on the tailor's dummies, in the fashion magazines, or described to her by Milagros are not simple, lifeless objects in her eyes. Instead, Rosalía's enthralled gaze reveals that the luxurious fabrics that mesmerize her with the limitless variety and diversity of their textures and colors seem to possess her and to hold her by their allure of appropriation. Thus, the attractiveness of sartorial goods in Galdós' novel can be compared, as the critics already noted, to the charms of a lover that rekindle new passions and desires in Bringas' wife:

...los ojos se le iban tras de las originales telas, y más aún tras de los admirables modelos colocados en los maniquís. En fichús, encajes, manteletas, camisetas, pellizas estaban allí las Mil y una noches de los trapos (Galdós 263-64).

However, by taking a closer look at the protagonist deriving enormous pleasure not only from getting the desired items, but also from daydreaming about them, altering them artistically in her head, and visualizing herself wearing them, one wonders what these fashionable dream-designs mean [29]. What do these combinations, spawned ceaselessly in Rosalía's head out of the profusion of colorful laces, ribbons, and luxurious fabrics and never described as a complete outfit, but instead as a series of elusive, fragmentary images, convey to us about the author's artistic construction of female subjectivity?

Rosalía's resistance to her husband's request that she wears the same old thing every day and her growing desire for a new mode of representation, embodied in the passion for creating, if only in her imagination, forever new, always à la mode, dream-designs, carry a symbolic meaning in the novel. The aesthetic qualities of these rapidly changing, always incomplete, fashion designs are used in La de Bringas as a metaphor. They are an artistic reflection of the transitory, transformative image of a woman depicted in a literary context of the fragmentary, chaotic motion of modern life. The finely drawn details of Rosalía's dresses, the vast array of textile colors: "un bies estrecho de glasé verde" (Galdós 95) and "unas veinte varas de poplín azul marino" (Galdós 120), serve Galdós as references to modern inventions, contrivances that give his protagonist an opportunity to compose her appearance with a "capacidad camaleónica de transformación" (Delgado 39). Thanks to the discovery of aniline dyes in 1856 by the English industrial chemist, William Henry Perkin, "emerald green

as well as brilliant purples and pinks, and 'azuline' blue of a garishness never seen today, were the most popular shades" (Gernsheim 54) in fashion during the sixties. As a result, the colors of female outfits are described as "outrageously crude," (19) by the French philosopher and art historian, Hippolyte Taine during his walks in London's Hyde Park. Women were wearing them, in the opinion of the nineteenth-century English dress artist, Marry Merrifield, "without reference to ... the complexion of the wearer" (55) [30]. Likewise, the rich assortment of fabrics and accessories in the novel, such as "unas veinticuatro varas de Mozambique," (Galdós 119) "unas veinticuatro varas de Bareges," (Galdós 123) or "cintas de mil clases, plumas, marabús egretas, penachos, amazonas, toques, alones, colibrises, esprís," (Galdós 182) constitute the author's allusion to the rapid production and the availability of the newest clothing items. Through them, Galdós refers to the increased accessibility and popularity of foreign novelties in Spain, thanks to the railroads and to the new free-trade tariff schedule policy, introduced in 1869 by the Spanish Finance Minister, Laureano Figuerola [31]. They are the novelist's allusion to the prominence of a new trend in women's attire, described by Carlos Soldevila as "trajes compuestos de tejidos distintos: los cuerpos ... de uno, las faldas de otro y la sobrefalda de un tercero ... El prurito combinatorio [in which]...las cenafas, galones, y demás adornos agregaban coloridos y muestras al conjunto, que tendía al contraste y al abigarramiento" (44-45).

But if the variety of colors, fabrics, and patterns made modern female outfits look like a "patchwork quilt," (190) to borrow the expression of the British costume historian, James Laver, these highly elaborate, fancy, patchwork quilts were clearly the products of women's free interpretation rather than their passive imitation of fashion plate designs. As a result, it

became impossible to describe women's dresses exactly, according to an anonymous writer for the fashion magazine, The Young Englishwoman (1876):

the skirts are draped so mysteriously, the arrangement of trimmings is usually one-sided and the fastenings are so curiously contrived that if I study any particular toilette for even a quarter of an hour the task of writing down how it is all made remains hopeless (qtd. in Laver 190).

