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ABSTRACT: Clothes offer us a commentary on the individual who wears them, and one of those comments deals with gender. Clothing is fundamental to gender, turning male and female bodies into men and women. In the nineteenth century the preoccupation with appearances was greater than in previous periods thanks to changes in the social system and a reformulation of gender roles, as well as the popularity of physiognomic theory. Given this increased sensitivity to the gaze, it is curious that men would uniformly adopt the black suit as their garment of choice. This revolution in male fashion was born from contradictory motives. On the one hand, the man in black attempted to avoid the gaze so as not to be anyone's object of desire. An exception to this rule was the elegante, for whom fashion was a way of life. The elegante became a frequent target of the satirical press, which questioned his masculinity. On the other hand, the black suit came simbolize the power of the ascendant middle class because it recalled Spain's most important monarchs, such as Carlos V and Felipe II. The black suit thus became a polysemic signifier, and the man who wore it attempted, impossibly, to be both the subject and object of the gaze.

RESUMEN: Las prendas nos ofrecen un comentario sobre la persona que las viste, y uno de sus mensajes trata del género. La vestidura forma parte íntegra del género, convirtiendo cuerpos masculinos y femeninos en hombres y mujeres. En el siglo XIX la preocupación por la apariencia llegó a tener más importancia que en épocas anteriores gracias a los cambios sociales, la reformulación del género, y la popularidad de la fisonomía. En este ambiente hipervisual lo curioso es que los hombres adoptaron con uniformidad el traje negro. Esta revolución en la indumentaria masculina tiene motivos contradictorios. Por un lado, el hombre que llevaba un traje negro intentaba esconderse, evitando la mirada de los demás para no ser objeto del deseo. Una excepción era el elegante, que se dedicaba al arte de vestir. Éste llegó a ser objeto de burla en la prensa popular, que cuestionaba su masculinidad. Pero al mismo tiempo el traje negro simbolizaba el poder de la nueva clase media, porque recordaba a los monarcas más importantes del imperio español, Carlos V y Felipe II. El traje negro, entonces, se convierte en símbolo polisémico, y el hombre que se lo pone intenta, imposiblemente, ser tanto el objeto como el sujeto de la mirada.

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Men in Black: Fashioning Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Spain

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> *¡Los trapos, ay! ¿Quién no ve en ellos una de las principales energías de la época presente, tal vez una causa generadora de movimiento y vida?*
> —Benito Pérez Galdós, *Fortunata y Jacinta*

The old adage that clothes make the man may be as true as it is trite. Beyond their basic function as protection from the elements, clothes operate as a social discourse, signs that make status claims and moral declarations, reveal aesthetic trends, and, of course, communicate gender identities.

The present study will address a lacuna in the scholarship on the intersecting subjects of gender and fashion.[1] As the study of dress and fashion has expanded during the previous half-century, so too has the variety of theoretical approaches. Roland Barthes, Susan Kaiser, and Fred Davis, for instance, have written about fashion from within the fields of semiotics, psychology, and sociology. Despite their diverse methodologies and discursive styles, each one insists on the role of clothing as nonverbal communication, what Barthes calls the "transformation of an object into language" (99).[2] Unsurprisingly, with the rise of post-structuralist philosophy and second-wave feminism, gender has become an increasingly central focus for fashion scholars as they explore the role of clothing in representing individual and collective identities (Crane; Hollander; Jones; Eicher). Although the study of fashion and dress has, over the years, concentrated mainly on women's fashions, recent scholarship has addressed the relationship between sartorial practices and the representation of masculinity (Breward; Byrde 88-109; Edwards 99-115; Harvey, *Men in Black*; Kuchta; Nixon; Zakin).

This shift toward a more gender-centric study of fashion has resulted in fruitful avenues of exploration in the field of nineteenth-century Hispanic studies, as seen in a number of publications that highlight the contribution of fashion discourse and sartorial habits to the construction of femininity, primarily in relation to literary representations of the feminine ideal known as the *ángel del hogar*.[3] The role of fashion discourse in the production of Spanish masculinity, by contrast, has been virtually ignored.[4] This is not to say that the evolution of men's fashion has not been documented by historians. There has been some effort in tracking changing styles, yet these tend to be descriptive accounts rather than interpretive, and make little attempt to draw conclusions about how fashion trends contributed to or reflected ideals of masculinity.[5] A notable exception to this critical oversight are the writings on the dandy figure in Spanish society.[6] I would suggest that such studies, though valuable to the study of men's fashion and masculinity, remain incomplete in that they attempt to view the dandy as an isolated subject. Because masculinity is layered and always relational, we must first document the hegemonic model, if only to move past it in our exploration of more subversive models of Spanish masculinity.

The following study will provide a clearer picture of why the black suit became the garment of choice for Spanish men during the second half of the nineteenth century by examining various examples from the discourse on fashion. Given the historical specificity of gender, I will outline how developments in the social environment of the day created a hypersensitivity to the gaze. On the

one hand, for an ascendant middle class, being seen in the latest, most elegant fashions provided a convenient way to achieve social distinction. On the other hand, the fashion discourse, influenced by a power dynamic in which the gazing subject occupies a (masculine) position of power while the object of the gaze is situated in an inferior (feminine) position, discouraged men from dressing conspicuously. This tension finds expression in the ubiquitous black suit, which became the visual symbol of hegemonic masculinity in the nineteenth century.

