GALDÓS AND *JAPONISME*: THE FLOATING WORLD OF LEÓN ROCH

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In a corner of the Casa Museo Pérez Galdós in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria hang two Japanese masks (fig. 1). The pair of grimacing faces were probably found among the other East Asian *objets d'art* in the author's bibelots displayed in the parlor or office of his *art nouveau* villa "San Quintín" in Santander. When and how they came into the author's possession is unknown; likewise, their exact origin in Japan is uncertain. Yet, it is clear they evoke the traditional folk performing art known as *Kagura* ("divine entertainment"), in which masked actors representing supernatural beings perform ritual dances in the streets of towns during seasonal *Shinto* festivals (Pellachia 162). In *fin-de-siécle* Europe, such masks were collected equally by intellectuals who appreciated the restrained expressivity and sparse aesthetics of the Japanese theater, especially *Kagura* and *Noh* ("skill" "craft"), as by amateur connoisseurs of things-Japanese for their ornamental and exotic appeal. The masks, along with various pieces of Japanese ceramics in the Galdós collection, might just be bric-a-brac acquired from one of the many Oriental bazaars that proliferated in Madrid, or perhaps are a souvenir from a trip abroad to France. They could also reflect the author's lifelong love of the theater, specifically the Symbolist and Modernist aesthetic concerns that pushed him to write for the stage in his later career. Whatever the case, the presence of the objects connects Galdós to the Japan-craze known as *japonisme* that swept Europe starting in the 1860s, and grounds the various references to Japanese decorative arts found scattered throughout his novels and theater, from the 1870s to the 1890s, in his domestic sphere.

Galdós's engagement with the visual arts as an art critic as well as aspects of intermediality in his novels have been amply explored by scholars. Emphasis has been placed on the fine arts, most particularly connections between the novelist and Spanish masters Velázquez, Zurbarán, and Goya, as well as his contemporaries Fortuny and Sorolla.[1] By contrast, decorative art has received less critical attention despite its capacity for similarly distilling visual aesthetic conventions and innovations into the author's textual world. Reflecting the tendency to exclude decorative art from the category of the fine arts, other than the possible symbolic function of particular objects or ornamental groupings, descriptions of decoration are generally treated as referents to the material universe that envelops characters, or underlined to draw out issues of taste and class associated with the notion of *lo cursi*.[2] Consequently, since *japonisme* is an aesthetic trend primarily associated with the decorative arts of the second half of the nineteenth century, the presence and possible influence of the movement on Galdós's work has gone mostly unobserved by scholars.[3] Nevertheless, the frequency and the way in which Japanese objects are placed in his novels are suggestive of a deeper understanding and appreciation of their potential as models or motifs for artistic innovation. Things-Japanese in the form of screens, masks, vases, dolls, parasols, and kimonos are mentioned in *Tormento* (1884),

Fortunata y Jacinta (1887), and *Voluntad* (1895), and a Japanese-styled room is the backdrop for scenes in *Realidad* (1889).[4] In *Tristana* (1892), the evocation of Japan, as several scholars have observed, becomes a key element in the characterization of the protagonist when she is described as "una dama japonesa de alto copete" (10-11).[5] However, nowhere else in Galdós's literature do allusions to Japan and the phenomenon of *japonisme*, in the form of decorative objects, appear with the consistency and depth of symbolic meaning as in *La familia de León Roch* (1878).

While explicit references to *ukiyo-e* prints are absent in *La familia de León Roch*, the world of pleasure and pain they represent is evoked in the decorative realm of the 1878 novel. The Japanese word *ukiyo*, translated as "floating world," encloses a double meaning that denotes both the Buddhist notion of life's transience, and a concept similar to Western *carpe diem*. The *ukiyo-e* or "pictures of the floating world," in the form of paintings and woodblock prints produced during the Edo Period (1615-1868), depict a hedonistic world populated by courtesans and entertainers, and punctuated by a complexly despairing sentiment of fleetingness. In this essay, I study the literal and figurative elements of *La familia de León Roch* that allude to Japan and the floating world of Japanese decorative objects in order to discover how both might reflect Galdós's understanding and engagement with *japonisme*. I question whether these references in the novel can be considered an attempt by the author to adopt the aesthetic more fully in his literature, or if the incorporation of Japanese objects is merely a device to discredit characters by marking them as *cursi*.

Galdós the Japoniste?

In the fall of 1878, just months before the December publication of *La familia de León Roch*, Ernest Chesneau's two-part review of the Japanese exhibit at the 1878 Paris Universal Exhibition, "Le Japon à Paris," appeared in the *Gazette des Beaux arts*. The French art critic presents a chronology of the European fascination with Japan from the 1860s to the present moment, noting: "In reality it was through our painters that the taste for Japanese art took hold in Paris, was communicated to the art lover, to the fashionable, and in time imposed on the decorative arts" (Reed 52). A cultural phenomenon, what by then had come to be known as *japonisme*, proposed an intellectualization of the broader engagement with things-Japanese that swept Europe and the Americas following the forced opening of Japan to trade with the West by the American Commodore Matthew Perry in 1854.[6] Premised on an opposition to the *japonaiserie* as a mere "flirtation" with Japan, *japonisme* claimed to be an authentic "understanding" of Japanese culture (Chu 97). While not ignoring the fact that their contact with Japan originated as an object-based curiosity, japonistes looked to evolve their comprehension of Japanese aesthetics beyond their decorative appeal in order to uncover a source of artistic renewal. Art critics Chesneau and Burty, along with Louis Gonsé, and art dealer Samuel Bing, encouraged artists to transcend the characteristics of Japanese art that were "startlingly exotic" in order to perceive the underlying aesthetic principles (Hokenson 72). In this way, the *japonistes* smugly distanced Japanese art from Orientalism, and raised it to the category of an "originary aesthetic," uncontaminated by the West, and "on the par with ancient Greece" (Hokenson 72-73).

