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## CULTURAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL CLASS IN EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN'S "LA MUJER ESPAÑOLA" AND INSOLACIÓN

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Most criticism surrounding Emilia Pardo Bazán's 1889 novel *Insolación* has focused on questions of naturalist determinism, narrative technique, gender inequality, space, and to a lesser degree, race and nationality.<sup>1</sup> The question of social class, however, has received scant attention. This is surprising considering that the characters' positions within the social hierarchy shape their interactions and intellectual debates and is key to understanding the socio-historical context portrayed in the novel. The late nineteenth century was a period in which new positions continued to open up within the class structure, creating a larger middle class and forging a ruling alliance between the aristocracy and the *haute bourgeoisie* (Vallis, *The Culture* 34, 49).<sup>2</sup> Holding less clearly defined positions in society, members of the emerging middle classes attempted to secure their rank in society through the acquisition and display of various forms of cultural capital (Vallis, *The Culture* 50). Cultural capital here refers to non-financial assets that confer distinction upon the individual. Pierre Bourdieu's criticism of traditional understandings of capital in solely economic terms is particularly fruitful for studying the situation in Spain where economic change lagged behind cultural change (Bourdieu 242-43; Cruz 5, 16-17; Vallis 11). For, as Jesús Cruz shows, despite the fact that

Spain trailed behind its European neighbors in industrialization and the development of a strong middle class, middle class *culture* indeed became hegemonic during this period (3).

*Insolación* explicitly touches on the question of social class in chapter two at the *tertulia* of the Duchess of Sahagún. Here, the artillery commander Gabriel Pardo de la Lage stirs up a polemic by asserting that all Spaniards are barbarous by nature (31-32). When Asís Taboada, the Marchioness of Andrade, states that social class is really the distinguishing factor, Pardo objects arguing that the education that the upper class receives only makes them better able to hide their inherently savage natures (32). The question of social class, however, not only receives expression in the discussion at the *tertulia*, but also is played out in the portrayal of the characters themselves as their displays of cultural capital—or lack thereof—ultimately place them in a hierarchy vis-à-vis each other. Thus, in this paper I explore how appearance, dress, possessions, and demeanor signify a character's social rank, and how they are pivotal in hierarchizing individuals amongst the ruling classes. This dynamic reflects an important sociological change in Spanish society of the time since it shows that social distinction was no longer automatically conferred by an aristocratic title. It was now possible for a member of the upper-bourgeoisie to outrank an aristocrat in cultural capital. Also key in this discussion will be the question of imitation, directly related to the concept of *curstlería*, and its role in establishing a person's position in society, whether it be the middle classes imitating the upper classes, the upper classes imitating the lower classes, or Spaniards imitating the English.

Before analyzing the novel it is useful to look at how Pardo Bazán herself conceived the social classes of her day. In her essay "La mujer española," published in 1890, only a year after *Insolación*, Pardo Bazán provides important insights into her view of class divisions. She begins with the aristocracy and lauds the aristocratic woman's frequent interest in art, literature, science, and national progress (95). Yet, she critiques the aristocratic woman's emulation of the French, English and German in education—through the em-

ployment of foreign governesses—, and in fashion, through the abandonment of traditional Spanish attire for foreign styles (97-99). Pardo Bazán then goes on to describe the middle-class woman, beginning with the ambiguous limits of the terms *middle class* and *bourgeoisie* themselves: "En España tiene sentido muy lato la palabra *clase media* o *burguesía*. Sus límites son tan indeterminados, que cabe en ella desde la mujer del opulento fabricante—que es *clase media* sólo porque no es aristocrata—hasta la mujer del telegrafista o del subteniente—que es *clase media* sólo porque no es pueblo" (99-100). Noël Valis confirms this view in *The Culture of Curstlería: Bad Taste, Kitsch, and Class in Modern Spain* when she states that for the aristocracy the middle classes represented "a perturbing class confusion and social indeterminacy" (9). According to Valis, it was precisely this indeterminacy that made members of this class eager to distinguish themselves by emulating the upper classes (11-12). Yet, frequently lacking both the economic and cultural capital to pull it off, such attempts at imitation were labeled *cursti* (11). Valis acknowledges, however, that this "lower middle-class anxiety and feeling of inadequacy as expressed through *curstlería* [...] trickle[d] upward, affecting the middle and upper class in Spain as well" (13). Moreover, *curstlería* was also related to questions of national identity since, while signs of traditional Spanishness were associated with being backward, imitation of the French and English in the name of modernity and progress, was associated with affectation or *curstlería* (8-9). In other words, the choice was between being backward yet true to one's culture, or being modern and *cursti*.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in "La mujer española" Pardo Bazán criticizes the middle-class Spanish woman precisely for her *curstlería*. She focuses on the middle-class woman's attire—objectified cultural capital—and overall lack of refinement and cultivation—embodied cultural capital. Not only does she point out that the middle classes simply did not have the economic capital to pay for clothes made by famous fashion designers, but she implies that an air of sophistication is inherently "inaccessible" to them since for

this group it cannot be acquired by "una educación escogida y una cultura vasta y apacible" (106). There are also references to the anxiety involved in occupying a more precarious position in the social hierarchy which is displayed by a lack of "seguridad" and "soltura," and a "azoramiento—que no es sino el temor de aparecer ridícula, falta de la serenidad" (106). Finally, the phenomenon of failed imitation, or *cursilería*, is emphasized throughout the passage: the dresses of middle-class women are inferior imitations, their way of walking and overall comportment is a "remedo infeliz," and they regularly exhibit "afectación" and an "afán de imitar" (106).