It is by now commonplace to refer to gender as a constructed identity rather than a coherent, monolithic, biological reality. Biology may create differences, but discursive fields give those differences meaning. Every culture has a unique way of conceptualizing the way the world should be, and presents that framework as truth. This holds true for conceptions of gender as well. Commenting on the historic variability of knowledge, Michel Foucault explains that, "there are different truths and different ways of speaking the truth" (*Politics,* 51). These "régimes of truth," as he calls them, are created through discourse. Foucault does not use the term discourse in its common sense as a speech or sermon but, rather, as a body of statements and practices that constitute the knowledge or "truths" of a period:

> Each society has its régime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (*Power/Knowledge,* 131)

Discourses, and the identities that they create, rise to prominence and fall according to the specific context of a period. The evolution of discursive trends typically corresponds to changes in the dominant ideology of a given society, and while one cannot reduce discourse to any one social or political agenda, it should be recognized that by functioning as a key site of power, discourse is never ideologically neutral. "[T]ruth isn't outside power, or lacking in power" because, Foucault explains, "[t]ruth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power" (*Power/Knowledge,* 131). As this citation suggests, truth derives not from a single source but from "multiple forms of constraint," that is, from the overlap, interplay, and loose unification of various discourses—a system of dispersion known as a discursive field.

Foucault's theories have been appropriated to great effect by contemporary gender theorists, who argue that masculinity and femininity are socially constructed, culturally specific, and fluid identities rather than natural, universal, and fixed. As various discourses—medical, religious, and fashion, for instance—coalesce around issues of gender, they form a new discursive field, out of which culturally specific models of masculinity and femininity emerge. Individuals then set about, usually unwittingly, molding their appearance, behavior, and thoughts accordingly. "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body," explains Butler, alluding to the physical manifestations of gender discourse (typically gestures, dress, and grooming) that make masculinity and femininity visible and give them the "appearance of substance" (33). Within the metaphoric gender wardrobe there are a limited number of costumes permitted by the established social order. Failure to wear the appropriate costume can potentially lead to marginalization.

Inasmuch as discourses intersect in varying configurations over time, gender identities are inevitably fractured and shifting. Connell and Kimmel, among others, have successfully argued that previous conceptions of manliness—which relied on the traditional view that men are one-dimensional and unemotional creatures who groan and

grunt through life—were inadequate because they failed to account for the variations created by culture. To speak of masculinity, even something as specific as Spanish masculinity, is to dangerously oversimplify the situation. The interplay between gender, race, and class means that we must acknowledge the plurality of masculine identity. Black as well as white, working-class as well as middle-class, heterosexual and homosexual, male and female.

How, then, do we organize so many models in a way that is relevant? In her pioneering book *Masculinities*, R.W. Connell suggests that the most effective way to understand the diversity of gender is a relational approach, one that highlights the "patterns of masculinity" within a given socio-cultural context (37). Although in any given context there may be a wide variety of potential models of masculinity, we can separate these into two basic categories—hegemonic masculinity and subordinate masculinity (76-81). Hegemonic masculinity is a culturally normative ideal of male behavior. It is not static and is not even the most common type of masculinity. Rather, it represents a particular configuration of masculinity that is culturally exalted. It is not a reality but a socially endorsed fantasy. It includes those characteristics and behaviors considered most desirable by a given society at a given moment. It is subject to challenges from subordinate or marginalized models of masculinity, and is reconstituted when new conditions arise. In other words, hegemonic masculinity is not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that individuals position themselves in relation to others through discursive practices.

Dress is central to the construction of gender, transforming male and female bodies into men and women. Yet clothes say so much more than that. As one of the most visible markers of identity, clothing has the power to tell the world who we are (or at least who we would like to be). That people's clothing carries meaning is hardly news, but in the nineteenth century this notion was especially pronounced, a consequence of social developments and redefined gender roles. The popularly held belief, that clothing possesses the capacity to unveil a person's true character by converting appearances into legible texts, is based on the principle of physiognomic reliability. First popularized by Aristotle in his "Physiognomica," physiognomy is the art of discovering a person's inner character by reading their outer appearance. Originally the study of physiognomy developed from human-animal comparisons. "The resemblance of forms supposes a resemblance of characters," argued Giambattista della Porta in his 1586 treatise *De humana physiognomonia* (qtd. in Lavater 2:99). Thus a man with drooping jowls and an upturned nose, like that of a pig, would be judged slovenly and gluttonous. Similarly, a man with thick golden hair and a full beard might be compared to a lion, courageous and strong.

As the popularity of the theory waxed and waned over the centuries, the field of physiognomy evolved and broadened so that by the end of the eighteenth century, when Swiss theologian Johann Casper Lavater published his seminal *Physiognomische Fragmente*, every element of an individual's appearance, from the angle of their nose to the shoes on their feet, was viewed as a virtual map of the soul:

> I comprehend under the term Physiognomy all the external signs which, in man, directly force themselves on the observer; every feature, every outline, every modification, active or passive; every attitude and position of the human body; in short, every thing that immediately contributes to the knowledge of man, whether active or passive—every thing that shows him as he really appears. (Lavater 1: 11)

With the publication of *Physiognomische Fragmente* Lavater captured the attention of modern Europe. During the first half of the nineteenth century his name was regularly cited in scientific journals and popular

newspapers alike. According to historian John Graham, Lavater's work

> was reprinted, abridged, summarized, pirated, parodied, imitated, and reviewed so often that it is difficult to imagine how a literate person of the time could have failed to have some general knowledge of the man and his theories. (62)

Physiognomy became a cultural phenomenon, and the belief that an individual's exterior accurately reflected their interior was accepted as fact.