The *ukiyo-e* print, more than any other form, came to function as a *lingua franca* that bridged cultural gaps between artists East and West, and across European borders, as well as transmitted the aesthetics of Japan to other artistic forms and media, including literature. The Universal Exposition in Paris in 1867 was the first to attract broad public attention to the artistry of Japanese prints, although French, Dutch and British collectors began acquiring works by Hokusai, Hiroshige, Kunisada and Utamaro and others by the late-1850s (Ives). In the ensuing decade interest in *ukiyo-e* prints grew such that, by the time of the third Paris exposition in 1878, their circulation and collection among artists and intellectuals had opened the door for development of a more fully-fledged understanding of Japanese arts based on a nuanced knowledge of Japan's history and culture (Jobling 90).[7] There are two main reasons why these images in the form of woodblock prints became so popular in nineteenth-century Europe. First, as glimpses of an unknown, exotic realm of the senses, the images offered Western viewers an escape from the contradictions of modernity. Second, they were prized as a source of aesthetic renewal for their use of color, composition, technique, and subject matter (Weisberg 17).

Appearing at a moment of openness to cross-fertilization and collaboration across the arts, as Pamela A. Genova notes, the impact of *japonisme* on painters was almost immediately picked up by forward-looking writers of the 1860s and 1870s, such as Jules and Edmond de Goncourt and Émile Zola (67). Between 1867 and 1878, the literary version of the Japan-craze evolved from the mere allusion and description of Japanese elements to original adaptations of core artistic notions. Realist and Naturalist writers were inspired by *ukiyo-e* prints of the banal and mundane activities within the pleasure quarters of Edo (modern-day Tokyo): visions of raw life and passion stripped of sentimentality and moralizing intentions. For their part, the Brothers Goncourts limited their use to similes, "based upon familiarity with the art of curiosities of Japan," and concentrated on decorative motifs such as fans, ivories and ceramics, as elements from which to extrapolate new narrative forms and to dictate the actions of their characters (Schwartz 805 qtd. in Honkenson 59). By contrast, Zola makes a more sophisticated and adaptive use of *japonisme*: according to Jan Hokenson, his coarse language corresponds to the vulgar and trivial subjects, and bold contrasting color schemes of the Japanese prints, while the compositional structure of his novels seem to aspire to the clarity of focus, intensity, and economy of these images (83).[8]

Had Galdós written *La familia de León Roch* after 1888, allusions to Japanese decorative objects and adoption of certain *japoniste* techniques therein would be easily attributable to his trip to the Universal Exposition held in Barcelona that year. Even though echoes of the Japan-craze had reached Spain much earlier, before the Barcelona World's Fair, very few Spanish artists and intellectuals, not to mention the general public, had had the opportunity to view firsthand a comprehensive display of Japanese arts and crafts.[9] By the late-1880s, Galdós had also cultivated relationships with notable artists and collectors of *ukiyo-e* prints in Spain, including the multifaceted Mélida brothers, Enrique and Arturo, with whom he collaborated on the 1882 illustrated edition of the *Episodios nacionales*.[10] Sometime in the 1880s, the Mélidas began to assemble a collection of *ukiyo-e* prints from the Utagawa school, and Arturo incorporated Japanese aesthetics into various interior design projects completed

over the decade (Bru, "Los hermanos" 291). Finally, Galdós's friendship with Emilia Pardo Bazán would supply another connection to the spread of *japonisme* to Spain: she commented on the Japanese exhibits in Paris in 1889 in her travel book *Al pie de la Torre Eiffel*, and was an admirer and promoter of pioneering French *japonistes* Jules and Edmond Goncourt.[11] Nevertheless, since all of these connections between Galdós and *japonisme* postdate the composition and publication of *La familia de León Roch*, it is necessary to look elsewhere to discover how he came into contact with the movement.

Although difficult to pinpoint with exactitude, the novelist's familiarity with, and interest in *japonisme* likely originated during the several trips he made to Paris in the decade prior. Well known to scholars, the novelist's first visit to the French capital in the summer of 1867 was purposely timed to coincide with the second Universal Exposition between May and November of that year, and at which Japan, as noted above, figured prominently. In September 1878, the third Paris Universal Exposition, where once again the Japanese pavilion was a star attraction, was probably the prime motive for another brief excursion to France.[12] The novelist mentions the 1867 Universal Exposition in an article for *La Nación* published in 1868, and in another piece for La Prensa in 1884.[13] The 1867 journey, and a second trip in 1868, also provide background details for his 1907 *episodio nacional, La de los triste destinos*, which is set in those years and opens against the backdrop of the Universal Exposition (Guereña 38). Finally, he recalls his early experiences in Paris in his 1915 *Memorias de un desmemoriado*. In none of these texts, though, does he mention the Japanese exhibits or comment explicitly on *japonisme*, and so it is impossible to know for sure if Galdós visited the Japanese art and craft displays that caused such a stir among French artists and writers, and piqued public interest.[14]

Nevertheless, in 1867-68 and 1878, Galdós plausibly may have had firsthand contact with *japonisme* elsewhere on the Champs-de-Mars or in the wider city beyond. In his 1868 article for *La Nación*, "La pintura Española en la Exposición de París," Galdós concludes by lamenting the absence of Catalán painter Mariano Fortuny at the Spanish pavilion (Bru, "Japonismo" 64). Fortuny was a key figure in cultivating a taste for things Japanese among Spanish artists in Paris. Galdós was undoubtedly aware of the ways in which the painter not only incorporated Japanese objects but also experimented with *ukiyo-e* derived aesthetics in his work (Bru "Japonismo" 64). Regarding the 1867 trip, Berkowitz writes, "Paris with its Universal Exposition, museums, monuments, visiting royalty, and especially the book stalls along the Seine threw him into ecstasy" (52). Book-buying offered another possible opportunity to engage with *japonisme*.Often noted is his discovery of Balzac, but in 1867, 1868, and 1878 he also acquired novels by primary practitioners of the literary version of the phenomenon, the Brothers Goncourts and Zola. Among the novels Galdós acquired in 1878 is Zola's *La Curée,* which Hokenson classifies as an "apprentice text" in which the French author "first experimented with a novelistic *japonisme* that could bring into literature what he saw as the revolutionary significance of the painter's uses of Japanese art" (87).