Pardo Bazán softens her critique a bit by adding that all forms of imitation displease her (106). And imitation is not only something that has already come up in her criticism of the aristocratic woman's imitation of foreign customs, and that will come up in the novel *Insolación*, but it also will be one of the grounds on which she vindicates the lower-class woman. In other words, the *pueblo*, with all its defects, is at least authentic. In fact, Pardo Bazán opens her discussion of the lower-class woman by making just such an assertion: "Mejor que ninguna clase, conserva el pueblo en España carácter nacional y el fondo de ideas y sentimientos consagrados por el óleo de la tradición" (108). She then proceeds to describe certain popular female types giving the most space to the *chula madrileña*, who figures prominently in *costumbrista* scenes at the *Feria de San Isidro* in *Insolación* (109-10). For Pardo Bazán the *chula madrileña* is: "un rezago del pasado, una supervivencia de la España clásica" (109). Unlike in her description of the middle-class woman, however, here she seems to brush off the *chula's* supposed defects. This can be attributed to the fact that Pardo Bazán's objectives are different in her description of the *chula*. While she critiques the middle-class woman, and even the aristocratic woman, although to a lesser extent, for behaviors that are supposedly under their control, mainly their efforts at imitation, she denies the *chula* the same free will. She creates a socially and racially determined character in an effort to portray some sort of Spanish essence.

The aristocracy's celebration and imitation of the *pueblo*, what José Ortega y Gasset refers to as the *aplebeyamiento de la nobleza*, has its roots in the occupation of the Spanish throne by the French Bourbon dynasty at the beginning of the eighteenth century (Torrecilla, *España exótica* 4-6). In fact, Pardo Bazán herself expressed her belief that the Bourbon dynasty had robbed Spain of its national identity (*Mi romería* 185-86). The Spanish War of Independence (1807-1814), which ended when the Spanish successfully expelled Napoleon's brother Joseph from the Spanish throne further strengthened Spanish patriotism and anti-French sentiment (Dorca 114). This cultural reaction to French hegemony, known as *casticismo*, sought to promote a Spain whose essence was to be found amongst the behaviors and traditions of the *pueblo* (Dorca 114). The novel directly addresses this historical phenomenon at the *tertulia* of the Duchess of Sahagún when Pardo talks about how Spaniards protested the foreign king, Amadeo I, by displaying their patriotism by wearing clothing typical of the eighteenth-century Spain, similar to those seen in Goya's tapestry designs (37). He then talks about how King Alfonso XII continued the tradition by dressing in *chulo* attire, causing the public to imitate him (37). This question, however, also comes to the forefront in the novel's presentation of cultural distinction.

In *Insolación* we encounter the lower classes at the *Feria de San Isidro* (mainly *chulos* and gypsies) and at *Las Ventas* (mainly the *cigarreras*). While the lower middle-class is pretty much absent, a few characters, such as the policeman from Lugo and the waitress at the eatery at the *Feria*, could be seen as representing this segment of the social hierarchy. The attendees of the Duchess's *tertulia* and Asís's aristocratic aunts are members of the upper class, which is comprised of both the aristocracy and *haute bourgeoisie*. Both Asís, as Marchioness of Andrade, and the Duchess of Sahagún, are titled aristocracy whereas Gabriel Pardo de la Lage, the grandson of a marquis, holds no title despite being a member of the nobility.<sup>9</sup> He is a professional, an artillery commander in the military. While it is uncertain if Diego Pacheco, the son of a rich landowner in Cádiz, has any ties to the aristo-

crazy, he exhibits a level of refinement that distinguishes him from others, even within his own social circle. The very fact that he is an invited guest at the Duchess's *tertulia* shows that his family belongs to society's upper echelon. Thus, below I will show how social status is determined by displays of cultural capital. I also argue that, paradoxically, it is certain upper-class characters' embrace of popular Spanish customs and their willingness to mix with the Spanish *pueblo* that reveals their distinction from those whose anxiety about being confused with the classes immediately below them causes them to disparage their own national identity. The same struggle is worked out on the national level, where the problem is presented of how to be authentically Spanish and modern, without falling into the traps of imitation and *cursilería*.

In contrast to the lower class characters, the upper class characters, mainly Pacheco and Asís, are noted for their beauty, especially their complexion, fashionable attire, hygiene, correct speech, good manners, distinguished demeanor, and sense of taste.<sup>4</sup> In terms of appearance, and in an interesting inversion of the norm in realist and naturalist fiction, a man, Pacheco, is the primary object of the narrative gaze. Pacheco is physically dashing and Asís notes his "buena presencia" and "trazas inglesas" from the moment they meet at the Duchess's *tertulia* (34-35). At the *merendero* at the *Feria* Asís specifically admires Pacheco's blue eyes, abundant, silky, black hair, beautiful smile, and tanned skin, which is actually quite fair under the collar of his shirt; his fairness being another obvious class marker (60). And, slightly earlier, in the carriage on the way to the *Feria*, fixating on the contrast between Pacheco's dark hair and complexion, and his blonde mustache and blue eyes, Asís asks him if he has an English mother (47). When he responds that he is "español de pura sangre," Asís reminds herself that there are many *rubios* in Spain. She then goes on to add that the complexion of Spanish *rubios* is actually more attractive than that of the excessively pale, and overly ruddy Englishman:

los ingleses que yo conozco son por lo regular unos montones de carne sanguínea, que al parecer se escapa sola

a la parrilla del rosbif; tienen cada cogote y cada pescuezo como ruedas de remolacha; las bocas de ellos dan asco de puro coloradotas, y las frentes, de tan blancas, fastidian ya. (48)

She then adds that she has never seen an Englishman as attractive as Pacheco (48). This is of importance since the novel dialogs with the issue of Spanishness and its relation to England and France. Indeed, in 1896 Pardo Bazán wrote that Spanish men increasingly sought to emulate English culture, while Spanish women remained dedicated followers of the French ("La vida contemporánea. Sportman" 114).<sup>5</sup> At a time in which to appear French or English in some way was a sign of distinction, Pacheco's English traits are a form of cultural capital. Yet, as the novel tries to work out the tensions between being true to one's culture and the importance of seeking distinction through emulation of the French and English, paradoxically Pacheco is completely Spanish in his English appearance; his good looks are accentuated by English features that are actually entirely Spanish.