This was certainly the case in Spain where the principles of physiognomy were disseminated by both scientific and popular publications. The August 1836 edition of *Semanario Pintoresco Español* ran a study of the face in which it cites Lavater to support the claim, "Tal nariz, tal frente, tal alma" ("Fisonomía," 163). In 1842 Antonio Rotondo published *La fisonomía, o sea El arte de conocer a sus semejantes por las formas exteriores; extractado de las mejores obras de Lavater*. In 1849 Mariano Cubí i Soler came out with a highly popular study of his own, *Elementos de frenología, fisonomía y magnetismo humano*. The marketability of such works showed little sign of diminishing in the second half of the century as publishers continued to print physiognomic studies. Mariano Aguirre de Venero's *Primer sistema del lenguaje universal, fisognomónico de los ojos: Nuevo arte de conocer a los hombres* was published in 1865, and in 1883 *Madrid Cómico* ran an article titled "En la cara," which asked readers: "¿Queréis conocer al hombre? Miradle la cara… no hay individuo que pueda sustraerse al influjo que las pasiones ejercen en nuestra fisonomía" (Matoses 3). Given the quantity and frequency of publications dealing with physiognomy, one can safely assume that most literate Spaniards were well versed in the practice of reading appearances.

As an extension of one's body, clothing, it was believed, provided an additional measure of a person's inner self. Honoré de Balzac, who, in his *Traité de la vie élégante*, conflated fashion and physiognomy, what he dubbed "clothingonomy," argued that clothes make hieroglyphic men of us all (Balzac 67). Spanish writers agreed. "La vestidura," observes Benito Pérez Galdós in a speech to the Real Academia Española, "diseña los útimos trazos externos de la personalidad" (*Ensayos,* 176). María del Pilar Sinués de Marco, a prolific writer of conduct literature, echoes Galdós and Balzac in "El arte de vestir": "El traje, la elección de éste y de los accesorios que le completan, no es otra cosa que la profesión de fe de nuestros gustos, de nuestros sentimientos y de tendencias particulares" (qtd. in Díaz Marcos 168). Kasabal, another frequent contributor of fashion-themed articles, also notes that, "no es esto de la indumentaria cosa tan insignificante como a primera vista parece; pues el traje da idea de los gustos, de la cultura y de la educación del que lo lleva" ("El traje"). Similarly, in an 1891 article published in Madrid's *La Edad Dichosa*, the author describes the symbolic value of clothing: "[la vestidura] expresa al mismo tiempo el carácter y aficiones de su poseedor" (Pino 474).

It is no mere accident that this interest in clothing's communicative capacity and the persisting faith in physiognomic typing coincided with the rise of the middle class. As the financial and political power of the day gradually shifted from the nobility to the bourgeoisie, previously rigid class boundaries became permeable to those with means. Consequently, the perception that clothing had the capacity to construct identity intensified. "In the society of the spectacle the gaze of the Other is all-important," explains Stephanie Sieburth in her study of mass culture in modern Spain (37). "Since wealth now counts as much as title," she continues, "and since wealth is a recent phenomenon, even for many of the upper bourgeoisie, the sense of having no identity other than one's representation in public is acute" (37). This preoccupation with one's public persona only served to strengthen people's faith in the communicative role of clothes.

Authors were well aware that clothing possesses the dual capacity to both represent and misrepresent. On the one hand clothing promises the possibility of recognition, of distinguishing individuals in a sea of unfamiliar faces. On the other hand, clothing's ability to mislead appealed to those who, dissatisfied with their current social situation, would attempt to transgress social boundaries by appearing to be something that they are not. By purchasing and displaying the trappings of luxury, social aspirants tried laying claim to an elevated status through their appearance alone. It was a trend that did not go unnoticed by authors, who took aim at those attempting to hide their poverty behind fine fabrics. In *La desheredada*, Benito Pérez Galdós includes a description of social pretenders who parade down the Paseo de la Castellana and vie for each other's attention:

> Como cada cual tiene ganas rabiosas de alcanzar una posición superior, principia por aparentarla. Las improvisaciones estimulan el apetito. Lo que no se tiene se pide, y no hay un solo número uno que no quiere elevarse a la categoría de dos. El dos se quiere hacer pasar por tres; el tres hace creer que es cuatro; el cuatro dice: "Si yo soy cinco," y así sucesivamente. (137)[7]

Sartorial expression was reduced to a game of copycat, and, as authors like Larra, Galdós, Mesonero Romanos, and Pardo Bazán lamented, distinguishing one class from another grew increasingly difficult (Bernís 457; Díaz Marcos 158-67).

These misgivings in no way lessened the emphasis placed on clothing as social signifier. This may be due to the fact that the role of dress in signaling social boundaries has a long, even systematized history in Spain (Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño; Sempere y Guarinos). Sumptuary laws were used to consolidate and reinforce the formalized hierarchy of class and status in medieval Spain by "producing an effect of order while coping with constant changes in fashion" (Martínez Bermejo 97). By regulating consumption, social rank was made instantly recognizable—one only needed to glance at a person's attire to know his or her position. Strict rules on the types of threads, the location of stitches, the colors of fabrics, or the type of jewelry one wore all helped individuals "recognize," "identify," and "know" others who inhabited the crowded "world of strangers" that was the modern European city (Mather 71).

In Spain the sumptuary laws underwent a process of gradual relaxation after 1600, with the last recorded sumptuary legislation coming late in the eighteenth century (Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño 278; Hunt 33). Despite the fact that sumptuary laws were increasingly unenforceable as the urban environment became more crowded and social divisions more pervious, the principles behind sumptuary laws (that is, a desire for appearance-based categorization) prevailed well into the nineteenth century.

Between the conspicuous consumption of the newly formed bourgeoisie and the widespread fascination with physiognomy, the importance placed on appearances was greater than ever before. In this atmosphere of seeing and being seen we might expect that clothing would become more stylized, more ornate, and that trends would change more rapidly as individuals tried to outdo their fellow social climbers. Our assumption would be only half right. There did exist an undeniable obsession with fashion, but it was notably one-sided.

