

# ROMANCE AND PSEUDOSCIENCE: FEMALE INDOCTRINATION IN HYGIENE MANUALS, 1850S - TURN OF THE CENTURY

## ROMANTICISMO Y PSEUDOCIENCIA: EL ADOCTRINAMIENTO DE LA MUJER EN MANUALES DE HIGIENE, 1850 - FIN DE SIGLO

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**Artículo recibido en abril de 2008 - Artículo aceptado en diciembre de 2009**

**Abstract.-** From mid nineteenth century onwards the publication of prescriptive literature for and about women increasingly rose in Spain until reaching its peak by the turn of the century: manuals, essays, treatises and textbooks for girls experienced an unprecedented boom. Hygiene manuals in particular intended to convince women of the need to be guided by male doctors and, while prescribing hygienic practices to improve women's health and that of their families, manuals also prescribed social roles such as that of wife and mother. Thus, the female body and the ways to keep it healthy became a way of preserving Spain's status quo and traditional male authority. The most convincing technique to reinforce that authority was the use of a scientific halo conveyed by medical discourse, with which the authors empowered themselves and their works. However, scientific discourse in hygiene manuals was full of fissures: science was curiously mixed with the popular and the romantic, the literary and ancient beliefs about the female body and mind more in accordance with superstition than scientific objectivity.

**Resumen.-** Desde mediados del siglo diecinueve en adelante la publicación de literatura prescriptiva sobre la mujer y para la mujer aumentó increíblemente en España, alcanzando el máximo número de publicaciones a finales de siglo: la escritura de manuales, ensayos, tratados y libros de texto para niñas vivió un auge sin precedentes. Los manuales de higiene en particular tenían la misión de convencer a la mujer de la necesidad de ser guiada por el médico y, a pesar de prescribir prácticas que servían para mejorar la salud de la mujer y su familia, también prescribían roles sociales tradicionales como el de madre y esposa. De esta forma el cuerpo de la mujer y los métodos para mantenerlo saludable se convirtieron en estrategias para preservar el status quo español y la autoridad masculina. La técnica más convincente para reforzar dicha autoridad fue el uso del discurso médico, que rodeaba con un halo científico a los autores de estos manuales y sus obras, dándoles legitimidad. Sin embargo, el discurso científico en estos manuales de higiene curiosamente estaba lleno de fisuras: se mezclaba la ciencia con el romanticismo y lo popular, lo literario y creencias milenarias referentes al cuerpo y la mente de la mujer que eran más acordes con la superstición que con la objetividad científica.

**Key words.-** Hygiene manuals; Female indoctrination; Medical discourse; Hybrid discourses; Pseudoscience.

**Palabras clave.-** Manuales de higiene; Adoctrinamiento de la mujer; Discurso médico; Discursos híbridos; Pseudociencia.

## 1.- Romance and pseudoscience: Female indoctrination in hygiene manuals, 1850s - Turn of the century

In Spain the second half of the nineteenth century was incredibly fruitful regarding prescriptive literature for and about women: manuals, essays and textbooks for girls proliferated, with topics ranging from hygiene, beauty and cosmetics to home economics and manners. These works offered a solution for what these manual authors considered the “woman's question,” or the appropriate behavior and education for females of the Spanish bourgeoisie in a time in which economic and cultural changes in Spain were opening up new possibilities for these women outside of the domestic sphere. Similarly to the rest of Europe, at this time old divisions previously perceived as immovable such as men and women's place in society, or the natural superiority of the aristocracy over the rest of classes, were being blurred in Spain by new economic necessities and opportunities of going up in the social scale. The economic and cultural shift of values from blood and lineage to capital and property made this possible.

The *hygiene movement* and the physical, moral and economic temperance it prescribed appeared as balancing elements which tried to reestablish those rapidly falling barriers and bring back some of the peace and order of the old times<sup>30</sup>. Ironically, modern printing techniques, new ways of distribution of print materials and the apparition of popular and mass literature, contributed to the widespread of this new “science.” The hygiene manual, the domestic novel and the newspaper, more easily and cheaply produced, provided quick and cheap access to this type of information in an understandable manner, thus becoming the preferred vessels to convey the ideology of moderation<sup>31</sup>.

Women played an essential role in the hygiene movement's agenda, for its goal was to transform bourgeois females into an anchoring element which would transmit healthy and morally appropriate customs to the rest of society through their families and children, future citizens. Critics such as Michel Foucault consider hygiene and the care of the bourgeois body as a type of “racism,” or segregating the bourgeois body from noxious influences to ensure its hegemony over the rest of classes: from the point of view of hygienists, the immoral aristocracy, which craved

<sup>30</sup> The definition of *hygiene* according to manuals of this period was the “art of preserving people's health” (Monlau, 1862: 2), or “achieving men and women to be healthy, strong and well formed beings” (Pérez Mandado: 18).