Pacheco's fastidiousness in matters of his own appearance has led Elizabeth Amann to call him a dandy (185-86). It may be more appropriate to label him a *piri*, the Cádiz version of the dandy, since what the novel highlights about Pacheco is that he is distinguished in a uniquely Spanish way, and the Spanish *piri* is a figure peculiar to Spain, specifically to Cádiz, Pacheco's home (Valis, *The Culture* 72-73). At the *tertulia* Asís notes that Pacheco wears his frockcoat "con soltura" and the next day she admires his light grey suit that is made out of a select, pliant fabric (35, 42, 60). She also takes note of the delicate handkerchief he uses to wipe the perspiration from his forehead (60). On one occasion Pacheco appears at Asís's house wearing a bowler hat and a cape with a scarlet muffle, and on another he arrives all spruced up in a spanking white shirt and vest and a brand new pair of dog-skin gloves (119, 130). Pacheco's mustache is also in keeping with the advice of conduct manuals of the time that recommended a beard or mustache "for a more masculine look" (Cruz 32). In terms of accessories he wears hats and gloves. Yet, it is the card case, or *tarjetero*, he carries, and happens to

forget at Asís's house, that is the most symbolic in terms of objectified cultural capital. A card case was a small container for storing personal objects and visiting cards—visiting cards were used to announce visits in advance, offer condolences, or let a person know that a visit was made while he/she was out (Cruz 38, 106). Visiting cards and the card case became “necessary item[s] in the ceremony of the visit” within polite society (38; 106). And the fact that Pacheco's card case is made out of English leather and bears his initials in silver, adds even more to its symbolic value.

While there are no direct references to Pacheco's hygiene practices, certain passages in the novel emphasize his attention to cleanliness and physical appearance. First, there is the mention of his gloves. In the nineteenth century people of the middle and upper classes went to great lengths to keep their hands covered with gloves, which were “regarded as both a sign of refinement and as necessary to the practice of hygiene” (Cruz 106). Not surprisingly, Asís takes notice of Pacheco's delicate hand and lean fingers (95). She also gets a dizzying whiff of the perfume of the hairstyling product he uses (46). And, on more than one occasion, she calls attention to his beautiful, healthy smile. While dining at the *Feria*, she tells the reader that “al reír, le iluminaba la cara la blanca de sus dientes, que son de los mejor puestos y más sanos que he visto nunca” (60). Pacheco's exceptionally well-cared-for teeth indicate that he follows nineteenth-century advice on dental care, which involved regular teeth brushing with “crushed charcoal, cream of tartar, and, later in the century, commercial mouthwashes” (45). Finally, the fact that he wears light colored clothing that would easily show any dirt—light grey at the *Feria*, and later a white vest and jacket—reveal his attention to cleanliness. It is interesting to note, however, that while he takes care to cover his hands, the skin on his face is tan, and he does not bother to wear a hat at the *Feria*. This indicates clear gender differences in terms of skin care since Asís makes sure to wear a hat and carry a parasol when in the sun. And Asís herself tells us, as we saw above, that an excessively fair complexion is not an

attractive feature in a man: “eso de la frente pura está bueno para las señortas, no para los hombres” (48).

Pacheco is the only upper-class character who has a regional dialect and whose speech is transcribed phonetically. Yet, unlike the speech of the lower-class characters in the novel, Pacheco's manner of speaking does not betray a lack of education. In fact, Asís finds it charming (“sandunguero” [43]). While Asís asserts that some *señortos* from Andalusia do sound like members of the lower classes because of their accents, Pacheco's accent is thick without sounding low-class: “su acento andaluz, que era cerrado y sandunguero sin tocar en ordinario, como el de ciertos señortos que parecen asistentes” (43). As Ermitas Penas has noted, although the narrators say that Pacheco “cecea,” the fact of the matter is that he never does (*Involación* 83; n. 51). This makes sense since that particular linguistic feature would indeed make him sound low-class.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to the other accents in the novel, Pacheco's accent is actually a sign of cultural distinction.

In addition to Pacheco's actual pronunciation, his way of speaking is characterized by his verbosity, good sense of humor, and a quick wit. The regional character of this aspect of his speech is seen in his interactions with the gypsy fortuneteller since Asís comments that their loquaciousness and quickness to respond shows that they hail from the same region of Spain (60). Yet, the distinction and charm of Pacheco's speech contrasts markedly with the gypsy's garbled chatter. Pacheco also shares with the lower classes his tendency to constantly flatter women. He, like the *chulos* that stand on the street outside the café Stuzo, enjoys giving women *piropos* (41). Thus, again, we see how a stereotypical Spanish trait that is shared with the lower classes becomes a sign of distinction when embodied by a refined, upper-class character, allowing Pacheco to be both characteristically Spanish and distinguished at the same time.