The fashion discourse of the nineteenth century reveals a clear division along gender lines. Fashion magazines and newspapers were plentiful, but all were for women.[8] Occasionally some advice for men would appear in conduct manuals, although readers would have to look carefully as it was usually only a sentence or two tucked away within a more extensive section on women's sartorial etiquette. The prevailing sentiment was that fashion was a purely feminine interest. Where fine fabrics once separated aristocrats from commoners, they now divided women from men.

This was not necessarily the case in the previous century under Bourbon rule. During much of the eighteenth century women's and men's styles ran on parallel tracks, differing in degrees, perhaps, but not in essence. The justaucorps, a long, knee-length men's coat imported from France, was stylistically analogous to a woman's dress. Similarly, women's dresses and men's *casacas* were cut from the same colorful, silk fabrics. Only after the turn of the century do men's and women's fashions begin to diverge dramatically. The female form expands while the male form contracts. Women's dresses maintain or enhance their vibrancy while men's suits lose their color until they are mostly shades of gray and black. Whereas women's fashion becomes more prominent over time, fashion for men becomes invisible.

The portraiture of the period exemplifies the degree to which men's and women's styles had diverged over the span of a century.[9] Jean Ranc's companion portraits of Felipe V (1723) and his wife, Isabel de Farnesio (1723) represent a pair with more in common than their rank. Felipe's blue justaucorps has a fitted bodice and flared skirt that is not so dissimilar to Isabel's red dress. His armor, a dark breastplate, is barely visible beneath a voluminous red sash around his waist and a second, blue sash across his chest. A similarly colored blue ribbon holds back her hair. Both garments are accented with gold embroidery and white lace. Their powdered wigs add to the similitude.

French styles continued to dominate Spanish society, particularly the aristocracy, up to the end of the century. Even as late as 1800, in Goya's paintings of the royal family, there remains a noticeable likeness in both the colors and materials used to craft men's and women's garments, although we begin to see a departure from previous styles as the three-piece suit, with its shorter frock coat, replaces the dress-like justaucorps.

Two portraits by Raimundo de Madrazo y Garreta, of siblings Manuela and Ramón de Errazu (1875; 1879), show a very different picture of gender-specific dress taking shape in the second half of the nineteenth century. Manuela de Errazu is shown in a full-bodied gown consisting of a silk navy-blue bodice, which extends over a large bustle, trimmed with white lace and a bold pink skirt. Several rows of ruffles and a voluminous train testify of the many, many yards of fabric that went into the construction of such a sumptuous garment. Her brother Ramón cuts a more modest figure. His ensemble lacks the volume and vivid colors worn by Manuela. A white shirt, vest, and tie are mostly covered by a black frock coat. Gray pants and black shoes complete his wardrobe. Whereas Manuela's luxurious look reveals an elevated social standing, the understated restraint of Ramón's clothing exposes nothing.

Even before the composition of the Errazu portraits Spanish men had abandoned the refined French styles of the of the previous century for more modest garb:

> Al comenzar el siglo se había producido una verdadera revolución en el traje de hombre... A Inglaterra se le debe la idea del traje confortable y práctico, la sustitución de las bordadas casacas de seda y terciopelo por prendas de paño más austeras. (Bernis 458)

As men turned their eyes from Paris to London in search of sartorial inspiration, styles changed to reflect a more severe aesthetic. The first changes were in the cut and fabric. Gone were the powdered wigs, silk breeches, and stockings. In their place men adopted full-length, wool trousers and dark jackets, typically a *frac* or *levita*, which were worn over a dark vest and a white shirt. The *chistera* or *sombrero de copa* was the hat of choice for most men. As the decades passed only minor changes occured. The silhouette relaxed as pants and jackets were worn more loosely. The *americana* was introduced and the *capa* gave way to the *gabán*. Yet the most notable change was as dramatic as it was universal: the variety of colors diminished until the male wardrobe took on the colors of the city: gray,

dark-brown, and black. In a satirical piece by Galdós, the author complains that, "[los hombres] hemos proscrito el color, adoptando el negro o los antipáticos tonos de cenizas y los grises y asfaltos más feos que es posible imaginar" ("El elegante" 233). Clearly not a fan of this achromatic style, Galdós notes that men seem too preocupied with feigning "una seriedad estúpida," leaving it up to women to utilize a youthful and vibrant pallete in their dress (233).

Galdós's disapproval is not the norm. Most social commentaries describe the dark suit as the most appropriate option for men. In Mariano de Rementería y Fica's highly popular *Nuevo manual de urbanidad, cortesanía, decoro y etiqueta, o el hombre fino*, the author urges men to "escoger colores obscuros y seguir la moda de lejos... y no tener otro fin que el aseo y la comodidad" (31). Unlike his advice that men should dress for comfort, Rementería y Fica states that women's clothing "está más destinado a adornar que a vestir" (27). His counsel is both uninspiring and familiar. In an article from the paper *Nuevo Mundo*, titled "La elegancia masculina," the author Kasabal offers similar advice:

> [E]s condición indispensable [de la indumentaria masculina] la sencillez, el alejamiento de todo lo que sea chillón y llamativo... La elegancia masculina se ha de distinguir siempre por un sello de severidad, por el predominio de aquello que parece de menos ostentación. (4)

The message conveyed by these experts of socially appropriate behavior could not be clearer. Women should be seen while men should remain unnoticed. Each of these texts reveals the same dismissive attitude toward the topic of men's fashion, insisting that such concerns are fine for women but unbecoming of men.