Even if Galdós had not visited France in those key years, he still would have been aware of Europe's growing interest in the arts of Japan. Spanish painters residing in Paris in the 1860s, such as Raimundo Madrazo and Eduardo Zamacois, witnessed firsthand the explosion

of *japonisme* and began to include Japanese objects in portraits and genre paintings purchased by wealthy clients (Bru, "Japonismo" 63-64). Though the first large-scale expositions of Japanese art were not held in Spain until the late-1880s, in the preceding decades, collectors had already begun to assemble small collections of prints, lacquers, and ceramics, making them available to friends and acquaintances. By the 1870s, *japonisme* had reached Madrid in the form of books and illustrated articles that recounted the details of Japan's political transformation under the Meiji emperor, and introduced readers to Japanese art.[15] Finally, shops like La Japonesa, opened in 1874, sold authentic and knock-off *japonaiseries* to consumers seeking to decorate new homes in the *ensanche* districts of Chamberí and Salamanca, while luxurious "*salones japoneses*" were being installed in restaurants like Lhardy and private residences like the Palacio de Santoña (Bru, "Japonismo" 65-66).

The Real León Roch

The upper-class society of 1870s Madrid provides the social setting for *La familia de León Roch*, and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, the historical backdrop for the ideological confrontation between the exalted liberal protagonist, León Roch, and his recalcitrant Catholic wife and in-laws, underpins the story. The novel's title is both ironic and descriptive: it announces the intimate space in which the story unfolds as centered around the main character, León Roch, and his in-laws; at the same time, it anticipates the familial nature of the predicament that drives the plot and to which the protagonist will ultimately succumb. Names in Galdós, as Angel Iglesias observes, function as masks that magnify characters and prefigure their destinies, often ironically (380). In the case of León Roch, José F. Montesinos notes, he neither lives up to the strength symbolized by his first name León, "lion," nor is he able to escape the hard-headedness that determines his fortunes in love and marriage suggested by his surname Roch, "rock" (257). Beyond its symbolic connotations, though, the title character's name also constitutes the first literal *japoniste* allusion found in Galdós's literature. On his trip to Paris in 1867, Galdós would most certainly have heard of Léon Roches (1809-1901), the French Consul-General to Japan from 1864 to 1868 responsible for the diplomatic arrangements that made the Japanese Pavilion at the Universal Exposition possible (Irwin 38; Satô 103) (fig.2). The association between the novel's hero and the French diplomat, whose diplomacy exposed Europe to the arts of Japan and fueled japonisme in intellectual and artistic circles, seems to be more than mere coincidence. For Galdós's contemporary readers, possibly familiar with the flamboyant exploits of the Frenchman in the Orient and the Far East, the connection might have heightened the irony of the protagonist's failures. More generally, though, the reference foreshadows, albeit subtly, the function of subsequent evocations of Japanese art sprinkled throughout the novel, and highlights the role they play in characterization and plot development.

It is likely Galdós had already known of Roches prior to 1867. In the 1840s and 1850s the French soldier had made his name in North Africa by participating in the military and diplomatic ventures that brought Tunisia and Algeria, and eventually Morocco under French rule. Expectations were high when Roches was sent to Japan in 1864 to represent French

interests in the midst of the complex unraveling of the 300 year-old Tokugawa Shogunate. He imagined he could repeat successes in the Maghreb and coax Japan's feudal lord Yoshinobu Tokugawa to embrace reform a *la française*. However, his brash diplomacy ultimately put France on the wrong side of the civil conflict that would end in 1868 with the nominal restoration of direct imperial rule known as the Meiji Restoration (Irwin 36-37). The real Léon Roches's inability to reconcile the forces of tradition with those of modernity amidst the ailing Tokugawa regime seemingly prefigures his Galdosian namesake's failure to overcome, with similar tactics of rationality and Western free-thinking, his wife María Egipciaca's Catholic fervor rooted in superstition. The conflict that drives the plot is framed in diplomatic terms in chapter 15 of part one, titled, "Un convenio como los que la diplomacia llama 'modus vivendi'." Like the French envoy in Japan who advocated the cohabitation of opposing factions through the creation of strong national government, the Spanish León Roch attempts to create a livable peace by agreeing to abandon his books and intellectual activities if María forsakes daily mass and confessions in exchange (99).

Luis Gonzaga as Shape Shifter

"Luis Gonzaga," the name of María's twin brother, also conveys a veiled, yet curious, reference to Japan. The novitiate's namesake is San Luis Gonzaga (St. Aloysius Gonzaga, 1568-1591), a sixteenth-century Italian Jesuit novice venerated as the patron saint of young students. Kathy Bacon shows that the character not only models himself on the saint, but that, "every aspect of Luis as a literary creation is based closely upon the historical Aloysius Gonzaga" (57). Foreshadowing the imminent conflict with his in-laws, Pepa de Fúcar cautions León about Luis, "el que está aprendiendo para misionero" (39). The character's desire to become a missionary reflects the hagiographic claim that the saint was inspired to pursue a religious life after reading of the Jesuit missions to India in the late-fifteenth century, and specifically opted to join the Society of Jesus because it embraced, as biographer Virgilio Cepari writes, "the evangelization of the heathen in India, in Japan, and in the new world. And he hoped that some day he might have the good fortune to be sent into those lands to convert souls to the Faith" (53). Gonzaga's connection to Japan is further indicated when, while studying at the Jesuit College in Mantua in the summer of 1585, he witnessed the tour of Japanese emissaries sent by the Christian daimyo, Otomo Sorin, to Rome. Despite the fanfare and festivities organized by the Mantuan princes, according to Cepari, the saint remained indoors and undistracted from his strict regimen of prayer, fasting, and meditation (79). The anecdote is recounted in various records of Gonzaga's life as proof of his extreme devotion and purity, which even his Jesuit confessors found to be extraordinary and exemplary (80-81).