In terms of Pacheco's character and behavior, we get a multifaceted view. While Asís is immediately smitten by his relaxed, graceful manner, the Duchess lets us know that, despite his being a gentleman and a decent person, he is a lazy



womanizer who entertains himself spending his father's money (39-40). Towards the end of the novel, after discovering Asís's relationship with Pacheco, Gabriel gives an even more incriminating synopsis of Pacheco's character: "ignorante, sensual, sin energía ni vigor, juguete de las pasiones, incapaz de trabajar y de servir a su patria, mujeriego, pendenciero, escéptico a fuerza de indolencia y egoísmo, inútil para fundar una familia, céfala ociosa en el organismo social" (156). Pacheco himself admits to having had many girlfriends, to having gotten into fights—even killing a man once—and to enjoying food and drink, and a bit of gambling here and there (122). And we get to see Pacheco's flirtatious nature firsthand when he dances with the *cigarreras* in *Las Ventas*. He also admits that he has resisted his father's attempts to help him obtain a position in the Spanish parliament (123). Yet, an appreciation of leisure and a rejection of the bourgeois work ethic are a luxury historically associated with the aristocracy. Also, while the reader may agree with Gabriel that Pacheco is not a family man, marriage itself is portrayed as an institution of social convenience rather than a sign of distinction since Asís was forced to give up her youthful attraction for a navy lieutenant in order to marry her uncle, a man many years her senior, in order to consolidate wealth and rank within the family.

Despite his distaste for work and his flirtatious nature, Pacheco always treats Asís with courtesy and respect. He carries out all of the formalities required in polite society with ease. Most importantly, Pacheco never takes any liberties with Asís when they are alone. Pacheco is also kind, generous, and friendly with the lower classes, and exercises emotional restraint. All of this leads Asís to form an overwhelmingly positive assessment of her admirer (127). For Asís, what gives Pacheco his distinction, is his combination of refinement with spontaneity and authentic Spanishness (127). He is typically, perhaps stereotypically, Spanish in the way in which he flatters women, embraces popular customs and combines humor, licentiousness and romantic melancholy (127). However, his upbringing and refinement show through in his grace, civility, agreeable demeanor, aristocratic man-

ners, and his lack of affectation and inhibition (127). Thus, apart from Pacheco's social capital as the son of a wealthy and well-connected landowner, and apart from his good taste and refinement, what makes Pacheco distinguished, and free from accusations of affectation, are precisely his capacity to both embrace and incarnate what is uniquely Spanish.

Since Asís is not the primary object of the narrative gaze, her beauty is revealed mainly by others' reactions to her. Pacheco not only lets her know that he finds her beautiful, but she catches him gazing at her when he thinks she is not looking (47). Gabriel Pardo is also attracted to her, and becomes jealous when he discovers that something is going on between her and Pacheco. Then there are the reactions of the *cigarreras* who note Asís's fair skin and rosy cheeks (139). Asís's care for her appearance and body, however, is revealed mainly by her attention to fashion and hygiene. The narrator informs us that Asís's husband let her spend generously on dress designers and that she enjoys spending her time comparing the lower cost, yet comparative quality and design of her clothes with those made by the Duchess's famous English tailor (84-85). Asís also spends money on her daughter's clothes, most telling is Marujita's "sombrero de castor blanco" a prized item that she gives to Ángela to give to her niece.<sup>7</sup> In descriptions of Asís's clothes there are mentions of the quality of the fabrics, the design, and the condition. To mass she wears a new, green taffeta dress and a mantilla (41, 44). For the fair she puts on a grey dress made of Zephyr cloth and decorated with red anchors, a black straw hat with Scottish ribbons, and thin gloves (44-45, 49). She also carries a sachet, instead of wearing perfume, and a checkered parasol (44). There are references to other clothing items such as a tulle veil, and another of English gauze, a lace shawl, a robe made of Turkish cloth, and English shoes (87, 124, 132, 152). The emphasis on textiles in particular could be attributed not only to the rise of fashion magazines that kept women abreast of such topics, but also to the flourishing textile industry in Catalonia that had made a wide variety of fabrics readily available (Cruz 96-98, 105, 108-10). While hurriedly preparing her suitcase for her return to Gali-

cia, Asís complains to her maid Ángela about the need to dress appropriately for each social occasion: "Luego las fiestas, los bailes dichosos de la Pastora, que obligan a ir provisto de trajes de sociedad, porque si uno se presenta sencillo, de seda cruda, les chocha y se ofenden y critican..." (128). Asís also recognizes her appearance and attire, as well as Pacheco's, as markers of social class at the fair: "Pacheco y yo nos bajamos de la berlina, parecíamos, por el contraste, pareja de archiduques que tentados de la curiosidad van a recorrer una fiesta populachera, deseosos de guardar el incógnito, y delatados por sus elegantes trazas" (50). Yet, despite Asís's emulation of European fashion, she continues to use traditional Spanish accessories such as mantillas and fans. The fact that Asís, and later the Duchess, continue to wear the mantilla even though, as Pardo Bazán laments, it had gone out of fashion, indicates the protagonist's embrace of her own Spanishness against the trend of emulating foreign fashion (Pardo Bazán, "La mujer española" 99).<sup>8</sup>

Asís's emphasis on hygiene is best observed in the detailed bath scene. She files her nails, brushes her teeth, combs her hair, cleans her ears with a sponge and small ivory spoon, and scrubs her neck with a horsehair glove coated with a honey almond paste (87). While this scene symbolizes Asís's desire to wash away the filth she associates with her escape at the *Feria*, the procedure itself distinguishes Asís from the masses who did not have the luxury of bathing regularly. Asís's use of gloves and the condition of the skin of her hands is also a testament to her concern with hygiene. Asís herself highlights the contrast between her hand and that of the gypsy fortuneteller:

En efecto, sin vanidad, tengo que reconocer que la mano de la gitana, al lado de la mía, parecía un pedazo de cecina feísimo: la tumbaga de plata, donde resplandecía una esmeralda falsa espantosa, contribuía a que resaltase el color cobrizo de la garra aquella, y claro está que mi diestra, que es algo chica, pulida y blanca, con anillos de perlas, zafiros y brillantes, contrastaba extrañamente. (60-61)

The fairness and smoothness of Asís's skin is a form of embodied cultural capital since: "the condition of hands was perhaps the most immediate distinguishing sign of social class" (Cruz 106). We also see Asís clean and groom herself by applying powder and cologne, carrying a perfumed sachet, washing her hands, and carrying a parasol to protect her skin (44, 55, 87, 152, 154). The reference to a bottle of elixir shows that she uses contemporary medicines and her awareness of the importance of exercise is made evident when she tells Pardo that she would like to go for a walk because "lo que me pide el cuerpo es ejercicio" (102, 132).

Apart from hygienic practices, the forms of leisure activities she enjoys also mark Asís's social class. Asís engages in variety of activities deemed appropriate for members of polite society such as attending *tertulias* and dinner parties, making social visits, participating in the afternoon *paseo*, and going to the theater, zarzuelas, and attending bullfights (Cruz 36, 39-40, 44, 172, 178). It is important that Asís actually prefers bullfights to horse racing (43) since, although bullfights remained one of the most popular spectacles in nineteenth-century Spain, horse racing, which was brought to Spain from England, became increasingly popular (Cruz 172, 217-18). Pardo Bazán herself was not a fan of horse racing and wrote in 1896 that: "No he visto diversión que menos divierta, ni que le sea más indiferente á la multitud. Todo el regocijo de los toros es en las carreras incuria y caimiento" ("La vida contemporánea. Sportman" 114).<sup>9</sup> In fact, Pardo Bazán critiques the upper class for abandoning Spanish bullfights for horse racing since bullfights are "la afición verdaderamente española, la que nosotros tenemos en la masa de la sangre" ("La mujer española" 99).<sup>10</sup> Thus, again, Asís's preference for bullfights seems to be in accord with the author's own predilection for forms of leisure that are traditionally Spanish.

In general, the novel promotes the idea that autochthonous customs embraced mainly by the lower classes actually have more character. Asís expresses this very idea when she admits that a *movero* at the *Feria* actually has "más carácter" than a *fonda* (56). Indeed, the novel, in the *casti-*

*cista* tradition, attempts to exalt the lifestyles and customs of the lower classes, mainly by turning them into art. Pacheco expresses this view most explicitly at the Duchess's *tertulia* when he insists that a nation is at its best when it embraces its own customs and that even the poor have an air of sophistication in Andalusia: "A cada país le cae bien lo suyo... Nuestra tierra no ha dado pruebas de ser nada ruda: tenemos allá de too: poetas, pintores, escritores... Cabalmente en Andalucía la gente pobre es mu fina y mu despabiliaa" (35-36). We see Asís's conversion of popular culture into art when the Puente de Toledo crowded with the people of the *Feria* evokes Goya's paintings, the flower seller a sketch by Emilia Sala, the events at the *merendero* a *sainete*, and the sight of Pacheco dancing with the *cigarreras* a *zarzuela* (48, 64, 140). Thus, the novel implies that Asís's, and Pacheco's appreciation of Spanish culture is a sign of distinction, even if the conduct manuals of the time insisted on the emulation of the French and English (Cruz 29).<sup>11</sup>

Asís's home is also another important marker of her social status. The ideal nineteenth-century home had a logical floor plan, tastefully decorated interiors, and new amenities such as gas lighting and heating, and running water and flushing toilets (Cruz 61-66). The only home of which we get a detailed description is Asís's. In terms of amenities we are made privy to the fact that her house has a sink with a faucet ("lavabo con grifo"), in other words, running water, and a porcelain enameled zinc bathtub, two luxury items of the time. The narrator tells us, however, that the Marquis had no sense of taste and cluttered the apartment with knickknacks (95-96). The most distinguishing characteristic of the decoration is the incongruity between the truly valuable items such as a piano and two authentic vargüeno desks, and kitschy items such as watercolor paintings of *chulas* and a large porcelain bulldog (95-96).<sup>12</sup> The failed decorative pretensions of the Marquis are presented as another example of *cursilería*: "La sala estaba amueblada con esas pretensiones artísticas que hoy ostenta todo bicho viviente, sepa o no sepa lo que es arte, y con ese aspecto de prendería que resulta de aglomerar el mayor número posible de cosas inconexas" (95-

96). It does not reflect on Asís, however, but rather on the Marquis who was "incapaz de distinguir un Ticiano de un Ribera" (95). In fact, the description of the apartment is in accordance with the image of a marquis who dyed his moustache in order to appear younger. What is important here is that the Marquis, who was titled aristocracy and had the economic capital to rent an apartment in Madrid with running water and to buy authentic vargüeno desks, is actually uncultured and *cursi*, revealing once again the importance of cultural capital over aristocratic title. It is also indicates why Asís, who is portrayed as more refined, would not find such a marriage particularly satisfying.