Blanca Valmont, a popular fashion writer for *La Última Moda*, echoes the words of both Kasabal and Rementería y Fica when she states that a man's wardrobe should be distinguished by a "sobria senscillez," and that, "Todo hombre serio debe huir de dar golpe, como vulgarmente se dice, por su manera de vestir" (2). She warns men not to imitate the "afeminado gomoso," who, thanks to his slavish adherence to fashion trends, "es el hazme reir de los hombres y no hay mujer que le tome en serio" (2). Likely influenced by the concept of essential differences, which justified gender roles as being a product of biology, Valmont depicts as natural the contrasting place of *la moda* in the lives of men and women:

> Con los incesantes cambios del traje femenino contrastan las lentas y poco importantes variaciones de la indumentaria del sexo fuerte. Pero no se entienda que esto significa una protesta contra nuestra inconstancia, o un ejemplo que pretenden darnos los caballeros. Significa en todo caso que los admiradores de las elegancias femeniles renuncian a competir con ellas y tratan como así debe ser de adquirir notoriedad por otras cualidades. (2)

Valmont highlights the reluctance of men to compete for the gaze, preferring instead to renounce fashion and define themselves in other ways. This concept will form the basis of the most influential explanation to date of the popularity of the black suit, Flügel's theory of masculine renunciation, which is described below.

This apparent renunciation of fashion by men is unexpected if one considers the primacy of appearance in determining social status. Being readily available and easily interpreted, clothing was arguably the most common currency used to establish social distinction in the nineteenth century. With the considerable wealth of the middle class and the end of sumptuary laws in Spain, the sartorial possibilities for men were seemingly limitless, and yet when viewed from within the gender discourse of the period it becomes obvious that indulging in anything but a dark

suit would have been viewed as unmanly. How, then, should we interpret the fact that men were shunning fashion despite the important role played by clothing in establishing rank in a society where everyone was jostling for position?

One of the more persuasive explanations emerged from the field of psychoanalysis. In "The Great Masculine Renunciation and Its Causes," J. C. Flügel rejects the notion that the seemingly sudden transformation from the brilliant styles of the French court to the somber style of English bankers was strictly a political declaration—that is, a consequence of the social upheaval of the French Revolution—insisting that the democratization of men's fashion was psychosexual in nature. Men, he claims, do not want to be the object of anyone else's erotic look. By rejecting showy styles in favor of nondescript black, they can avoid being objects of desire. Instead, women are expected to bear this role with their fine gowns and accessories. Flügel's argument is not without its flaws. He relies on stereotypes and a number of misconceptions about the natures of men and women that typified the gender discourse of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He suggests that men play a greater role in social life than women, and he takes for granted the validity of the public/private divide (106). He asserts that women are inherently more narcissistic than men (107), and he maintains that men have a "sterner and more rigid conscience" than women, whose sentimental character quickly gives rise to envy and spite when they encounter other women who are dressed more elegantly (105). Flügel clearly subscribed to the concept of essential differences that shaped the gender norms of the nineteenth century.[10]

While such bias cannot be overlooked, Flügel's basic thesis, that men attempt to deflect the gaze through inconspicuous styles, is worth considering. Such a view is in line with the position of many gender theorists who argue that the gaze and male privilege are interconnected. According to Luce Irigaray,

"investment in the look is not as privileged in women as it is in men" (50). This gendering of the gaze, she explains, is due to the intertwining of knowledge, power, and looking: "More than any other sense, the eye objectifies and it masters" (50). If the gazing subject occupies a (masculine) position of power while the object of the gaze is situated in an inferior (feminine) position, then for a man to be caught in the Other's gaze would be tantamount to emasculation. By donning a nondescript black suit men attempt to escape the gaze by saying, "Don't see me! I efface myself" (Harvey, *Men in Black,* 13).

Men could still achieve status through dress, but they had to do so vicariously, by buying beautiful gowns for their wives. Thorstein Veblen suggests that a woman's appearance came to symbolize the economic condition of the entire household (118-31). The reasoning is that the more extravagant and impractical the woman's dress, the further removed from the world of labor she is. In other words, as a family becomes more deeply imbedded in the leisure class, they (especially the women) have less use for functional clothing. A man's reputation was therefore tied to the clothing his wife wore, rather than his own. In *La de Bringas*, arguably Galdós's most fashion-conscious novel, Rosalía seems to be alluding to her role as symbol of the family's pecuniary standing, as well as the honor of her husband, Francisco, when she explains why she likes to dress well: "Si se tratara de mí sola, me importaría poco. Pero es por él, por él... para que no digan que me visto de tarasca" (173). Her explanation that Francisco's reputation depended on her appearance rather than his own is in keeping with the gendering of fashion that occurred in nineteenth-century Spanish society.

The positioning of hegemonic masculinity in relation to subordinate models, as described by Connell (37-38), is clearly visible in Spain's fashion discourse. The man who shunned fashion in order to avoid the gaze did indeed have a model against which to base his wardrobe and his behavior. In the

seventeenth century they were called *lindos*. In the eighteenth, *petimetres* or *currutacos*. In the nineteenth century, men who displayed an exaggerated interest in clothing were known as *gomosos* or *elegantes*.

The *elegante* paid little heed to the conduct manuals that called for renunciation of flashy styles and instead enjoyed attracting the gaze of others. Unlike the everyman in his nondescript attire, the *elegante* embraced color, form-fitting garments, and sartorial innovation. From the October 14, 1883 edition of *Madrid Cómico* we find the following description of the *elegante*:

> Y más que vanagloria, hay quien convierte en carrera civil el arte de vestirse. Ustedes verán por esos teatros y por esos cafés sujetos planchados, almidonados, estirados, de quienes no se sabe otra virtud que la de llevar bien el traje.
> —¿Qué es ése?
> —Nada.
> —¿Trabaja?
> —No.
> —¿Es artista, escritor, propietario?...
> —Ni empleado siquiera.
> —Pues ¿qué hace?
> —Mire V.: por las mañanas se viste, por las noches se desnuda, y al día siguiente hace la misma operación. (Matoses, "Los elegantes," 3)