The presentation of the Tellería family in the first part of *La familia de León Roch* is completed by the sudden return of Luis from France in the chapter appropriately titled "El asceta." Sick with tuberculosis, he truncates the family's plans to summer in Arcachon, and also has a ruinous effect on León's design to transform his wife. The narrator notes that Luis is out of place in the family home, "fuera de su centro;" however, as the physical description of the young priest continues, the opposite appears to be the case (113). His dark habit, pale and transparent complexion, and downcast gaze cause him to blend in and become lost in the

dark corners and among the bric-a-brac that populate the dark and poorly ventilated rooms of the Tellería home:

> […] discurría como una sombra maldecida por las salas revestidas del abigarrado papel o de las chillonas tapicerías. Era una mancha oscura y triste caída sobre el mueblaje de colorines y oro, sobre los exóticos objetos de estilo japonés, cuyas aisladas figuras de pesadilla parecían armonizar con la persona del escuálido colegial. (113)

Luis's shadow is confused with the silhouetted figures that decorate porcelains, lacquer boxes, fans, and prints displayed in the room, and he disappears into the background so perfectly that the servants often overlook him as they go about their daily dusting. The identification of the priest with these *objets d'art* can at first be read as merely a *japonaiserie*, that is, a superficial invocation of the exotic for heightened effect and appeal. However, the way in which the simile is carried over in subsequent scenes leading up to the character's death is evidence that Galdós adopts the practice established by the Goncourts: using readers' familiarity with the curiosities of Japan to capture attention, and then subtly redirecting the representation to other aesthetic ends and narrative functions (Hokenson 59).

The characterization of Luis as a Japanese figure, as if leapt from a screen or fan, is taken up again in four later chapters set in León's *hotel* on the northern outskirts of Madrid. It is not insignificant that the final sequence of the first part of the novel, which ends with Luis's death in the arms of his sister, opens with a description of the surrounding landscape punctuated by the sunset and the appearance of evening stars:

> Desde la casa de León se veía al anochecer, la faja luminosa que deja el sol en el horizonte, la hermosa sencillez y unidad del suelo, que trae al pensamiento los lugares de Oriente donde han pasado las cosas más grandes que ha habido en el mundo; más tarde, la sucesiva aparición de los soles remotos, como si cada cual fuera a tomar su sitio y se encendiesen poco a poco […]. (122)

The night sky becomes visible in the East, but emphasis here is on the horizontal line marked by the setting sun in the West and the simplicity and unity of light and color that bathes the foreground. The image, according to the narrator, recalls the Orient and would seem to evoke the Near East as the origin of Western civilization, but the decorative references to Japan in the preceding chapter might also connect it to the aesthetic principals of *ukiyo-e* for rendering space. Instead of unfolding in conventional fashion, here the narrative evolves across a set of parallel picture planes that convey a tensely complex sense of progression and simultaneity. The starlit sky serves as a backdrop, and the sweltering heat, an atmospheric foreground for multiple scenes that appear to be layered together: a conversation in the garden between Luis and María shares a middle ground with León, who is first shown seated close by, gazing at the stars, then in the dining room within view and earshot of the pair outside, and finally, in his office, unable to escape the heat and the chatter. Galdós's construction of the interior and exterior of León's home as a narrative space is highly theatrical, a detail underscored by the intervening chapter title, "Un drama viejo, viejísmo." Not unlike the horizontal triptych-format

employed by *ukiyo-e* artists to depict the exploits of popular warriors of history and legend frequently represented in *kabuki* theater, the novel creates an elaborate staging for an age-old drama: the fight to the death between two men, León and Luis, over a woman, María. The context of the classic triangle, though, as Lou Charnon Deutsch remarks, is unorthodox since the battle occurs in a dream, and the trophy is the woman's soul instead of her body (144).

The warrior prints by nineteenth-century *ukiyo-e* artist Kuniyoshi Utagawa are unique, as Melinda Takeuchi observes, for the emphasis placed on dreams, ghostly apparitions, and supernatural feats (5). One of Kuniyoshi's most popular series of triptychs illustrates the struggle between samurai Raikô and the earth spider Tsuchigumo, which begins when the insect disguised as a monk enters the hero's bedchamber and attempts to entrap and kill him (fig. 3). The half-asleep warrior draws his sword and injures the insect, but it still manages to escape with the aid of an evil brood of demons. Through several episodes, Raikô and his loyal retainers chase the spider and eventually kill him by cornering him in his lair. The story, from tenth-century Japan, bears striking resemblance to the nightmare that rattles León from half-slumber in the chapter titled "Batiéndose con el ángel":

> Y vio enfrente una figura japonesa, negra, rígida, recortada y destacándose sobre el fondo de colores inundados de luz. El cuerpo mezquino se mantenía sentado tieso, cual si de sí mismo fuera inquisidor, y el rostro gelatinoso, cadavérico, contraído todo por el hábito de hacer continuamente los visajes del escrúpulo y de la aflicción mística, elevaba al techo los ojos de esmeralda o los paseaba con indiferencia estúpida por las paredes pobladas de acuarelas, mapas y estampas, y por el suelo cubierto de fino junco. (137)

In the character's dream, he crushes the horrific apparition in his hands like a paper toy, "un juguete de papel," only to see it reconstitute itself in the form of a sword-brandishing angel surrounded by the conclave of spirits who embody the stellar constellations that populate the Eastern night sky (138). Like the Japanese hero Raikô, León ultimately vanquishes his adversary; however, as the final title, "Vencido por el ángel," indicates, this victory is bittersweet. Charnon-Deutsch explains: "Dying gives Luis the advantage in the struggle because one cannot reason and win with a corpse, and especially because María Egipciaca has been conditioned to prize martyrdom" (144).