In terms of behavior and demeanor, Asís, like Pacheco, complies with most societal norms for her class. She is courteous and polite, even with the lower classes, and exhibits emotional control. At the *merendero* at the *Feria* she applauds herself for knowing how to keep up a certain level of reserve without being too uptight (65). And as we saw in the case of Pacheco, an adherence to the norms of conduct of polite society combined with ease and naturalness in one's comportment, was the signature sign of distinction, since to be too stiff or concerned about the impression one was making, was to be *cursi*. Asís also knows when to exercise emotional control. We see this for example at the eatery in *Las Ventas* where she hides her anger and jealousy from Pacheco once he has returned from dancing with the *cigarreras*. Interestingly, however, the narrator associates this characteristic with Galicians in general and points to the disadvantages of being too controlled in one's behavior: "Esto se llama *guardarse* las cosas, y si tiene la ventaja de evitar choques, tiene la desventaja de que esas impresiones archivadas y ocultas se pudren dentro" (146). When Asís does reveal her emotions, such as when she reproaches Pacheco for having entered her house in her absence, she labels her own emotional display as low-class ("ordinario" [94]). The narrator also attributes some of Asís's reserve and emotional control to society's indoctrination of women: "La mujer es un péndulo continuo que oscila entre el instinto natural y la aprendida vergüenza" (138).



In nineteenth-century conduct manuals geared specifically for women, domesticity, virtue, reserve, and modesty continued to be emphasized above all else (Cruz 34-37). For example, in her widely read *El ángel del hogar*, María del Pilar Sinués dedicates an entire chapter to the importance of reserve in women (Colbert 432). According to Sinués, reserve makes a woman more attractive, protects her reputation (which can be easily tarnished), and preserves her husbands' love and admiration (257-59, 262). It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Asís lauds herself for having been a faithful wife and having maintained her honor. She is proud of being "una dama formal, intachable" who appears in celebrity gossip magazines only to receive praise (85). Her concern is precisely that her escapade and attraction towards Pacheco will ruin her impeccable reputation (85). Yet, challenging the gender norms of the time, the novel suggests that for Asís, discretion is to be found in the transgression of societal norms for women. As a young widow, Asís is in the enviable position of being "libre, rica, moza, bien mirada y con el alma serena" (84-85). She no longer needs to live by societal conventions and is now free to enjoy life. Valis attributes Asís's initial timidity to her insecurity about her aristocratic rank—her title of Marchioness was only conferred by marriage—and asserts, rightly I believe, that Pardo Bazán criticizes her protagonist precisely for "este 'achicamiento' o falta de valentía moral frente a las hipocresías sociales del asfixiante qué dirán" (Valis, "Confesión" 338-39). Indeed, in her 1892 speech entitled "La educación del hombre y de la mujer: sus relaciones y diferencias" Pardo Bazán criticizes the "moral chiquita" that discourages personal qualities in women that are admirable in a man, such as independence and "la franca veracidad": "La mujer se ahoga, presa en las estrechas mallas de una red de moral menuda, menuda" (29-30). Moreover, she goes on to translate teachings on "honestidad" as "el arte de agrandar al hombre" and on "reserva" as "el fingimiento" (31). Yet, as the novel progresses, Asís becomes bolder in her defiance of society's dictates for women. Asís's outings with Pacheco show the beginning of her defiance of certain societal norms, as does her assimilation of Gabriel's ideas about

the hypocrisy of the sexual double standard (112). But, her ultimate rebellion comes with her decision to spend the night with Pacheco without experiencing feelings of remorse, a scene which shocked Pardo Bazán's critical readership of the time (Mayoral 127-29).

The other female aristocrats in the novel are Asís's aunts, the Cardenosas, and the Duchess of Sahagún. Asís's aunts are two affable spinsters in their fifties who are described as timid and sweet, but not emancipated and living in an internal female infancy (90). Their form of dressing is out-of-date and their conversations turn on trivialities such as novenas and the happenings in the lives of others (90). Their high social standing is revealed by the narrator's comment that: "Gozaban con todo esto las Cardenosas fama de trato distinguidísimo, y su tarjeta hacía bien en cualquier bandeja de porcelana de esas donde se amontona, en forma de pedazos de cartulina, la consideración social" (90). Here, in another reference to the upper-class practice of using visiting cards, the narrator lets us now that simply receiving a visit by the Cardenosas means one is a member of the most elite circle. Yet, despite their high social rank, virtue, and kindness, they are dull, insipid, asexual women. While Asís initially enjoys the calm the visit provides, she soon finds herself bored. Trying to inconspicuously check the time, her gaze stumbles upon a bronze clock featuring a nude Apollo (91). This scene is telling for several reasons. First, the bronze clock, as an extremely valuable item at the time, is a form of symbolic cultural capital that signals the Cardenosas' high social status.<sup>18</sup> However, the figure of a beautiful, youthful male "con la lira muy empuñada" clearly reminds Asís of Pacheco and her sexual attraction for him, which wakes her up out of her lethargic trance that the Cardenosas' soporific company induces. Also, Apollo, as a god of the Sun, ties together the motif of the sun as a symbol of sexuality, implied most obviously by the novel's very title. Finally, the fact that Asís's aunts have never noticed the male nude in the forty years they have owned the clock, and the fact that the clock stopped working as soon as they got it, points to both their

celbate existence and their failure to change with the passage of time.