The *elegante*'s refusal to conform to the hegemonic model of inconspicuous masculinity resulted in similar derision from *costumbrista* authors who questioned his manliness. In the immensely popular *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*, Ramón de Navarrete paints a humorous picture of the *elegante*, showing him to be more vain than virile:

> Yo tengo para mí que el Elegante desciende por línea recta, de aquel Narciso famoso que cuentan se pasaba las horas muertas contemplándose en la límpida corriente de los ríos... Lo primero que hace el *hombre de buen tono*, (que también por esta castiza metáfora se le conoce), en cuanto

amanece para él, que no ha de ser antes de las doce del día, es pedir un espejo. (398)

Like the previous citation by Matoses, Navarrete highlights some of the unflattering, indeed unmasculine, qualities of the *elegante*. That he sleeps until noon shows him to be an unproductive member of society, certainly not in keeping with middle-class ideals of ingenuity and work ethic. As for the *elegante*'s self-absorption, we can contrast his narcissistic love of mirrors with a scene from Galdós's *Tormento*, in which Agustín Caballero alludes to the relationship between masculinity and grooming.[11] Caballero's introduction in the narrative occurs in the fifth chapter when, after finishing his morning ride on horseback, he visits the home of his cousins, Rosalía and Francisco Bringas. No sooner does he walk in the door than Rosalía attempts to straighten his tie: "¡Ay, qué desgarbado eres! Si te dejases gobernar, qué pronto serías otro" (39). Caballero, not a man to be "gobernado" by anyone, brushes aside her concern about his appearance, which he disparages as mere "melindres." He goes on to explain that he has gone fifteen years without bothering to look in a mirror (39). With candid approval, the narrator elaborates on Caballero's rejection of sartorial protocol as well as his disdain for social wannabes who are overly preoccupied with appearances:

> Caballero, con muy buen sentido, había comprendido que era peor afectar lo que no tenía que presentarse tal cual era a las vulgares apreciaciones de la afeminada sociedad en que vivía. (40)

Implied in these statements, particularly in his use of the adjective "afeminada," is the belief that fashion (and by extension anyone unduly concerned with being seen) falls outside of the proper domain of men. Fashionable or image-conscious men arouse suspicion because they appear to transgress the limits of "appropriate" male behavior.

It is no wonder that the satirical press gravitated toward the *elegante* for comic fodder. Satire is designed to attack vice or folly with wit and ridicule. It seeks to persuade an audience that something or someone is reprehensible or ridiculous. Similar to the aforementioned vignette from *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*, many of the cartoons by artist Francisco Ramón Cilla veiled anxiety beneath a veneer of humor. In one image a man and woman stare through a shop window. The word "MODA" is stenciled across the glass. The lady wears a full-length dress with a high neck and long sleeves. A hat with feathers completes the look. The man at her side wears a long, form-fitting coat (*levitón*) and top hat. The artist has composed the piece so that the silhouettes of the two figures mirror one another. The four verses at the bottom of the page explain this symmetry: "Entre los sexos contrarios / se dan ya aproximaciones: / se aproximan en derechos, / en gustos y hasta en faldones" ("Aproximaciones," 122). The blurring of boundaries, in this case between male and female, is precisely what stimulated the physiognomic craze of the nineteenth century. Undecideability makes, to paraphrase Larra, every day of the year carnival with its topsy-turvy confusion of categories. In a society that preached the doctrine of essential differences, gender ambiguity was an affront to the established order.

Another cartoon by Cilla in *Madrid Cómico* contains a similar message about the dubious gender of the *elegante*, although it is left up to the reader to draw his or her own conclusion. At the top of the page is the title, "EL SEXO ¿FUERTE?" The title's punctuation immediately casts doubt on the gender identity of the *elegante* depicted below. He stands at the window of a tailor shop, leaning forward to get a better view of the items on display. His thoughts, revealed below the image, help the viewer answer the question posed by the title: "¡Caramba! el caso es que necesito una docena de corbatas y no sé qué modelos elegir... ¡Ay, Jesús! nos mandan unas cosas de París este año..." ("El sexo ¿fuerte?," 365). His excitement

over something as trivial as ties is meant to be laughable, and the viewer would have an easy time concluding that the *elegante* could not possibly belong to *el sexo fuerte*. In the nineteenth century fashion was synonymous with feminine, and the man who failed to realize this was not considered much of a man at all.

Even though a fear of gender ambiguity was a cultural reality during the period in question, wearing black was more than just a reaction to the feminization of fashion. The appeal of the black suit also had possible political underpinnings. The styles of the previous century were Paris imports, symbolic of the *afrancesamiento* ushered in by the Bourbon regime, and were often associated with effeminacy. The Paris correspondent for *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, Jacinto Octavio Picón, in his coverage of the Parisian art scene in 1880, condemned "la ignorancia del público francés, que toma por elegante lo afeminado y confunde lo bonito con lo bello" (389). Picón does not refer to fashion specifically but, rather, a general "mal gusto" of the French. Gabriel Araceli, the narrator and protagonist of Galdós's popular *Episodios nacionales*, expresses a similar opinion about French taste. In *Trafalgar*, Araceli describes the effeminate appearance of the *afrancesados* as contrary to what normal Spaniards wear: "Como yo observaba todo, me fijé en la extraña figura de aquellos hombres, en sus afeminados gestos y sobre todo en sus trajes, que me parecieron extravagantísimos" (142). Here the gendering of fashion has the added nuance of a national bias. Araceli realizes that unlike most of his friends and aquantainces, individuals who "vestían a la española," these *afrancesados*, whom he refers to as "afeminados," draw on Paris for their sartorial inspiration (142). Could the privileging of London styles in nineteenth-century Spain be less about celebrating British culture and more about rejecting French culture? There is certainly a hint of anti-French sentiment, even subtle nationalism, in the adoption of the black suit.