Odalisque or Geisha?

The name "María Egipciaca" is equally charged with symbolism, as well as obvious Orientalist overtones. The narrator sarcastically combines the religious connotations evoked by the character's namesake, Saint Mary of Egypt, with the Oriental subtext of physical beauty by referring to León's wife as the "odalisca mojigata" [sanctimonious odalisque] (97). Though the identification between María and the fifth-century saint are never explicit, there is a similar overlap in their biographies, "a story of deprived sensuality followed by repentance and a determination to dedicate oneself to God, leaving behind earthly attachments" (Bacon 59). Catherine Jagoe points out the irony of the name as, "ultimately much more reminiscent

of stereotypes of seductive fallen women such as Eve, Salome, or Circe than of the pure Virgin Mary" (81). The amalgamation, according to the narrator's ironic characterization, would appear to make incongruous the figure of the odalisque-courtesan whose allure, as Piya Pal-Lapinski studies, is based on unsettling reversibility rather than contradiction (18-20). Indeed, whereas the Galdosian heroine's sanctimony derails the odalisque's erotic and exotic appeal, the conventional European demimondaine used to her advantage the titillation produced by the potential merging and intersection of racially distinct bodies in her persona. By evoking the Orient in their dress and boudoir accoutrements Pal-Lapinski notes, "courtesans continually flirted with these intercorporeal landscapes, which became a symbol of their libertinism, extravagance, and ability to reinvent themselves" (20).

Reference to María as odalisque can be further construed as an allusion to Japan by considering the possible source of Galdos's evocation of this mainstay of mid-nineteenth century Orientalist fantasy. The novelist's admiration for Catalan painter Mariano Fortuny (1838-1874), famous for his small-scale Arabesque paintings, has been pointed out by Lieve Behiels and Susan Martín-Márquez. At the end of his chronicle of the 1867 Paris Exposition, as mentioned earlier, he laments that Fortuny was not included in the official selection of paintings sent for exposition at the Spanish pavilion. He was certainly familiar with the artist's variations on the odalisque theme, not to mention representations of the 1859-60 war in Morocco, but Galdós was also likely aware of the increasing influence of Japanese art in the artistic circles frequented by the painter and other Spanish artists residing in Paris at the time (Bru, "Marià Fortuny" 161).

In chapter 15 of part two of the novel, titled with the interrogation "¿Cortesana?," María schemes a grotesque attempt to win back her estranged husband by traveling to the palace where he has taken up residence in Carabanchel, on the outskirts of Madrid. The interrogation introduced in the title amplifies the sensuous contradiction between the character's coquettish nature and priggish religiosity, with the description of an entire night spent at the dressing table contemplating how to best stage her re-conquest. The evocation of the courtesan image is purposefully ironic, when, in the following chapter, she realizes the possible unsavory connotations of choosing an afternoon gown for the early morning mission; she fears being confused for a woman returning from a rendezvous. The label is indeed evocative of the Orientalized odalisque-courtesan; however, it was also associated with an entire subgenre of Japanese prints, the so-called *bijin-ga* "beautiful person pictures," dedicated to depictions of high-class prostitutes of nineteenth-century Edo and Kyoto. In the prints of Utamaro Kitagawa, these women are often shown preparing to receive clients: emerging from the bath, applying makeup or dressing their hair, and communing in the common, intimate spaces of teahouses.
A key feature that heightens the realist effect of *ukiyo-e* paintings and prints reside in the moment of action selected for the depictions of their subjects. In Utamaro's "Naniwa Okita Admiring Herself in a Mirror" (1790-95), the elegant woman is shown in her boudoir, seated before a mirror, just prior to an engagement in a private interval normally hidden from the public gaze (fig. 4). Potential rather than consummation, as David Bell points out, produces a sense of gentle eroticism complemented by the underlying tension between the refinement of color and line and the unrefined nature of the subject matter (72). A similar image is evoked

in Galdós's novel, in the chapter "La revolución," when María allows herself to be dressed and coiffed:

> María se dejó llevar ante el espejo de su tocador en la pieza inmediata; dejóse caer en la silla. El espejo estaba cubierto con un gran paño negro, y parecía un catafalco. Quitaron el paño, y nació, digámoslo así, sobre el limpio cristal inundado de claridad, la imagen hechicera de María Sudre. Aquello parecía un raro ejemplo de la creación del mundo. (263)

Peter Bly's suggestion that "Her careful toilette is a protracted session of autoerotic delight," concurs with interpretations of a mirror's function in Japanese prints (78). Mara Miller observes how in Utamaro's work "women examining themselves in the mirror […] exemplify the self as Subject taking itself as object, adopting toward itself the stance of the Other" (445). The phantasmagoric re-appearance of María on the surface of the mirror is closely aligned with the way portraiture of figures in the "floating world" is less concerned with revealing true character and appearance than in uncovering how the individual decides to reveal itself to the world (Miller 432). Like the Japanese courtesan, her restoration results from her intention to be beautiful and to seduce. If she is mistaken for a courtesan, as the title of the next chapter suggests, it is because she has chosen to provoke such an effect in order to achieve the desired re-conquest of León.