The Duchess of Sahagún forms a marked contrast with Asís's aunts. The Duchess is a collector of pottery, minerals, paintings and porcelain, and she is smart, witty, and informed enough to entertain the ambassador of Germany (35). As a woman up to date on the topics of art, politics and science, the Duchess embodies the attributes that Pardo Bazán admired in the aristocratic woman ("La mujer española" 95). Moreover, the Duchess is a woman who does and says as she pleases. Asís initially distinguishes herself from the Duchess precisely because she believes she is still subject to societal conventions while the Duchess is not:

Para ciertas personas no rigen las ordenanzas sociales. La Sahagún no sólo es muy experta, y muy deshablada, y discretísima [...], sino que con su alta posición conviene en excentricidad graciosa e inofensiva lo que en las demás se toma por desvergüenza y liviandad. Hay gentes que tienen permiso para todo, y se imponen, y les caen bien hasta las barrabasadas. Pero yo que soy una señora como todas, una de tantas, debo respetar el orden establecido y no meterme en honduras. (82)

The idea that the Duchess is in a position in which she can defy social convention is in consonance with Pardo Bazán's belief that social defiance is "a privilege earned through education and self cultivation" (Smith 157). Also in line with the author's own views, is the Duchess's embrace of popular Spanish customs, and her rejection of certain foreign influences. She praises the *Feria de San Isidro*, goes to bullfights, and says she would prefer to be compared to a *chula* rather than an English woman: "más vale una chula que treinta gringas. Lo gringo me apesta" (38). The Duchess's attitude resembles that of author who was often dismissive of English culture ("La vida contemporánea. Sportman" 114). Asís spots the Duchess in her English carriage, on her way back from a bullfight, wearing a black mantilla and a group of carnations, and thus resembling a figure from one of Goya's tapestry cartoons (89-90). The Duchess's mutual embrace of foreign in-

fluence (the English carriage) and Spanish tradition (bullfights, mantillas, and carnations) confer distinction upon her, while the references to Goya return us to the theme of Spanish culture as art.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike the other members of the love triangle, Gabriel Pardo has a limited presence in the novel. While we do not get any physical descriptions of Pardo, we do see him express his ideas and interact with others. Asís describes him as courteous, but a bit naïve, and very eccentric and tenacious in his views (31). As one who enjoys engaging in polemics, Pardo is pivotal in raising the straw man argument of Spanish racial inferiority. Indeed, as Carlos Feal has noted, Pardo represents liberal Spain and its values (275). He aligns himself with the *afancesado* view of Spain as backward and in need of emulating European practices, he uses Anglicisms like *shocking*, frequently goes on harangues against bullfighting, accepts "scientific" theories that connect Spain's hot climate to its racial inferiority, and condemns the upper class for imitating the *pueblo* in dress and manners, as well as Galicians for imitating Andalusians (107, 32-33, 37-38). These positions put him at odds with the Duchess, Pacheco, and Asís, but in accordance with the conduct manuals of the time that insisted on the importance of imitation of the French and English. And, although Pardo's attack on the double standard is refreshing, his harsh judgment of Asís when he discovers her relationship with Pacheco makes him guilty of the very hypocrisy he criticizes. As Gene Forrest has pointed out, this character has sharply divided critics as most either see him as the mouthpiece of Pardo Bazán's views or as a hypocrite who does not truly espouse the views he expresses (81). Asís and the narrator seem to underscore this latter assessment when they refer to his words as "frecuentes asuntos de sermón" and "detestables sofismas" (32, 110). And Maurice Hemingway notes the contradictions of this character across novels: "We know from *La madre naturaleza* that [...] [Gabriel] is liable to lurch from one opinion to another. This dual perspective is carried over into *Insolación*" (144).

In addition to serving the function of presenting key arguments with which the novel dialogues, Pardo serves as a foil to

Pacheco. Overall, Pardo is more dull and stodgy than Pacheco, who excels at having a good time. Pardo condemns *ferias* and bullfights, but enjoys going to the Military Circle to read foreign newspapers—he, of course, reads the *foreign* press—and to listen to talks on “soothing” topics such as the advantages and disadvantages of the seniority scale in professional organizations (157). Asís pegs him as a bit of an introvert when she notes that despite his penchant for controversy and debate, most nights Pardo prefers to withdraw from conversation altogether (31). Considering that social skills and a vibrant social life were deemed necessary for entrance into polite society, Pardo’s introversion and social ineptness contribute to his lack of status (Cruz 39). In fact, Valis points out that gauche behavior was the main characteristic of the male *cursei* (Valis, *The Culture* 73). Pardo is also less seductive as a suitor since he lacks Pacheco’s dashing appearance and facility with words. And the quickness with which Pardo recovers from the emotional injury of discovering Asís’s and Pacheco’s relationship paints a picture of an overly cerebral man. Thus, Pardo’s lack of passion, inelegance, and sense of Spanish inferiority, all make him less distinguished than Pacheco and open to accusations of *cursejería* since, as Valis asserts, one was “perceived as *cursei* precisely [...] for imitating the comportment and ideas of other national cultures, especially the English and the French” (9; emphasis in the original)

According to Jesús Cruz, what marked polite society as different in the nineteenth century was that it was now open to anyone able to display the gentility promoted in the conduct manuals of the time (221). Although the lower classes remain completely marginalized in the novel—implying a certain adherence to theories of social and racial determinism—amongst the ruling classes positions are negotiated in terms of cultural capital rather than aristocratic rank or material wealth. Even though characters such as the Marquis de Andrade and the Cardenas are titled aristocracy, their tastes and habits deprive them of the cultural distinction of characters like Pacheco, who is fashionable, witty, and entertaining. The novel also aims to refute the notion that “to

modernize meant the homologation of Spanish society with the most developed societies of Europe” (Cruz 224). Thus, in line with Pardo Bazán’s call for a reconciliation of the two Spains that would preserve the greatness of Old Spain while importing certain philosophies and technologies from abroad, the novel promotes its own concept of cultural distinction which defies specific advice found in the conduct manuals that encouraged Spaniards to emulate the French and the English, and that promoted reserve and submissiveness for women (Pardo Bazán, *Mi romería* 204-05)