In addition, as observed by the French fashion historian, Octave Uzanne, in looking at Parisian fashion in the 1860's, "[t]he more wild and mad and utterly improbable a woman's dress became the more reasonably she might expect to hear herself proclaimed the reigning queen of fashion" (135). One might say that the new fascination with originality in dressing and boldness in style indicated that in the modern era, as noticed by Gilles Lipovetsky, things were no longer loved and valued "for themselves or for the social status" (147) they conferred, but rather for the novelty and pleasure they gave.

It must be emphasized that, in the literary world of La de Bringas, neither slavishly-faithful descriptions nor the historically-accurate portrayals of the heroine's costumes are of much concern to Galdós, since "el novelista necesita," as Carmen Burgos once wrote, "no copiar, sino estilizar la moda en sus creaciones" (49) [32]. Nevertheless, the author's depiction of Rosalía's outfits, comprised of continuously changing combinations of fabrics and colors, and presented as a succession of fragmentary, heterogeneous images, brilliantly captures his main character's infatuation with novelty, her quest for new modes of representation, and her intoxication with sensation and modern novelties. The protagonist's love for stylish

appearance and her endless reinvention of herself through the kaleidoscope of new attire, seen traditionally by literary critics as indicators of her social aspiration, accentuate, in fact, not so much her docile imitation of others, but rather her own talented imagination, resourcefulness, and enjoyment of self-invention. Furthermore, Rosalía's "público alarde de su vestido mozambique" (Galdós 185) heightens her pride in her ingenuous creations and underscores her delight in converting them to spectacle. Although the rich combinations of colors, fabrics, and the vast array of fancy accouterments adorning Rosalía's body seem to be placed in the novel in order to present the protagonist in light of the popular nineteenth-century image of a woman as a spectacle and commodity, they neither turn her into an object, as argued recently by Tubert, nor do they epitomize her fragmented and dispersed subjectivity. The scene describing Rosalía Bringas diligently contriving her toilette before receiving Pez emphasizes not only her verve and ingenuity for improvising a desired image out of sartorial novelties, but also shows that, instead of taking on the character of a "strolling commodity," (Benjamin 367), an object passively exposed to the male gaze, it is Rosalía who actively "takes the concept of market-ability itself for a stroll" (Benjamin 448). The dynamically changing looks of Galdós' protagonist based on her talent for making diverse images out of her wardrobe and the calculated manner of presenting her adorned self to Pez challenge the idea of a woman as an object commodified by fashion. The larger point is the notion of femininity as an ongoing gender performance. The descriptions of Francisco Bringas' wife, first during her walks with Pez ("cargada con un ramo de lilas, el velo un poco echado atrás" {Galdós 126}), and then, on another encounter, as "elegantísima...con su bata grosella, adornada de encajes, abanicándose" (Galdós 173) suggest that dressing well is not only part of her visual representation but also an aspect of her well-staged seduction technique. The fan, for example, is not merely an exquisite

accessory in Rosalía's attire, but rather, as Charles Blanc once wrote, a "formidable weapon of coquetry" (194), a displacement of speech in the gracefully performed game of flirtation. The fan in Galdós' protagonist's hands "para atenuar el vivísimo calor que a su epidermis salía" (Galdós 174) while listening to Pez's blarney works not only to enhance her feminine appeal but also to engage in a flirtatious dialogue with her admirer. Blanc expresses this 'language' as follows:

For a Spaniard all the intrigues of love, all the maneuvers of flirtation, are hidden in the folds of her fan. The shy audacity of her looks, her venturesome words, her hazardous avowals, half uttered, half dying on the lips, all are hidden by the fan, which appears to forbid while it encourages, to intercept whilst it conveys (195-96) [33].