The possible allusion to *Japonisme* contained in the scene of María's refurbishment is anchored in chapter 16 when she is left alone with her mother, the Marchioness of Telleria, to make the final preparations for her mission. Noticing that several pieces of jewelry and various other valuable objects have mysteriously disappeared from her boudoir, María eventually inquires: "Di, ¿no te llevaste también las cortinas de seda, mis encajes, mi escritorio de ébano y marfil, el tarjetero, los vasos de Zuloaga, las dos jarras de Sévres, el abanico pintado por Zamacois, la acuarela de Fortuny y no sé qué más?" (267). The collection of vanished objects suggests a visual style that would contrast sharply with the overbearingly religious tone of the room's remaining decorations, "imágenes, láminas, estampas y reliquias que hacían de su alcoba un museo de devoción" (266). The ebony and ivory writing desk, the vases from the Zuloaga ceramic factories near Segovia, the fan decorated by Zamacois, and the watercolor by Fortuny, all add a *japoniste* dimension to the scene. Whereas the furniture and Zuloaga vases evoke the hybrid mixing of Chinese and Japanese styles popular among mid-century consumers, the names Zamacois and Fortuny constitute a more literal connection to *japonisme*.[16] Given the moniker applied to María earlier in the novel, "odalisca mojigata," it is possible that Galdós had in mind one of Fortuny's early works set in Egypt, or a preparatory sketch for one of his odalisques. However, grouped with the other disappeared objects, the watercolor could also evoke the painter's nascent fascination with Japan.

The mention of Fortuny here associates María with both *japonisme* and Orientalist aesthetics and offers further evidence of a connection between the historical León Roches and Galdós's protagonist. The confrontation between the couple, thusly framed, replicates the tension underlying encounters between East and West that drive both aesthetics. In the final chapter of part two, "El deshielo," the novel reaches a dramatic climax when María, in

a violent fit, rejects the duality implicit in her self-fashioning as courtesan by tearing away her carefully confected outfit: "Se miró el pecho y el lujoso vestido, y lanzando una exlclamación de horror, añadió: Las mujeres consagradas a Dios no se visten con este uniforme del vicio" (285). Her staid and calculating image reflected in the boudoir mirror as erotic potential is displaced by the frustration of unconsummated desire, causing her to collapse into physical and moral enervation as she tries to plant a kiss on her husband's cheek: "El médico habló de congestión cerebral... El caso era grave..." (288).

The Man in the Japanese Room

The imaginary battle at the end of part one of *La familia de León Roch* foreshadows Luis's death and the rupture that will ultimately, and permanently separate María from León. The haunting prefiguration of the dead Jesuit as Japanese later resurfaces in different form during the last part of the novel that unfolds in the southern Madrid suburb of Carabanchel Alto at Suertebella, the Fúcar's summer palace. The narrator describes the sumptuous residence much earlier, in part two, when León first flees Madrid to escape María:

> Era de planta baja, constituido por larga serie de grandes salones en fila, decorados primorosamente. Quien haya visto las viviendas de la aristocracia bancaria, comprenderá que no faltaba el salón árabe, obra delicada de Contreras, ni el japonés, ni el gótico-sajón, ni menos el rutinario Luis XV. (170)[17]

The home boasts all the expected features corresponding to the owner's wealth and class including a *salón japonés*, which compared to the other themed-rooms would have been a true novelty in 1870s Madrid. The surname Fúcar has a long and storied past in Spain that originates with the wealthy, fifteenth-century German merchant Jakob Fugger, who notoriously lent money to King Charles V. Lisa Surwillo notes how the Pedro de Fúcar character, who also appears in the 1884-85 novel *Lo prohibido*, makes a loose reference to the historical figure; however, the Japanese room at Suertebella also ties him more explicitly to a nineteenth-century figure, which she also studies but does not connect to Galdós's literary creation: Juan Manuel de Manzanedo (92). Despite its location, the palace in the novel resembles the Madrid home of the banker, the Palacio de Santoña, which presented one of Spain's earliest examples of a Japanese-themed salón oriental in 1876.[18] The *ukiyo-e* inspired panels representing Edo-period scenes of commerce that decorate Manzanedo's room suggest a space used for informal business transactions and intimate conversations with friends (fig.5).

Christopher Reed, in his study of Japanese-styled interiors, describes the development of *japonisme* "as a form of masculine sociability forged around a self-consciously fantastical idea of Japan" (57). Conceived as spaces reserved for connoisseurship of things-Japanese among men, such rooms were nonetheless also places of exchange in which prints and other objects were traded. The walls of the Palacio de Santoña feature images of items collected by European *japonistes*– silks, ceramics, and other Japanese wares– being bought and sold in an environment evocative of the Japan represented in *ukiyo-e* prints (fig. 5). The function of the *salón japonés* as a transactional space among men is carried over to Galdós's novel as the

room serves as the backdrop for the continuation of the "age-old drama" referred to earlier. The masculine struggle for dominance over one another and for control over María's body is rearticulated as a negotiation: the brother-in-law is replaced by the father-in-law, Don Agustín Luciano de Sudre, and the conflict is no longer spiritual but rather a question of honor. More important still, the site of the encounter is no longer a figment of the hero's imagination but rather the real and richly decorated Japanese-themed room at Suertebella. The Tellería family, the marquises and their two sons Gustavo and Polito, rush to the Fúcar's home where María has been removed for better care following her collapse only to discover that León has barred them from seeing her due to her delicate "moral" condition (320). Full of consternation, the tense first encounter between Agustín and Milagros and their estranged son-in-law moves from visitation issues to the larger looming question: a possible reconciliation of the married couple. León's resolute "no" causes Don Agustín to take him aside for a man-to-man talk:

> Estaban en el salón japonés, lleno de figuras de pesadilla. Por sus paredes de laca andaban, cual mariposas paseadoras, hombrecillos dorados, cigüeñas meditabundas, tarimas de retorcidos escalones, árboles que parecían manos y cabezas que parecían obleas. (322).

As in the presentation of Luis before, here the reader is invited to visualize Roch's in-laws by confounding them with the nightmarish figures that congregate and parade across the lacquered-panel walls of the room. In a striking ekphrastic exercise, the narrator continues:

> Las figuras humanas no asentaban sus redondos pies en el suelo, ni los árboles tenían raíces; las casas parecían volar lo mismo que los pájaros. Allí no había suelo, sino una suspensión arbitraria de todos los objetos sobre un fondo oscuro y brillante como un cielo de tinta (322).