#### NOTES

1. For the most noteworthy examples see Amann, DeCoster, Colbert, Dorca, Giles, Gomis-Izquierdo, Hemingway, Karageorgou-Baseta, Knickerbocker, Penas (“la crisis del naturalismo”), Pereda (“Espacios urbanos,” “Sniffing”), Santibáñez-Ti6, Scari, Schmidt, Tollver, Torrecilla (“Un país”), Tsuchiya, Whitaker, and Zeechi.
2. In nineteenth-century Spain the terms *mudde class* and *bourgeoisie* were used synonymously (Cruz 10; Valis, *The Culture* 10). Thus, for the purposes of this paper, I will also use the terms interchangeably.
3. Gabriel’s father was a *segund6n* and therefore did not inherit the title of Marquis. Both Gabriel and his father are *hidalgos*, or untitled aristocracy (*Los pazos* 158).
4. Pardo Bazán wrote extensively on the topics of fashion and hygiene in her column “La vida contemporánea” in *La Ilustración Artística*. In fact, the two subjects often overlapped such as when she spoke out against the length of women’s dresses, which were so overly long that they trapped the filth of streets and brought it into the home (“La vida contemporánea. Higiene” 250; “La vida contemporánea” 142), or against men’s being required to wear suits made of wool in the heat of the summer (“La vida contemporánea. La vida en verano” 538).
5. She repeats this idea in a her column a few months later when she writes that Paris “[t]iene que defender el centro del buen gusto, porque Inglaterra se lo está arrebatando: Inglaterra, en la actualidad, es más *vlan* que Francia: empezó por cortar mejor la ropa de hombre, siguió por vestir deliciosamente á los mocosos ó *babies*, apoderóse luego de las *girls* ó muchachas semi casaderas, y ya ha puesto su silla en todas partes, en el traje, en el nobilitario, en la decoracion de las habitaciones, en el modo de servir las mesas y

- hasta en los juegos. Sólo le queda á Francia un dominio propio: la indumentaria femenina, en la edad de agrandar" ("La vida contemporánea. A la Rusa" 754).
6. Considering the number of occasions in which Pacheco seseo, as exhibited by the phonetic transcriptions of his speech, Pardo Bazán must have confused seseo with ceceo.
7. Beaver fur was the most coveted material for hats at the time ("The Beaver Fur Hat").
8. In "La mujer española" Pardo Bazán argued that Spanish women should continue to wear traditional Spanish attire, which included "la misteriosa, voluptuosa y poética mantilla negra o blanca" (98). She modifies her position a bit, however, a couple years later in "Mantillas y sombreros," where she argues in favor of eclecticism in fashion: the mantilla is preferable on some occasions whereas the hat, a foreign import for women, is better suited for others (91-93).
9. Five months later in a piece entitled "Polo" Pardo Bazán again asserts that she, like most Spaniards, finds horse racing dull (466).
10. While Pardo Bazán was an avid fan of bullfighting in her youth, her enthusiasm for it waned in her adult years (Faus 464). Yet, in all her writings she proved herself to be well informed on the subject and continued to defend the practice (Faus 464-67). For example, in "Sobre la fiesta nacional" (1896) she lauded bullfighting for "la delicadeza, la habilidad, el arte, la agilidad y la gracia unidas á la seriedad que puede conquirar y dominar el peligro" (434), and in "La novela amarilla" (1898) she attacked U.S. propaganda against Spain that uses bullfighting as proof of Spain's savage nature (506). Even as late as 1913 she wrote against a vilified depiction of bullfighting that had recently appeared in the German press (Faus 467).
11. Pardo Bazán herself pokes fun of Spanish Anglophilia in "Sportman, Sportmen y 'Sportment'" (1896) by ridiculing Spanish men who imitate British customs and in "Polo" (1896) by describing members of the Spanish aristocracy who could pass as English: "Los dos hermanos eran una acuarela de Kate Greenaway, clavada: eran la anglofilia, nota suprema del buen tono actual" ("La vida contemporánea. Polo" 466).
12. Varguëño desks and pianos were amongst the most prized items in a home (Cruz 75, 106).
13. In his study of inventories of nineteenth-century homes, Cruz notes that the most highly appraised item in the home of the Prime Minister Narváez was the bronze clock that adorned one of the consoles (Cruz 84).
14. Pardo Bazán does concede that in the manner of horses and carriages, the Spaniards will never be able to compete with the English

("La vida contemporánea. Polo" 466). Thus, the Duchess's English carriage would most certainly be construed as a form of distinction.

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A CASTIZA COMMODITY:  
THE SALESGIRL IN  
RAMÓN GÓMEZ DE LA SERNA'S  
LA NARDO

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Un día bajaba al Rastro con Tomás Borrás, y de pronto, en la visión de la tarde, bajo los toldos del vial de las Américas, la vimos. Era como una esclava, desnuda y desmelenada, que se vendía en el Mercado. Y me enamoré de ella.

(Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *La sagrada cripta de Pombo* 585)

Ramón Gómez de la Serna might have admired women—he was indeed emotionally and intellectually attached to feminist writer Carmen de Burgos for two decades—but female characters in his novels are often depicted from a negative perspective. Different scholars have already demonstrated how Gómez de la Serna and most male authors of the vanguards “[i]n spite of their ‘new art’ with its alleged rejection of nineteenth-century technologies of representation, [...] continue to mimic the female constructs passed on to them through the ages” (Spires 220). Interestingly, as Spires states, even though avant-garde artists were accused by their contemporaries of emasculating the male image and creating an effeminate new literary expression, the truth is that