Similarly, the train of Rosalía's elegant dress, sweeping along the clean paving stones ... while she goes for a walk round the terrace, functions, not just as a descriptive detail of her outfit, but also as part of her coquettish demeanor. The fashionable long train of Rosalía Bringas' dress following discreetly, as does Manuel Pez, her plump body is, to use Maureen Turim's term, another "storytelling wardrobe" (222) that, in conjunction with the main character's seductive bearing, articulates her subtle invitation to her future lover's romantic endeavors. Galdós' emphasis on Rosalía's pleasure in dressing and undressing, her delight in adorning herself with fashionable accoutrements, and her willingness to take them off "to the highest bidder," (Labanyi 160) does not aim to turn her into a powerless object, subjugated to the male gaze. The scene of Rosalía going through the list of potential lovers,

watching them in the Prado, examining "las condiciones pecuniarias de cada uno," (Galdós 258) shows that she is a creative producer and adept performer of her own spectacle.

Finally, the profusion of sartorial items in the novel has little to do with "la fragmentación y dispersión de la subjetividad de Rosalía" (Tubert 386). After all, as pointed out by Noël Valis, "[n]either Rosalía de Bringas nor any other character in this novel is given over to self-reflection" (167). Hence, the maze of ribbons, feathers, laces, and other fashionable ornaments, never composed into a complete outfit but instead dispersed into many fragments, serves Galdós as artistic means to capture the fragmentary, elusive images of his protagonist and to depict, like Baudelaire in "The Painter of Modern Life," the transient, modern character of feminine beauty.

Galdós is one of the few Spanish writers of his time, who, to use Carmen Burgos' phrase, "poniendo ... aquí un pliegue, allí una gasa, más allá un tul," (66) was able to create out of his protagonist "un figurín nuevo de arte, audaz, sin patrón ... de todos los tiempos, para que no envejezca jamás su novela" (Burgos 48). However, it is not enough to say that the fashionable artifacts in this novel serve only to provide the reader with aesthetic pleasure. Fashion in La de Bringas is more than what Elizabeth Wilson once called, "a snapshot of time, passing mood and fleeting moment made permanent in the fixative of color, line, and surface" (33). The mosaic-like appearance of the protagonist's outfits, the constantly changing and shifting fragments of her clothing convey, besides the plasticity of her character, the notion of the impossibility of framing her in a single image. Hence, the fragmentary images of Galdós' protagonist created out of the labyrinth of garments and presented in the form of erratic montages of fabrics, colors, and styles suggest that she is,

like Benjamin's modern metropolis, "a sprawling entity marked by discontinuity, dislocation, and fragmentation ... with no possibility of any overarching perspective, no definitive view of the whole" (Gilloch 182). Like Benjamin's modern city described as a "multi-faceted entity, a picture puzzle that eludes any unequivocal decipherment," (Gilloch 169-70) the main character is presented as a montage of unexpected and ephemeral combinations of fragments that resists encapsulation in the traditional image of gender and escapes any one-dimensional, clear-cut interpretation.

However, the importance of the mosaic-like appearance of fashionable artifacts in La de Bringas lies not only in the images they produce with respect to the representation of gender. The plethora of sartorial images conjured from the bewildering array of clothing articles accentuate, along with Galdós' fascination with the permanent transitoriness of his protagonist's existence her persona as a work in progress. She is half ephemeral and fleeting, half an eternal and immutable work of art. She is the essence and dynamic style of modernity. Just as Benjamin captured the spirit of modernity in describing the modern city, Galdós did so in depicting his main character's fashionable attire. Similar to Benjamin's metropolis with its "mass of diverse artefacts and distractions," (Gilloch 103), Galdós' literary outfits with their mass of "cosas de tanta novedad y buen gusto" (182) reflect "a site of the perpetual stimulation, the intoxication of the modern" (Gilloch 103). As for Benjamin, the modern city is a dream world of modernity, the setting for and the product of fantasies, the place where "edifices and the objects ... are utopian wish-images frozen representations ... of genuine wants and aspirations that remain unfulfilled or thwarted," (Gilloch 105) so for Galdós, fashion is a dream world of modernity in La de Bringas. In this world, the different materials and bits of fabrics, the strips and pieces of *glasé*, the