Given the rise of liberalism that accompanied the establishment of the bourgeoisie in Spain, we could also interpret the

homogeneity of men's dress as a sociopolitical declaration of liberal ideals (Pena González, *El traje,* 30). However we should not be too quick to accept the declaration of universal equality made by the liberal segment of the newly empowered bourgeoisie. As historian Jesús Cruz has shown, the persistence of "old society" continued throughout the century via the monopolization of political, economic, and social power by a ruling elite who used kinship, friendship, and patronage to maintain its control (172). Publicly the ascendant middle class argued for reform, revolution, and equality, but privately the ideals of the old regime continued to hold sway (171-77). Like a new round of musical chairs, the rules of the game did not change, it was simply that a new player had ascended the throne.

This dynamic hints at an alternative interpretation of the bourgeois black. In Spain black clothing has always been the color of power, authority, and legitimacy, and for this reason the popularity of the black suit in Spain should be viewed through a different lens than in other nations. Unlike the United States or even England, Spain's tradition of black clothing is much longer and can be seen as fortifying divisions rather than breaking them down. In his study of black clothing, John Harvey observes that, "it was Spain, more than any other nation, which was to be responsible for the major propagation of solemn black both throughout Europe, and in the New World" (*Men in Black,* 72). When Carlos V became the first person to rule united Spain in his own right in 1516, he brought not only his titles from the houses of Hapsburg and Burgundy, but the black style worn in the court of Burgundy as well. Titian's iconic portrait (1548) depicts Carlos V resting in a chair and dressed head to toe in black, with the exception of a white collar and a gold pendent that hangs from his neck.[12]

As Holy Roman Emperor, Carlos V's influence cannot be exaggerated, although it was his son, Felipe II, who codified black clothing as the uniform of the Spanish monarchy. Felipe II ruled for more than 40 years,

and one would be hard-pressed to find a portrait of him wearing anything other than black. These rulers produced an empowerment of black:

> En el ámbito de la Monarquía Hispánica, el negro pasó a convertirse en signo de autoridad y poder, no solo propio del rey, sino de toda la corte y en general de la administración de los territorios de la Corona. (Colomer)

When the ascendant middle class is looking to strengthen its foothold, to really legitimize itself as the dominant class, there is no better way to look the part. By donning the black of their most popular monarchs, Spain's new social elite symbolically laid claim to the crown.

The echos in Federico de Madrazo's stark portrait of politician Segismundo Moret (1855) are hard to ignore. Moret's appearance invokes Carlos V's wardrobe, but it is also typical of Spanish men during the period in question and embodies the hegemonic model of masculinity popularized by the middle class. He stands erect, turned ever so slightly, with his left arm on his hip. His trimmed brown hair is brushed back and his dense beard and mustache are also neatly groomed. As for his clothing, he is dressed entirely in black, the default uniform of the nineteenth-century gentleman. The blackness of his attire is so complete that the only hints of color are the gold chain of a pocket watch and the slightest bit of a white collar that peeks out above his coat and tie. Serene confidence marks his visage. He has the look of a man in control. Moret's appearance does not reject the attention of others but commands it. And unlike the depictions of the *elegante*, which produce scorn and laughter, Moret seems to demand respect. The black suit, as represented in Madrazo's portrait, is thus transformed from a hideaway cloak to a declaration of sovereignty.

In Spain, black's association with the Catholic Church enhanced its symbolic importance. After all, when we think of the Church we think of men in black. This may

be part of the very reason that Carlos V and Felipe II wore black. Men in black were the ultimate moral authority. In a strict Christian state, wearing black was good politics on the part of the king. Black's symbolic connection with the court is ostentatious, yet its connection with the priesthood almost makes a show of renouncing ostentation. Therein lies the brilliant paradox of black. It is polysemic, and you can be grand without offense—an attractive quality for a social group on the rise. In a deft maneuver the man in black ostensibly sidesteps the social staircase by taking his stand on a moral stair instead.

In summary, developments in the visual culture, especially the link between spectatorship and social mobility, resulted in gender identities that were increasingly dependent on matters of style, self-presentation, and consumption. Yet at the same time, the reformulation of gender roles based on essential differences contributed to a feminization of fashion. These multiple forms of constraint, to put it in Foucauldian terminology, meant that the respectable gentleman, upon throwing his closet doors wide each morning, had only one viable option. The black suit was the garment of choice for those who sought to emulate the hegemonic model. Wearing anything else might raise questions about one's masculinity. Notwithstanding the apparent simplicity of the black suit, it was a complex signifier. It was conspicuous in its inconspicuousness. It manifested apprehension and ambition at the same time. On the one hand, the middle-class man in black seems to say, "Don't look at me. I don't want to be the object of your gaze." On the other hand he is saying, "Look at me, I'm calling the shots now."

Just as we find in most discursive fields, the discourse on fashion is characterized by contradiction. The feminine ideal known as the *ángel del hogar* relegated women to the private sphere, yet the discourse on fashion designated them as symbols of family status, thereby requiring their presence in public. Hegemonic masculinity also presented ideals that were seemingly incompatible. Marriage,

faith, and civility were celebrated on the one hand, yet many of the paragons of masculinity—the frontiersman, the *Don Juan*, the soldier—rejected the limits imposed by those value-systems. The question that the middle-class man is struggling with in nineteenth-century Spain is: how do you control the social order and yet remain untouched by it? It is a question that scholars have yet to explore.