<sup>31</sup> See ANDREU, Alicia Gacriela (1982) *Galdós y la literatura popular*. Madrid: Sociedad General Española de Librería S.A. and CHARNON- DEUTSCH, Lou. (2000) *Fictions of the feminine in the nineteenth-century Spanish press*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

for leisure and luxury, and the physically and morally debased working class. Thus, the “cultivation” of bourgeois bodies with the help of hygiene manuals, which gave tips on how to enhance longevity and obtain good descendants, was a strategy to ensure the political and economical predominance of the bourgeoisie (Foucault, 1980: 125). For Spanish hygienists, bourgeois women were to be the keepers of this newly empowered class from the private sphere of the home. Hygienists advocated an *organicist* view of society as a body, being the family a smaller cell of the social body, the whole of society and the Spanish nation. As a consequence, hygiene manual authors frequently called the mother the “pillar of the family” and, thus, of society and Spain. Women became protectors of tradition and good mores; manual discourse constructed them into the representatives of an Edenic, more stable past embodied by the redemptive figure of the mother or the *angel of the home*, the model to which all bourgeois women should aspire (Felski: 37)<sup>32</sup>.

In Spain, the obsession with the care and cultivation of the female body had to do with the beginning of a process of cultural and economic openness after Ferdinand VII's repressive reign in early nineteenth century, during the Isabeline period in the 1850s and 1860s, when the market for Spanish popular press and conduct manuals started to steadily grow. By the 1880s and the turn of the century, the hygiene manual boomed together with foreign investment and consumerism as a way to counteract what male hygienist doctors perceived as modernization's physical and moral “backlashes” on the bourgeois female body. In relation to this, the hygienic supervision of the bourgeois female body became a way to preserve the physical and cultural health of the Spanish nation and its future generations, a discourse of degeneracy which was legitimized by colonial loss throughout the nineteenth century and events such as the “Desastre del 98.”

From the wide variety of manuals on and for bourgeois women available in the time period of my study (on manners and education, religious duties, cooking, sewing, fashion) I focus on hygiene manuals, the main reason being that, from mid nineteenth century onwards, Spanish doctors proclaimed themselves as the quintessential experts on female matters. Thus, hygienist doctors tried to exercise their “authority” as guides on bourgeois women at a moment in which in Western Europe foreign-influenced positivism was slowly gaining terrain to traditional

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<sup>32</sup> The perception of women as the recipients of ancient tradition was particularly apparent in the debate about female suffrage. Liberal governments throughout the nineteenth century did not grant Spanish women the vote due to the fear that they would use it to favor the reactionary sectors of the government. After a long and heated debate, universal suffrage was implemented by the Second Spanish Republic in 1931 (Scanlon: 274).

institution such as the Church. In many cases, however, due to political and cultural circumstances and state censorship, Spanish hygienists did not antagonize but allied themselves with priests in their mission to “guide” the bourgeois female population into the correct behavior.

Bias in the shape of mentions in support of the state and the praise of Catholicism and Spanish morality, together with ancient beliefs on women's physical and moral weakness and inferiority in relation to men, made of nineteenth century hygiene manuals pseudoscientific tools of indoctrination. A discursive coat of “scientific” neutrality and medical terminology were used at times for the purpose of legitimization, causing scientific and technological advances to overlap with tradition, popular belief and prejudice, all coexisting and adapting to more effectively supervise female conduct. As the saying goes, “knowledge is power.” Since the hygiene manual author's knowledge as a doctor, a “man of science,” was expressed through discourse, manual stylistics played an essential role in transmitting and exerting this power while trying to create an illusion of “scientific” impartiality and reliability and medical altruism.

The contents of most hygiene manuals for women were very similar: together with practical information about how to achieve health, there was a poetic prologue praising women, stating their importance in society and the need to be supervised by the father, the husband and the doctor. All in all, with a mixture of medical and scientific discourse and the poetic praise of traditional femaleness, the male hygienist's goal was to create the fiction of bourgeois women as destined to be angelic wives and mothers. Although in Victorian England and in France similar fictions were created and women were used to sustain national myths, Spain's situation as economically and culturally dependent on these countries during its process of modernization, its quasi-colonial situation towards them, made specially apparent and bizarre the hybridization and the clash between the foreign and the national, the traditional and the modern<sup>33</sup>. In this paper, I will discuss the discursive strategies used to indoctrinate the female reader into a desired model, together with the fissures which exposed the authors' bias and lack of scientific objectivity such as the use of lyricism, literary rhetoric and the praise of popular Spanish traditions and domestic gender roles in contrast to foreign custom. I consider these strategies both a defense mechanism to avoid cultural colonization, but also a way to exploit this fear for the hygienist's personal and economic profit, a marker of status for doctors.

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<sup>33</sup> On the history of conduct literature and hygiene in France and England respectively, see STEWART, Mary Lynn. (2001) *For health and beauty. Physical culture for Frenchwomen, 1880s. 1930s.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP. and AMSTRONG, Nancy. TENNENHOUSE, Leonard. Eds. (1987) *The ideology of conduct. Essays on literature and the history of sexuality.* New York, London: Methuen.