"veinticuatro varas de Mozambique...bonita y vaporosa tela que la Pipaón, en sueños, veía todas las noches sobre sus carnes" (Galdós 119) are the key components of the protagonist's fantasies, literally the materialized expression of her frustrated aspirations, unfulfilled ambitions, and desires. Lastly, like Benjamin's city with 'its swirling, buffeting crowds, its swift and compelling tempo, its rude encounters and intrusive distractions', Galdós' fashion, described in La de Bringas as constellations of motifs from past and present, as a montage of "mil especies de arrees diversos, los unos antiguos, retocados o nuevos los otros, todo a medio hacer..." (Galdós 119), presents itself as a locus of the ever-new and always-the-same, the illusion of progress and change, the beauty of modernity.

Notes

- [1] See Montesinos, Palley, and Jagoe as cited in the bibliography.
- [2] For more information on the image of a woman of fashion in the writings of the Spanish Renaissance and Baroque moralists and social commentators, see Vígil. For the association between the eighteenth-century women's attraction to luxury and moral depravity, see Aldaraca, Bridget A. El Ángel del Hogar: Galdós and the Ideology of Domesticity in Spain. Chapel Hill: North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 1991. 96-102.
- [3] In Las Modas from 1728, Feijoo described fashion as a threat to economic prosperity in the following way: "Antes el gusto mandaba en la moda, ahora la moda manda en el gusto [...] la moda se ha hecho un dueño tirano [...] que cada día pone nuevas leyes para sacar cada día nuevos tributos; pues cada nuevo uso que introduce es un nuevo impuesto sobre las haciendas. No se trajo cuatro días el vestido, cuando es preciso arrimarle como inútil, y sin estar usado, se ha de condenar como viejo. Antes la nueva invención esperaba que los hombres se disgustasen de la antecedente, y a que gustasen lo que se había arreglado a ella. Atendíase al gusto y se excusaba el gasto: ahora todo se atropella. Se aumenta infinito el gasto, aun sin contemplar el gusto" (67).
- [4] Concepción Gimeno Flaquer, "A las sacerdotisas de la moda," La Mujer, July 24, 1871, 3.
- [5] Emilia Pallares, "Privilegios de la moda," Ellas, 6, October 30, 1851, 47.
- [6] Emilia Pallares, "Revista de modas," Ellas, 5, October 23, 1851, 35.
- [7] Author unknown, "Modas," Mariposa, 45, April 16, 1840, 122.
- [8] María del Pilar Sinués de Marco, "La mujer española," El ángel del hogar, August 8, 1866, 225-26.
- [9] Francisca Carlota del Riego Pica, "La moda," Violeta, 4, December 28, 1862, 4.
- [10] Fernando Garrido, "El lujo," El Nuevo Pensil de Iberia, 2, October 20, 1857, 1.
- [11] Author unknown, "La mujer elegante," Mariposa, 25, November 28, 1839, 108.
- [12] Concepción Gimeno Flaquer, "A las sacerdotisas de la moda," La Mujer, July 24, 1871, 2.
- [13] María del Pilar Sinués de Marco, "La mujer española," El ángel del hogar, August 8, 1866, 225-26.
- [14] Concepción Gimeno Flaquer, "A las sacerdotisas de la moda," La Mujer, July 24, 1871, 3.