Historian Keith Thomas once noted that, "those who study the past usually find themselves arriving at two contradictory conclusions. The first is that the past was very different from the present. The second is that it was very much the same" (10). This certainly seems to be true of the current state of men's dress in Spain. No longer does men's fashion carry many of the negative connotations that it once did. Advertising campaigns target men of all walks of life, and depict men dressing in a broad spectrum of colors and styles. More importantly, a desire to dress well does not produce the same degree of scorn that it would have just over a century ago. And yet for all the changes, much remains the same when it comes to sartorial protocol. A cursory glance at any red-carpet event, wedding, or executive board meeting will tell you that for important events the black suit is still the most popular option for men. Colorful shirts and trousers may be appropriate for the park or the bar, but only a dark suit has the necessary gravitas when all eyes are on you. It would seem that black is not back in style, it actually never left.

Notes

[1]My use of the term *fashion* encompasses, but is not limited to, definitions found in previous studies of dress in which *fashion* refers to the collective acceptance by consumers of new styles (Kawamura; Reilly and Cosbey xv; Sproles), a style popular at a certain time (Horn and Gurel; Kefgen and Touchie-Specht), and a specific code of dress (Entwistle 47-49).

[2]For additional reading on the communicative role of fashion see Barnard; Damhorst; Díaz Marcos (47-50); Harvey (*Clothes*, chapter 3); Hollander (24-29); Lurie; Stone; Svendsen (especially chapter 4).

[3]Aldaraca; Anderson; Bacon (22-53); K. Davis; Díaz Marcos; Jagoe; Labanyi; Sinclair, "Luxurious Borders."

[4]In fact, Spanish masculinity in general has been largely overlooked until very recently, most likely because the masculine pole of the sex-gender system is assumed to be an unproblematic default position against which femininity is measured. The limitation with such a view is that it not only glosses over a potentially rich area of scholarship, but in doing so it does a disservice to social critics, religious leaders, doctors, and literary authors whose discussions and portrayals of masculinity are anything but unproblematic. Fortunately, the subject now seems to be gaining purchase, especially in the arena of literary studies, as evinced by a small but growing body of scholarship. See, for instance, recent scholarship by Copeland; Erwin; Harpring; Iarocci; McKinney (95-108, 136-57); and Tsuchiya (112-35).

[5]In his extensive overview of clothing trends in Romantic Spain, Pena González notes that, "Desde el Romanticismo la moda será cosa de mujeres" (*El traje* 28), an attitude that is reflected in the composition of his book. He dedicates approximately eighty pages to women's styles (two chapters), but only sixteen pages (one chapter) to men's. He briefly mentions the prominence of the black suit, however his commentary is limited to a summary of Flügel's thesis (29-31). Through no fault of his own, Pena González's study is also hampered by a lack of authentic source material. Nearly all of the fashion plates that appear in the section on men's fashion come from French publications. Although this is due to the fact that there are no journals published in Spain on the topic of men's fashion, it gives a false impression of male fashion trends, which by this time were imitating English styles more than French.

[6]Ortiz; Pena González "Dandismo"; Reyero 253-57.

[7]The type of social emulation described by Galdós finds a more extensive articulation in Thorstein Veblen's classic study of modern affluence, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, published in 1899. In his analysis of "conspicuous consumption" Veblen observes how social pretenders emulate the behavior and fashion trends of the social tier directly above them:

> In modern civilized communities the lines of demarcation between social classes have grown vague and transient, and wherever this happens the norm of reputability imposed by the upper class extends its coercive influence with but slight hindrance down through the social structure to the lowest strata. The result is that the members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal. (70)

Veblen's insistence on the primacy of appearance, as well as his frequent use of the adjective "conspicuous" to describe the pecuniary habits of members of the leisure class (and those hoping to join its ranks) highlights the visual dimension of social mobility and the role of clothing in initiating that process of ascendency. See also Georg Simmel (chapter 5) and Herbert Spencer for a discussion of sartorial imitation and its social underpinnings.

[8]All journals about fashion listed in Alison Sinclair's computerized handbook of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Madrid periodicals (up to 1870) appear under the rubric of "Women's Papers" (*Madrid Newspapers*, 438-39).

[9]The few examples of conserved garments in the collection of the Museo del Traje in Madrid are similarly useful in observing the evolution of fashion between the eighteenth and nineteenth century. It should be remembered, however, that in both instances these examples reflect the clothing of the upper classes. Given this study's focus on gender ideals created by the dominant classes, this is entirely appropriate.

[10]Flügel's comments recall the words of celebrated Spanish physician Pedro Felipe Monlau, who in 1853 famously described the anatomical and psychological differences between men and women: "La mujer está dotada de una sensibilidad mayor; sus sentidos son más delicados y finos. Predominan en la mujer las facultades afectivas, así como en el hombre las intelectuales" (112). This notion, that differences between men and women were the result of fixed, biological realities, was used to explain everything from the concept of separate spheres to the feminization of religion.

[11]It should be noted that, of all the male characters in this novel or its sequel, *La de Bringas*, Caballero represents the most positive model of masculinity (McKinney 95-108).

[12]As an example of the influence wielded by the Spanish monarchy throughout Europe, Barzini, author of *The Europeans*, relates how a visit from Carlos V in 1530 ushered in a new phase of Italian fashion:

That year Charles V came to Bologna
to be crowned both king of Italy and
Roman emperor by the Pope and to
pose for a portrait by Titian. He and
his retinue paraded on horseback
through the city streets. The gay Ital-
ians, dressed in silks of all colors, bro-
cades, velvets, and damasks, cheered
their guests and tossed flowers from
balconies hung with multicolored
cloths and tapestries. All the unsmil-
ing Spanish dignitaries, as pale as El
Greco saints, wore black with white
ruffled collars. A few months later
the Italians, most of them, wore black
too, as if to show their sorrow for the
end of the Renaissance and the loss of
their liberties and joy of life. (36)

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