The placement of the figures and objects swirling about like butterflies, and the mind-bending architecture and twisted vegetation, capture the principals of asymmetry and suspension found in *ukiyo-e* prints. The sense of floating associated with the hedonistic world of pleasure becomes literal as everything in the room, decorations and occupants, appear to be untethered against the dark colored background and removed from the real world that lies outside.

Further elaborating the image of the Japanese salon as a place of retreat, Reed notes how women's acquisition of the taste for things-Japanese was looked upon as a threat both to the aesthetic movement as well as to middle-class standards of femininity (68). Thus, it is worth noting that Milagros is present in the scene, even though the room is clearly marked as one usually reserved for male guests. The "hombrecillos" on the walls constitute a bizarre male coterie of impartial observers who comment on the way in which the Tellerías, both husband and wife, react to León's response, making a subtle distinction in terms of gender:

> Los desabridos rostros japoneses parecían hacer con su estupidez castiza el comentario más elocuente de la escena viva, y las mariposas de oro y plata reproducían, por arbitrio de la fantasía en aquella especie de estancia soñada, la sonrisa jeroglífica de la marquesa de Tellería. Cacharros de color de chocolate poblaban rincones y mesas; y viendo los ídolos tan graves, tan tristes, tan feos, tan

> hidrópicos, tan aburridos se hubiera creído que estaban comentando en teología mística asiática la tristeza indefinible de don Agustín Luciano de Sudre. (322)

Throughout the novel, Milagros's airs of moral rectitude are undermined by her flagrant materialism; in this instance, the authenticity of her concern for her daughter competes with the sense of awe caused by Fúcar's generous invitation for her and her family to make themselves at home and to stay for as long as needed. Given that León's decision to abandon his wife signifies an important setback for the Tellería household economy, the reference to her hieroglyphic smile is ironic and suggests a critique of her mindless insensitivity to her daughter's crisis.

The conclave of little men seems to be more sympathetic to Don Agustín's suffering, and the reference to the presumably Buddhist statuary scattered around the room adds a mystic dimension to the encounter with León that connects back to the battle initiated earlier by his son Luis. Even though the term *ukiyo*, by the eighteenth-century, had come to signify more literally a world of passing fashions, the pleasures represented in prints continued to be dogged by the Buddhist origins that remind the viewer of life's fleetingness and the suffering inherent to human existence. The duality undergirding Japanese art and decoration is transposed here to suggest that the cause of Don Agustin's "indefinable sadness," from the Buddhist perspective represented by the idols, is in fact knowable. His clinging to the antiquated notion of honor manifests a resistance to see the world as it is: full of suffering. At the same time, Milagros's desire for material goods and immortality, guaranteed by her Catholic faith, are shown to be the cause of suffering –not only for her, but also for her husband, the family, and even her son-in-law.

The description of Suertebella's *salón japonés* does not merely detail Japan-inspired decoration, but also includes what can be surmised as authentic Japanese objects collected by the owner. The narrator emphasizes Fúcar's activities as an art collector and how this has shaped the entire palace interior: "una mano pródiga y muy ducha en elegir reunió cuanto de rico, raro y bonito producen las artes suntuarias de nuestros días" (170). The conversation between León and Agustín continues in the next room decorated in arabesque style, reflecting again the fusion of *japoniste* and Orientalist tastes: "Como se pasa de una página a otra en un libro de estampas, así se pasaba de la habitación japonesa al gran salón árabe, donde estaba el billar" (323). Through the metaphor of the print album, the narrator clearly evokes the series of contiguous rooms that comprise the main floor of the palace, but the allusion also suggests something about the nature of Fúcar's art collecting practice. The presence of a *salon japonés* in the home could be taken as evidence that the owner is in step with Paris-based *japonisme*. But, as just one room among many designated for the accumulation of art objects of varied origin, it might also suggest that the collection of Japanese art at Suertebella is nothing more than a bibelot of *japonaiseries*. María's confessor, the effeminate and *cursi* Italian Father Paoletti, is especially taken by the palace's artwork, and is offered a personal tour:

> Paoletti, que era entendidísimo en artes bellas y aun en las suntuarias, elogió mucho las riquezas de Suertebella, dando así propicia coyuntura al marqués para que gustara su satisfacción predilecta, que era enseñar el palacio, sala tras sala, sirviendo él de *cicerone*... (333)

The episode is laced with irony when the visitor's dubious artistic tastes, derived from his condition and relation to León's wife, is aligned with that of Fúcar by way of his appreciation of the collection.

Despite being fashioned as a space for masculine sociability and connoisseurship, then, the *salón japonés* at Suertebella might simply be an expression of pure consumerism more often associated with women than with men. In fact, during the Telleria's temporary residence, the Japanese room becomes a refuge and center of operations for Milagros. There she receives the gossipy Pilar San Salomó and other friends who come to comfort her during her tribulations; she also attempts to make sense of the household finances with her son Leopoldo; and finally, she seeks consolation following the spectacle of María's funeral. In the strange countenances that decorate the space, Milagros may find solace, because they remind her of similar objects in her Madrid home, or because they recall the cadaveric figure of her dead son Luis lurking among them in the shadows. Either way, the gendering of the room implied in the narrative reflects how, by the mid-1870s, as the enthusiasm for things-Japanese reached Spain, the dynamics of *japonisme* began to shift beyond all-male circles, and the sites of *japonisme*, such as shops and themed-rooms, became gathering places for women as well (Reed 62).