The enhanced social value of science, medicine and rationality, which empowered hygienists and their works, dated back to the late eighteenth century, when the frequency of epidemics elevated the status and mission of doctors to that of “protectors” of the nation, guardians of health and morals (Foucault, 1994: 25,42) and “masters of truth” (Foucault, 1980: 70). This favored the institutionalization of medicine and created a public perception of the doctor as a figure of unselfish heroism, which empowered the male experts to the detriment of popular knowledge on health and beauty. Such was the case of female healers and midwives.

References to hygiene as a modern, revolutionary science and the hygienist doctor as humanity's savior, together with the display of the latest discoveries by foreign medical authorities, became instruments to legitimize the doctor's expertise against popular practice. Nevertheless, in Spain, specifically in the case of manuals for women, the “dry,” supposedly objective discourse of medicine, embodied by the description of anatomy, bodily functions and psychological traits, was intertwined with flowery rhetoric and moralistic preaching in order to obtain a docile female body and mind. The metaphorical style in Spanish hygiene manuals reflected their duality and hybridity: they were a mixture of modernity and tradition, science and popular knowledge, purported scientific objectivity and personal and cultural bias.

Hygiene was a movement coming from abroad, which created an inherent contradiction with the nationalist endeavor of Spanish hygienists, and became the source of Spanish hygiene's bizarre hybridization of the old and the new. The hygiene or *sanitary movement* consolidated in heavily industrialized countries such as and England, Germany and France in the early years of the nineteenth century, and was both a product of modernization and a way to fight what was perceived as its backlashes. Some examples were high mortality due to overcrowding of city quarters, the lack of adequate sanitary services, the contamination of food, air and water due to industrialization (Rodríguez Ocaña: 18). Besides hygiene's public function, hygiene applied to the home or *private hygiene* was especially addressed at women, and supposedly gave individuals who had not been physically favored by nature control on their health, strength or beauty, an opportunity to achieve them through “la limpieza, el ejercicio, la sobriedad, la continencia, y el preservarse de toda pasión, son los grandes elementos de conservar y robustecer la salud, y, consiguientemente, de perfeccionar y prolongar la vida” (Monlau, 1875: 547). Hygiene was devised to represent balance, progress and prosperity of women and their families, even the whole of humanity, in contrast to the inequalities, injustice and backwardness of the old medieval-inspired order. To symbolize this shift, in hygiene manuals plenty of light and ventilation were essential for the preservation of health. Darkness and

dust became symbols of the past which needed to be disposed of: draperies, carpets, baroque décor, anything that gathered too much dust, was to be avoided. Modern hygienic housing required high ceilings, meager decoration, plenty of windows for light to come in, and spacious rooms.

Cleanliness was the first and most important hygienic rule: frequent bathing, traditionally discouraged as dangerous for health and decency, had to be strongly enforced. Exercise and activities in the open were encouraged for all, even women who, in the case of the bourgeoisie, had traditionally been enclosed in the home. Certain limitations, however, applied to women, who were discouraged of practicing “masculinizing” sports or doing strenuous physical exertion. Physical activity which enhanced grace, pose and social skills such as walking, dancing, even singing and house work, were prescribed as proper exercise for women. Their femininity had to be preserved at all cost.

The contradictory nature of hygiene, both liberating and enslaving for women, arises with hygiene's allegory for the change from darkness to light: the power of the male human reason or rational maleness supervising and harnessing unruliness, excess and deviance, all considered female qualities; science and reason versus nature and instinct: “on the one side, the clear-headed, masculine spirit of science; on the other side, a dark morass of female superstition, old wives' tales, rumors preserved as fact” (Ehrenreich and English: 29). Hence, on the one hand, hygienists provided women with valuable and even life-saving information previously unavailable to them. On the other hand, they created a gap or “symbolic division,” using Pierre Bourdieu's words, between the male expert or “delegate” of a higher power (the specialist, the measured and authorized spokesperson belonging to a group of dominant individuals) and the supposedly “irrational” and “ignorant” female reader<sup>34</sup>.

The burst of cholera epidemics at the beginning of the nineteenth century popularized hygiene in Spain with the help of pioneering hygienist doctors such as Pedro Felipe Monlau y Roca (1808-1871) who publicly endorsed the institutionalization of medicine, fostered the consolidation of public health, and served as Health Minister in the first years of Isabel II's reign<sup>35</sup>. Dr. Monlau became one of the first advocates of the *hygiene*

<sup>34</sup> See BOURDIEU, Pierre. (1991) *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Harvard UP.

<sup>35</sup> Some of Monlau's most popular manuals were *Higiene del matrimonio o Libro de los casados* (*Hygiene of marriage or The book of spouses*, 1853); *Elementos de higiene privada o arte de conservar la salud del individuo* (*Elements of private hygiene or the art of preserving the health of the individual*, 1846) and *Elementos de higiene pública o arte de conservar la salud de los pueblos* (*Elements of public hygiene or the art of preserving people's health*, 1847), which were reedited several times until the beginning of the twentieth century.