- [15] Joaquina García Balmaseda, "Revista de Modas," Correo de la Moda, 37, October 2, 1874, 1.
- [16] Joaquina García Balmaseda, "Revista de Modas," Correo de la Moda, 9, March 2, 1874, 1.
- [17] Joaquina García Balmaseda, "Revista de Modas," Correo de la Moda, 1, January 2, 1874, 2.
- [18] Notably, many of the neo-Catholic writers were founders, co-founders, owners, and editors of the most popular fashion magazines for women. María del Pilar Sinués de Marco founded El ángel del hogar, Faustina Sáez de Melgar was owner and editor of La Violeta, and Angela Grassi was editor of El Correo de la Moda. Joaquina García Balmaseda was in charge of the fashion section in several fashion magazines and newspapers in which she regularly described the newest Parisian outfits for the season. Judging by the content of these magazines, and especially the detailed descriptions of fashionable outfits, it is reasonable to conclude that these women were not only very knowledgeable about fashion but that they themselves enjoyed fashion as well. For more about these writers and their writings on fashion, see Antología de la prensa periódica isabelina escrita por mujeres (1843-1894). Ed. Iñigo Sánchez Llana. Cádiz: Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad de Cádiz, 2001 and Andreu, Alicia. "Arte y consumo: Angela Grassi y El Correo de la Moda." Nuevo Hispanismo 1 (1982): 123-135.
- [19] María del Pilar Sinués de Marco, "La mujer inglesa," El ángel del hogar, September 16, 1866, 249-51.
- [20] Joaquina García Balmaseda, "Revista de Modas," Correo de la Moda, 37, October 2, 1874, 1.
- [21] All referenced given to La de Bringas 1884, Ed. Alda Blanco and Carlos Blanco Aguinaga (Madrid: Catedra, 1985).
- [22] See, for example, Fisas, Carlos. La doncella cristiana. 1874. Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1998. 66-72.
- [23] The author's choice of the artists mentioned in this episode is not coincidental. Veronese and Rubens represent artistic styles that are reflected in the description of ornament in the novel. Paolo Veronese represents the Venetian school of painters who preferred ornamental art that is sensuality over reason, dazzle over effect, color over line, and ornament over severity. Rubens represents the Dutch style of painting, which is known for the association of the feminine with ornamental detail and the sublimation of the prosaic that is the transformation of an insignificant object into an art object. For more on these painters and their manner of incorporating ornamental details in their works, see Schor, Naomi. Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine. New York: Methuen, 1987. 11-42.

- [24] For more information on nineteenth-century department stores and modern commercial techniques of retailing, see Miller, Michael. The Bon Marché. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981 and Bowlby, Rachel. Just Looking. New York: Methuen, 1985. 1-18.
- [25] It is worth noting that, unlike in other his novels, Galdós does not provide any specifics regarding the location of the Sobrino Hermanos store. For more information on the commercial world in Galdós' narrative, see Pla, Carlos. El Madrid de Galdós. Madrid: Avapiés, 1987. 67-89.
- [26] It is interesting to compare the humorous description of sales assistants and female customers in these authors who poke fun at the women's lack of knowledge of fashion and the dishonest, simple sales techniques in the shops, to the description of the more sophisticated customers and shopkeepers in La de Bringas.
- [27] I am indebted to Noël Valis' work for this understanding of the significance of things in La de Bringas. For Valis, "is not so much the purchase or possession of things in themselves but the complex and sometimes unpredictable relationship with things that paradoxically adds to the human dimensions of the nineteenth-century texts and culture" (147).
- [28] Appadurai's comment on the world of things is drawn from Mauss, Marcel. The Gift. New York: Norton, 1976.
- [29] The nexus of imagination and materiality in La de Bringas has been discussed at length by Valis, Noël. The Culture of Cursilería. Bad Taste, Kitsch, and Class in Modern Spain. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002. 139-78.
- [30] On women's fashion in the 1860's, see Uzanne, Octave. Fashion in Paris. The Various Phases of Feminine Taste and Aesthetics from 1797 to 1897. Trans. Lady Mary Loyd. London: Heinemann, 1898. 127-46.
- [31] On the Laureano Figuerola's free-trade policy of 1869 and its effects on the importation of foreign textiles into Spain, see Vicens Vives, Jaime. An Economic History of Spain. Trans. Frances M. López-Morillas. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. 702-12.
- [32] The chronological inaccuracies of dress designs in La de Bringas are discussed in Bly, Peter. Pérez Galdós: La de Bringas. London: Grant & Cutler, 1981. 52.
- [33] For more information on the fan as a feminine adornment and its meaning in nineteenth-century Spain, see Valis, Noël. The Culture of Cursilería. Bad Taste, Kitsch, and Class in Modern Spain. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002. 88-117.

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