In the penultimate chapter of *La familia de León Roch*, Pedro de Fúcar accompanies a distraught León to the *salón japonés* and deposits him there following the unpleasant confrontation with Federico Cimarra, Pepa's husband. The gesture on the part of León's would-be father-in-law seems strange unless the symbolic importance of the space is reconsidered. As Walter Benjamin points out, "[t]he collector dreams his way not only into a distant or bygone world but also into a better one" (qtd. in Genova 86). With the departures of the Tellerias, and later the Cimarras, the Japanese room is recovered as a refuge outside of time: "Largo rato estuvo allí León sin conciencia del tiempo que transcurría. Lentamente volvieron sus alteradas facultades, si no al reposo, a un estado en que le era posible la apreciación exacta de las cosas" (439). Whereas before the sight of the floating figures on the walls of the room was nightmarishly unsettling, now it has a calming effect that allows him to clear his mind and think straight. The therapeutic aspect of the Japanese room attributed by the owner-collector translates into a narrative function grounded in the aesthetic convention of the *ukiyo-e* print by which heroes are depicted in a state of suspension, at a moment just before or after taking a decisive action that defines their character (Bell 78). Like the eroticism distilled in the image of María as courtesan, here Galdós transposes a similar visual narrative technique by momentarily detaining León in the *salón japonés* as he gathers the wherewithal to make his final exit from Suertebella. In the following scene, the moment of hesitation used by Japanese artists to create tension and heighten melodramatic effect in portraits of *kabuki* actors in famous roles is repeated tactically just as León glimpses the deceased María laid out in the palace chapel: "Sobrecogido, incapaz de movimiento, con la vida toda en suspenso, permaneció un rato junto a la puerta, percibiendo en la vaguedad de su estupor un montón de luces […]" (439). Melodrama is, however, diffused when the hero concedes defeat and retreats to his home instead of committing suicide, which would be the expected honorable action for a Japanese warrior at the end of a *kabuki* play or a Castilian gentleman in the conclusion of a Romantic drama.

Conclusion

Clearly by 1878, *japonisme* had entered discussions of artistic renovation in Madrid, and the consumption of *japonaiseries* came to be a sign of class, if not refinement, among the bourgeoisie and middle classes of the early Restoration. Thus, it is not surprising that Galdós integrates elements of both forms of engagement with Japan into his textual world to create an accurate portrait of Spanish society. How and when he discovered *japonisme* is difficult to determine, but the presence of Japanese decorations and evidence of experimentation with certain *japoniste* techniques in *La familia de León Roch*, situate the novelist at the forefront of the Japan-craze in Spain. As similes, the hidden reference to Japan contained in the name León Roch, and the more explicit allusions made in relation to the twin characters Luis and María, might serve merely a decorative role in the overall composition of the novel. Yet, the way in which the narrator insists on these connections throughout the story, and situates the *salón japonés* at the center of the denouement, reveals a key narrative function in the development and resolution of the plot. The projection in *La familia de León Roch* of the tension between *japonisme*, as an authentic form of aesthetic engagement, and *japonaiserie*, as superficial flirtation, provides another mode of reading the protagonist's ideological struggle by giving it a further visual dimension. Like the *japoniste* connoisseur whose fascination with the arts of Japan is threatened by the artificial and inauthentic *japonaiserie*, so too is León's liberal doctrine as an aesthetic enterprise defeated by María's neo-Catholic *cursilería*.

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NOTES

[1] See Bly; Smith "Recepción"; Smith "Galdós y Sorolla."

[2] See Gold; Valis.

[3] The classification of Japanese art forms as decorative rather fine art became a point of dispute among Japanese authorities and organizers of the 1873 and 1878 Universal Expositions in Vienna and Paris, respectively; see Coaldrake.

[4] For example: in *Tormento* the Aztec-styled pottery displayed in Agustin Caballero's office is compared to Japanese *seto* ware; in *Fortunata y Jacinta* the nun who takes pity on Mauricia at the Micaelas is likened to a masked Japanese figure; and in *Voluntad*, two Japanese vases are mentioned in the stage directions.

[5] See Jagoe; George.

[6] The term *Japonisme* is attributed to a series of six articles published by French art critic and collector Philippe Burty (1830-1890) in *La Renaissance Littéraire et Artistique* in 1872-73, written with the intention of disseminating knowledge of Japanese culture and customs among artists and the public; Burty was an acquaintance of painters Edouard Manet and Jame McNeil Whistler, and is credited with encouraging them to incorporate Japanese elements into their works (Weisberg 19).

[7] The Universal Expositions in Vienna in 1873 and Philadelphia in 1876 were also key to the development of *japonisme*, although less relevant to the Galdós case; see Coaldrake.

[8] Hokenson suggests that Zola's pursuit of transparency can be attributed equally to the application of the scientific method as to an embrace of Japanese aesthetic principles (84).

[9] Galdós covered the fair for *La Prensa* (Ortiz-Armengol 428).

[10] Later, Arturo Mélida also designed the furniture for the office and created other decorations for Galdós's San Quintin mansion.

[11] See Carrasco; González.

[12] Ortiz-Armengol refers the 1878 trip to Paris as "una breve escapada" without further detail (328).

[13] See Guereña; Behiels.

[14] Japanese arts and crafts were displayed at three separate pavilions in 1867: one sponsored by the Tokugawa shogunate, and the others by the rivaling Satsuma and Saga domains (Satô 108).

[15] See Almazán.

[16] See Rubio Celada.

[17] The Marquis of Salamanca's Vista Alegre in Carabanchel featured an arabesque room designed by Rafael Contreras, but did not have an Oriental room.

[18] The restoration of the palace interior was executed by Domingo Inza, and like Suertebella, it too features rooms decorated in Turkish-style and the more traditional Louis XV.

FIGURES

Fig. 1 Japanese Masks in the Casa-Museo Pérez Galdós. Casa-Museo Pérez Galdós, Las Palmas de Gran Canaría.

Fig. 2 Léon Roches, second French representative to Japan, circa 1865. Photograph. Wikicommons.

FIGURES

Fig. 3 Utagawa Kuniyoshi, "The Earth Spider Generates Monsters at the Mansion of Lord Minamoto," 1843. Woodblock Print. Waseda University Library, Tokyo.

Fig. 4 Kitagawa Utamaro, "Naniwa Okita Admiring Herself in a Mirror," 1790-05. Woodblock Print. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

FIGURES

Fig. 5 Detail, *Salón Oriental*, Palacio de Santoña, Madrid. Photograph.

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