*movement* in Spain when it was already well known in industrialized countries such as Germany, France and England<sup>36</sup>. Contradictorily, despite his openness and will for change in matters of health, in the case of women his hygiene manuals were amongst the most belligerent against a move from tradition. Quotes from the Bible, references to Napoleonic law, ancient Greek philosophy and medicine on female physical and mental weakness (embodied by Hippocratic texts), harshly ridiculing female aspirations in the public sphere, even popular refrains endorsing traditional femininity were used by Dr. Monlau to get his point across. Thanks to this attitude, the author gained the necessary state and ecclesiastic permits for the publication of his manuals<sup>37</sup>.

Dr. Monlau's self-censorship is an example of this bow to the Isabeline state's moral standards. Deeply concerned about the misuse of his works for erotic titillation, Monlau carefully monitored his language and tried to achieve the outmost "scientific" discursive neutrality when describing sexual organs, intercourse and sexually-related diseases and dysfunctions. His privileged position within the Isabeline establishment was at stake. Therefore, in the introduction to *Higiene del matrimonio* (1853) he took pains to assure the reader that his manual did not provide any illustrations or language which could be used for any other purpose than achieving a physically and morally hygienic lifestyle:

*"[Mi Higiene del matrimonio] no es una obrilla de esas que se han de leer en secreto, como quien comete una mala acción, no: mi libro es una verdadera HIGIENE DEL MATRIMONIO, es una obra seria, es una obra filosófica y médica, que se puede leer sin empacho ni escrúpulo de conciencia, porque se propone un fin moral, útil y saludable, fin para cuya consecución he empleado cuantos medios han podido sugerirme mis ardientes deseos del mayor acierto."* (Monlau, 1858: vii- viii)

After submitting his language and style to a strict self-censorship in favor of linguistic austerity when discussing sexual matters, consulting

<sup>36</sup> The origins of the implementation of public hygiene dated back to the mid eighteenth century German *medizinische polizei*, tied to absolutist monarchy in order to "secure and increment the power and riches of the absolutist State and its monarch [...] a system of surveillance to guarantee the well-being of the State" (Rodríguez Ocaña: 8). The first academic positions in hygiene were created in France, which was the first country in seriously institutionalizing the discipline and using statistics to explain socioeconomic phenomena of the population, such as mortality. England, due to industrial growth and the deterioration of urban living, adopted French methods (Rodríguez Ocaña: 12).

<sup>37</sup> *Higiene del matrimonio*, despite its pseudoscientific value from a present perspective, was used as a textbook in Madrid's School of Medicine in the 1850s. Subsequent editions were published until the end the nineteenth century, which perpetuated these ancient beliefs about the female body and mind, a tradition which served very well the cause against feminism with the coming of the twentieth century.

current legislation about print material and submitting his work to Isabeline ecclesiastic authorities, Monlau affirmed that he obtained the license and seal which legitimized this manual as having nothing “contra la religión, ni contra la sana moral” (viii). In contrast, Monlau harshly criticized foreign hygiene works as

*“obras que acerca del material, aunque con fines poco loables, se han publicado con sobrada libertad en el extranjero [...] libritos inmundos en cuyas groseras páginas y obscenas estampas va a buscar inspiraciones eróticas la inexperta juventud.”* (Monlau, 1858: viii)

Despite this alliance with Isabeline, Catholic cultural standards, for Dr. Monlau, as for his fellow hygienists, cleanliness was the first and most important hygienic rule, a practice which later hygienists from the 1880s confirmed as essential to preserve the health of the population thanks to Pasteur's “germ theory.” Frequent bathing, traditionally discouraged as dangerous for decency, had to be strongly enforced. However, in women's case cleanliness and simplicity in attire had to be a sign of humbleness and inner virtue, not a sign of vanity. In hygiene manuals, the use of fashion and cosmetics were portrayed as an indication of the woman's neglect of her motherly mission in order to self-indulge. Instead of the preservation and enhancement of the physical and moral health of the nation's cells, female unruliness, in the shape of elaborate grooming and entertainment, were depicted by hygienists as a dangerous disease in social organism.

While contradictorily praising bourgeois women's superiority as wives and mothers, for Dr. Monlau they became inferior in any other respect, unstable, dangerous elements when left to their own instincts. As critics like Elaine Showalter, Rita Felski and Bram Dijkstra suggest, the association of women with physical weakness, instability, immorality, lack of restraint and irresistible and destructive curiosity, which went back to Greek mythology and philosophy and Judeo-Christian tradition, caused late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Western intellectuals, scientists and doctors to relate the “chaotic” elements of modernity and modernization with femininity<sup>38</sup>.

Male Spanish hygienists often portrayed women as the favorite “victims” of modernization. In the 1850s and 1860s, Dr. Monlau angrily denounced the physical ravages of modernization on previously modest

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<sup>38</sup> See DIJKSTRA, Bram. (1996) *Evil Sisters. The threat of female sexuality and the cult of manhood*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf..



and humble Spanish women. Female work and education outside of their domestic roles, together with foreign influence embodied by fashion, cosmetics, luxury goods and entertainment (theater plays, soirees, reading serialized novels) were presented as weakening or contaminating the female body. A growing market of foreign and national fashions and cosmetics were licitly considered a source of physical illness: the deformation of the female body through the corset or high heels, or poisoning due to harmful chemicals such as lead, arsenic or mercury in cosmetic products. However, these admonitions against cosmetics also had a moral counterpart related to traditional Spanish propriety, closely linked to Catholic femininity: the modern market of goods and entertainment provided women with independence and pleasurable opportunities which were thought to distance them from their true mission as devoted wives and mothers. Consequently, fashion and cosmetics were demonized as a source of promiscuity and frivolity, and hygiene manuals pervasively depicted foreign countries such as France, main exporter of luxury items, fashions and cosmetics as sources of degeneration and harmful revolutionary ideals.

Furs or any other material which prevented transpiration and the correct regulation of body temperature, such as silk, were considered by Dr. Monlau not only unhealthy, but unfit for Spain and utterly ridiculous: “en nuestros climas templados, el uso de las pieles, como abrigo, es generalmente innecesario, y como adorno, es ridículo” (Monlau, 1875: 61). The admonitions against cosmetics in reality attempted to preserve bourgeois sexual and monetary economy. These products were thought to be noxious for the soul and the pocket, for women were wasting money and precious time to no avail, besides endangering their health. Furthermore, cosmetics were a sexual lure, “tricks” used by fallen, sexually aberrant women such as the prostitute and actress to acquire the worth they did not naturally possess:

*“la acción de los perfumes y cosméticos abusivos, y de los tópicos infernales, se ejerce principalmente sobre el sistema nervioso, y despierta en mala hora el sentido genital, para hundirlo al fin en la más vergonzosa prostración [...] huyamos pues, de tamaña degradación; recobren su justo y purísimo ascendiente las gracias naturales del cuerpo y la sencilla limpieza, y queden las supercherías de los cosméticos exclusivamente reservadas para las ramerías, y para las ilusiones de la escena.” (Monlau, 1875: 115-6)*

Similarly to the use of bath salts and elements different from water and sand, which Dr. Monlau considered the only necessary ones to achieve cleanliness, any other product was presented as accessory, foreign, sensuous. In favor of simple and natural exercise, Dr. Monlau, for example, considered massage for muscle toning:

*“desconocido entre nosotros [...] más no obstante los maravillosos efectos que se atribuyen al masaje, y que se pueden obtener en gran parte por medio del ejercicio, creemos que el hombre sano, tal como lo considera la higiene, ninguna necesidad tiene de tal práctica accesoria, y casi puramente voluptuosa.”* (Monlau, 1875: 90-1)

In contrast to fashion's nonsense and cosmetic unnecessary or even dangerous pampering, hygienists prescribed “el justo medio” in customs as the ideal lifestyle for the Spanish bourgeoisie. Women, especially portrayed as having an unquenchable thirst for these products, had to remember “la diferencia entre el lujo (a cuya palabra va vulgarmente anexa la idea de ostentación y superfluidad) y la comodidad, entre lo elegante y lo *confortable*” (Monlau, 1875: 445-6). Following once more the precept of moderation, luxury was considered superfluous, excessive, unhealthy but also immoral; comfort necessary, desirable and affordable for the middle class family.

Besides the demonization of fashion and cosmetics to favor feminine simplicity and naturalness, and the praise of women's outer and inner beauty when being an angelic wife and mother, other strategies employed in hygiene manuals for indoctrinating purposes included the focus on female bodily and mental weakness, the emphasis on female inferiority. One of the most common pseudoscientific argumentations to prove women's need for the father, husband and the hygienist doctor's guidance, was irremediably tying women and their bodies to reproduction. The symbol for this perpetual dependence was the ancient Greek myth of the “enslaving uterus,” which gave this organ an almost supernatural free will, and was pervasively used by hygienists and moralists throughout the nineteenth century to strip bourgeois women of any possibility of fully participating in the public sphere alongside men<sup>39</sup>. The uterus became the outmost repository of femininity, what distinguished females from males. For Dr. Monlau, the uterus irrevocably tied women to their reproductive capacities and linked the happiness and

<sup>39</sup> Hippocratic medicine considered the uterus to have wandering abilities which disturbed normal bodily functions, therefore considering women in perpetual lack of balance. Consequently, the doctor's prescriptions became essential for the well-being of women. See KING, Helen. (1998) *Hippocrates' woman. Reading the female body in ancient Greece*. New York: Routledge.

health of every able woman to marriage and the fulfillment of her natural reproductive capacity as many times as possible:

*“La matriz es el órgano más importante en la vida de la mujer; es uno de los polos de la organización femenina [...]. En la matriz retumban indefectiblemente todas las afecciones físicas y morales de la mujer. El útero hace que la mujer sea lo que es: **Uterus est animal vivens in muliere, the ancients said; propter solum uterum mulier est id quod est.**”* (Monlau, 1858: 103)

Together with ancient mythology, Dr. Monlau was particularly fond of popular sayings to exemplify the wisdom of centuries regarding women's appropriate role in society. For didactic and mnemonic purposes, the author seasoned *Higiene del matrimonio* with popular refrains on gender roles such as “el hombre hace a la mujer,” “triste es la casa donde la gallina canta, y el gallo canta,” “cuando una mujer se irrita muda de sexo” and quotations from Genesis and Saint Paul such as “sub viri potestatis eris et ipse dominatibur tui,” and “caput est mulieris vir” (Monlau, 1858: 83). A curious contrast occurred some pages later, when “science” took over Monlau's popular flavor in order to describe female and male genitals: “The vagina or vulvo-uterine channel, is a vascular-membranous channel, four to five inches long [...] and with cylindrical shape, that lodges the virile member in the act of copulation” (Monlau, 1858: 103).

The trend of mixing ancient and popular lore with scientific and medical discourses remained unchanged from the Isabeline period until the turn of the century and the Bourbon Restoration. After Monlau's pioneering efforts to widespread hygiene in Spain, the 1880s and 1890s experienced an unprecedented boom of hygiene literature and conduct manuals for women. The urgency for such an amount of prescriptive literature by the end of the century can be related to political instability in the shape of colonial loss, besides a general feeling of disappointment after the failure of the *Gloriosa Revolution* and the First Republic. According to Elaine Showalter, the end of a century and the beginning of a new one represented a moment of crisis more deeply felt since individuals invested it with “metaphors of death and rebirth” (Showalter: 2). In turn-of-the-century Spain, political unrest and military defeat caused a crisis in patriarchy and its images of masculinity which, together with the traditional perception of unruly females as capable of bringing down the foundations of empires, unleashed a torrent of prescriptive literature for and about women. In these works the female body became the repository for male anxieties, once more a potential threat only to be controlled through the close supervision by the experts.

Together with psychological trauma, scientific advance was also a factor in the dramatic increase of hygiene manuals. An unprecedented rise in public interest in science thanks to the development of microbiology favored a renewed and widespread preoccupation with hygiene. For Aurora Granjel and Esteban Rodríguez Ocaña, between 1865 and 1885 Spanish hygiene had progressed to be a more European-like, scientifically solid and positivistic discipline, a process which was fostered by the discovery of microbes, the agents of infection, and the creation of vaccines and new protocols for disinfection such as asepsis and pasteurization by Koch, Pasteur and Pettenkoffer (Granjel: 40). This gave the idea of cleanliness full scientific support and germs became “the invisible enemy, fought at every turn. Germ theory reinforced every single lesson of the old gospel of cleanliness, but the 'eternal vigilance' now required made house-cleaning a heavy burden of responsibility; its neglect was akin to murder” (Smith: 299). The champions of cleanliness, hygienists, gained renewed power, together with an intensification of women's domestic role as preservers of their family's health:

*La relación de la microbiología con el movimiento higienista revisió caracteres de legitimación profesional. La teoría microbiana desvelaba los factores corruptores y ofrecía un nexo de unión entre los componentes externos y los internos de las enfermedades colectivas. La redefinición del medio social como un universo microbiano garantizaba la necesidad de la presencia del los expertos, sanitaristas entrenados bacteriológicamente y justificaba un aparato tecnocrático. La ola de esperanza y admiración pública que rodeó el éxito de la vacuna contra la rabia o el suero antidiftérico, multiplicó la autoridad de la medicina científica, fortaleciendo la posición tecnocrática. (Rodríguez Ocaña: 40)<sup>40</sup>*

Despite these promising advances, hygiene's attitude towards women experienced mere superficial changes, remaining stagnant in the last two decades of the century. Dr. Francisco de Paula y Campá's *Calendario de la preñez e higiene de la mujer en cinta* (1874) was a great example of a Spanish hybrid, contradictory manual which continued to mix

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<sup>40</sup> This turning point in matters of prevention was reflected in the creation of the first Spanish *Sociedad Española de Higiene* in 1881 to propagate the discipline, create demographic statistics and perfect the theory and practice of hygiene. From 1850 until 1904 there were forty five bulletins and newspapers dedicated to hygiene, and the number of other hygiene publications raised dramatically from seventeen edited between 1870 and 1880 to two hundred and forty seven edited between 1880 and 1904 (Granjel 34, 41, 59).

old and new, traditional and foreign views on pregnancy<sup>41</sup>. Dr. Campá went against old-fashioned and, many times, noxious beliefs about pregnancy based on popular belief, what he called the “plague of superstition” of the “comadres” (or female friends and neighbors) (Campá: 141). He lifted many traditional-based restrictions directed to pregnant women such as taboos on bathing and doing exercise, and recommended using light underwear and changing it frequently (Campá: 99,119) together with the elimination of the corset, which deformed the uterus (Campá: 70). Unlike more traditional doctors, he did not prescribe extreme changes in diet, pointing at a will of normalizing pregnancy instead of pathologizing it. Neither he was against the satisfaction of urges or “antojos,” usually depicted by hygienists as proof of women's hysterical temperament. Eating ice cream, sorbet, coffee or even drinking alcohol were authorized if common sense was used (Campá: 96-7). The manual also offered women a state-of-the-art calendar to predict the time of birth of their babies, designed by Doctor Tibone in Turín, Italy.

However, despite this seeming complicity towards the female reader, Dr. Campá reaffirmed his authority as an intelligent, rational and prudent man of science. In contrast, he affirmed that women's sense of decency caused them to commit indiscretions which endangered themselves and the fetus during pregnancy. Hence, for this hygienist and obstetrician woman

*“es siempre reservada y difícilmente da cuenta a un extraño de los fenómenos que en sí misma experimenta durante los primeros tiempos del matrimonio. ¡Cuántas veces hasta el esposo ignora lo que ella siente y no se atreve a divulgar! En este caso puede muy fácilmente cometer indiscreciones, verdaderas imprudencias, que produzcan en su día fatales resultados, sólo porque una persona inteligente no ha podido indicarle su regla de conducta.”* (Campá: 19)

In contrast to this doctor's seeming modern approach towards pregnancy, flowery rhetoric was a remnant of the Isabeline romantic period, something hygiene manuals never discarded but eagerly used to inspire and attract women to their domestic duties. First of all, Dr. Campá commanded the young female readers to accept the book, due to the great obligation maternity represented for the good of society and humanity:

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<sup>41</sup> On the cover of hygiene manuals it was frequent to have a brief curriculum with the credentials and professional achievements of the writer in order to give credibility to the contents. Dr. Campá was a professor of obstetrics and “special diseases of women and children” at the University of Valencia.

“acéptenlo las jóvenes llamadas pronto a los grandes deberes de madre” (Campá: 20). Dr. Campá idealized women as poetic and mysterious beings, the favorite for doctors due to their “interesting fragility” (Campá: 5). This fragility, their supposed physical and mental weakness and defenselessness, legitimized the medical connection between them and children<sup>42</sup>:

*“[la mujer es] el ser excepcional, que reuniendo todo lo grande, complicado y perfecto del rey de la creación, presenta sin embargo, al lado de esos grandes rasgos, todo lo delicado, susceptible y encantador de una naturaleza angelical infundida en las formas deleznable de la materia. Por esto el médico debe respetar y venerar más que otro alguno a la dulce compañera del hombre [...]. Háse dicho, y no sin razón que la mujer es un niño grande: esta expresiva frase que para algunos envuelve una censura, es sin embargo, el mejor elogio que puede hacerse de las hijas de Eva. ¿Hay algo que interese más al hombre que la tierna infancia? ¿Hay algún ser de la creación que tenga más derecho a la estimación, a los cuidados, a la benevolencia, que los seres que sólo conocen la aurora de su vida?”* (Campá: 5-6)

Although popular belief revolving pregnancy was discredited by Campá as superstition of the “comadres,” more in the vein of hygiene's tradition he presented biased statements related to female leisure as “scientific” fact. For example, reading novels and watching plays or other spectacles were said to damage the fetus physically and morally. Strong impressions had to be prohibited because “si la tristeza, la amargura y la concentración de espíritu han reinado durante el embarazo, sostenidas tenazmente por espectáculos románticos o por lecturas diabólicas, ¿cuál será el carácter moral que saque el niño?” (Campá: 141).

In this way, despite the author's initial approach towards pregnancy and the calendar to predict delivery being examples of modern medical advances, the Isabeline standard of angelic and infantile femininity survived and was presented as the one and only desirable role model for females. The idea of women's frailty and defenselessness, like that of a child, gave Dr. Campá and his fellow hygienists the perfect excuse to legitimize themselves as women's protectors and saviors, a marker of their status as experts and professionals. Once more, medicine endorsed the

<sup>42</sup> The medical discourse on women's childishness, gender bias presented by doctors as “scientific” and clear evidence of female propensity to disease and lack of intellectual soundness, provided the justice system with the justification to exclude married women from controlling their assets, voting, making any kind of financial transaction without the permission of the husband, being a tutor, keeping custody of their children in case of separation of the spouses, becoming a jury, being a witness, etc (Scanlon 123).

contradictory fiction of woman as beautiful and angelic but frail and unstable, a being dramatically endangered by her own emotions and by “insidious diseases.” Women's body was paradoxically described as essential for the survival of humanity, dependent, superior, childish, weakly, natural, ethereal, material, diseased but beautiful and perfect, God's creation.

Hygienic-cosmetic manuals, however, were the most contradictory examples of late nineteenth century Spanish hygienic literature for women, for they had to do with one of the most abhorred elements in traditional hygiene: beauty products. We have seen how earlier hygienists such as Dr. Monlau advised the use of water and sand as the only necessary elements for cleanliness. By the end of the century, there was a shift in this perspective, for hygienists saw in the cosmetic market an enormous source of revenue. As the saying goes, when it is impossible to defeat the enemy, a good solution is to join him. The result was a juggling exercise for hygienists-cosmeticians to legitimize a business which they had previously condemned.

The most used strategy was subordinating female beauty to the well-being and enjoyment of others, thus, not breaking apart from the traditional, quasi-religious depiction of virtuous women as sacrificed and unselfish. At all cost women had to avoid frivolity and vanity when grooming, but always keep in mind that being clean and beautiful assured the harmony between husband and wife, reflected their inner beauty, and helped them to more happily fulfill their domestic duties. Dr. Nácar's *Guía higiénico-cosmética de la mujer en el tocador o colección ordenada y completa de cuantas reglas, operaciones y fórmulas higiénicas reclaman la salud, la belleza y la educación física de la mujer* (1886) included sections for the specific care of each part of the body, focusing on ways of grooming, products to be used, and the care of defects such as wrinkles, rashes, warts, color of the skin, etc. However, together with this more practical information, Dr. Nácar included comments which legitimized his work as hygienically orthodox. The most obvious example was presenting beauty as women's most important attribute, therefore, worth cultivating and preserving with the help of doctors. While men depended on talent, honesty and hard work, woman were romantically portrayed as “formada por Dios para que fuese el bello y perpetuo estímulo del hombre en la accidentada y penosa carrera de aspiraciones y zozobras que desde la cuna hasta el sepulcro obstinadamente le persiguen” (Nácar: 18).

The new *higiene cosmetológica* emphasized the idea of beauty as a natural merit, and the desire to be beautiful or preserve beauty as something intrinsic in women, also their most valuable attribute in society:

*“Siendo la hermosura la prenda más estimable de la mujer, creo prestar al bello sexo en general un humanitario e importante servicio, instruyéndole en la manera de conservar y restablecer tan precioso don e ilustrándole en las frecuentes dudas que en la práctica del tocador se presentan. Si consigo de las damas españolas, cuya reputación de hermosas es tan universal como merecida, convencerlas a la verdad, único lema de la higiene cosmetológica, me daré por muy satisfecho [...].”* (Nácar: vii- viii)

This strategy intended to make of the hygienist and the cosmetic manual something indispensable in women's lives, even a matter of national pride for it was a way of preserving the beauty of Spanish women, which was “famous world-wide.” Besides this clever marketing strategy, which appealed to the reader's sense of pride, the strategy of subordinating the use of cosmetics to the doctor's approval opened a very profitable market for hygienists, who contrasted their reliable expertise to that of foreign impostors and their own recipes from the apothecary to dangerous products and chemicals from “la nauseabunda trastienda de algún droguero parisiense, o el pretendido laboratorio de cualquier charlatán afortunado” (Nácar: 15)<sup>43</sup>.

In conclusion, hygiene manuals for women, a genre usually overlooked in scholarly studies on nineteenth century Spain, represent a very important historical source to understand the concerns Spaniards of this period, especially about modernization and its potential to subvert traditional gender roles. These worries sprung from the complex situation of a country which needed to advance without “selling out” its own identity, something which is reflected by the manuals' double or “hybrid” discourse. Traditional female roles endorsed by Catholicism were similarly depicted by modern scientists and doctors as essential, as the pillar on which the whole of society was sustained. Hygiene manual authors juggled with both worlds, tradition and modernity, in a desperate attempt to overcome a time they believed to be of physical and moral decadence due to the blurring of traditional gender boundaries. However, writing this sort of manuals was also a not so altruist way to empower themselves socially and economically as guides worthy of being followed, as essential elements in the lives of the population, especially women.

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<sup>43</sup> Dr.Nácar's recipes are detailed lists of mixtures, essences, and extracts of mainly natural ingredients such as herbs, nuts, fruits, flowers and spices (orange blossom, almonds, cinnamon, amber, musk, cocoa butter, eggs, laurel, starch, vinegar, lily, geranium, clover) carefully measured for the female reader to take to an apothecary. These prescriptions are always accompanied by a description of ailment or beauty defect to be corrected, for example warts, hair loss, flaccidity and many more.



Scientific advances which greatly bettered the lives of the population were part of modernization, while, contradictorily, modernization was presented by hygienists as a source of degeneration, both the problem and the solution for Spain. Spanish hygiene endorsed tradition, self-control and temperance while also surrounding itself with a “modern,” “scientific” halo, a halo of cleanliness and brightness which did away with the darkness and dust of old knowledge in health and moral matters. For example, marriage in the hygienic era was not only morally adequate as it was in Catholic tradition, but also a source of physical and mental health. Being a mother was not only women's sublime mission as commanded by God, but also a way to avoid venereal illnesses and mental disorders such as hysteria, while also providing able citizens to the Spanish nation.

The double discourse of tradition and modernity became stylistically imprinted in hygiene manuals: authors swung from the use of aseptic medical jargon to moral judging and pessimistic preaching; from lyricism and popular Spanish sayings to pathological descriptions. Supposedly, the physical and moral “dangers” of modern life for the individual were neutralized by the hygiene manual. The nation was doubly secured: modern advances such as hygiene were let in for the physical, moral and economic well-being of the Spanish people (and the hygienists themselves) and, at the same time, traditional roles which ensured women's dependence on male authority, and the hygiene's “business,” were maintained with the help of modern science. Within this “schizophrenic” and changing atmosphere, women were supposed to be the anchoring element which could not and should not ever evolve or change. Women were to be always beautiful but fragile symbols of nature, childish and tender wives and mothers, for the benefit of family, nation and hygienists.

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