

The Airy and the Irrational: Elaborating on the Meanings of the *Petimetra* from a Selection of Goya's *Caprichos* and the Spanish Periodical *El Censor*

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Abstract:

In the final years of the eighteenth century, a number of Francisco de Goya's etchings from his collection known as *Caprichos* visually inscribed the female within the literary production of his time, most evidently perhaps within the satirical publication *El Censor*.¹ The eighteenth-century Spanish female prototype, depicted in a number of *El Censor*'s essays and later seen in a few of Goya's *Caprichos*, was the *petimetra*: a cultural invention employed and exploited with misogynist tone. The *petimetra* was a contemporary fashionably dressed woman, mainly adopting French styles, who may equally have been a member of the aristocracy or the middle social groups. It was a figure present in eighteenth-century Spanish iconography and literature and was used to criticize those who adopted affected, artificial and pretentious styles. The *petimetra* was a pejorative word that ridiculed thoughtless imitation of foreign influences.

Keywords: Francisco de Goya | *Caprichos* | *El Censor* | *petimetra*

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Ana Hontanilla

In the final years of the eighteenth century, a number of Francisco de Goya's etchings from his collection known as *Caprichos* visually inscribed the female within the literary production of his time, most evidently perhaps within the satirical publication *El Censor*.¹ The eighteenth-century Spanish female prototype, depicted in a number of *El Censor*'s essays and later seen in a few of Goya's *Caprichos*, was the *petimetra*: a cultural invention employed and exploited with misogynist tone. The *petimetra* was a contemporary fashionably dressed woman, mainly adopting French styles, who may equally have been a member of the aristocracy or the middle social groups. It was a figure present in eighteenth-century Spanish iconography and literature and was used to criticize those who adopted affected, artificial and pretentious styles. The *petimetra* was a pejorative word that ridiculed thoughtless imitation of foreign influences.

El Censor characterized this female prototype as a woman who delighted in "ricos trages, primorosos abanicos, aderezos costosísimos," and "vive en el seno de los placeres, y recibiendo inciensos de todo el mundo" (I 6:32). She was both "un animal que se deleita en el adorno" and a monstrous product of artifice given that her hips, head, and breasts balloon mysteriously depending on ever changing fashion dictates (II 26: 115; III 49: 212). In *Caprichos* 61 *Volaverunt* (see Appendix 1) and number 26 *Ya tienen asiento* (see Appendix 5), Goya characterized the *petimetra* according to her unsubstantial vanity and irrational ostentations. In *La mujer y la serpiente* (see Appendix 3), one of the illustrations in Goya's collection known as *El espejo mágico*, the reflection of the fashionable woman in the mirror consists of a snake curled up in a scythe.² For *El Censor* and Goya, the *petimetra* was

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then a female figure whose obsession with fashion, voluptuous styles, and luxurious appearances defiantly overstepped the boundaries of her gender role, thus becoming a deviant sexual identity occasionally equated to that of a monster.

Perhaps Virginia Wolf—the English novelist, essayist, and critic—was one of the first women writers keenly aware of the intersections of the written text and the visual, as well as the cultural myths that underpin both. In a collection of essays published in 1932, she addressed the issue of how viewers approach visual images in search of evidence and place upon the photograph their preconceived notions of knowledge, truth, and fact (Wussow 3). In the depiction of women, Lou Charnon-Deutsch also understands that the connection between the visual arts and literature exposes an inclination to seek pragmatic verification of images that emerge from verbal accounts. She has observed in relation to nineteenth-century male representations of women that pictorial images show an inclination to establish an empirical confirmation of the verbal. When visual artists offer the aid of iconic illustration to literature, one can observe a wish to reaffirm the correspondence between the visual and the spiritual functioning of the mind. In other words, the picture supports the intellectual speculations, paradoxically making the products of the human mind more truthful and real. As Goya himself expressed in 1797, in what might have been his first introduction to the *Caprichos*, the artist's only purpose in dreaming was “desterrar vulgaridades perjudiciales y perpetuar con esta obra de caprichos, el sólido testimonio de la verdad” (qtd. in Helman 48).

A common understanding of Goya's *Caprichos*, in particular those that depict women, is that they do offer an authentic visual support to the satirical literary texts of the time. In the nineteenth century, French poet Charles Baudelaire indicated that “Le grand mérite de Goya consiste à créer le monstrueux vraisemblable” (The great merit of the *Caprichos* was to present true-to-life monstrosity) (2: 569-70). Francisco Calvo Serraller, curator of the exposition *Goya: la imagen de la mujer* organized by the Prado Museum in 2002 and author of the first essay in the exhibition's catalogue, also pointed out the following:

Goya siempre se las arregla para dotar con un realismo y una penetración cualquiera de [sus imágenes] como para que pensemos que, más abstractas o más concretas, no nos ayuden a completar nuestra información y nuestro criterio acerca de la imagen femenina en el artista. Por eso, sean el icono de vírgenes, santas, figuras mitológicas o de ideas, todas nos muestran mujeres, a veces, de escalofriante aspecto real. (50)

René Andioc suggests that the *Caprichos* refer to an immediate reality, recreating uses and customs of the time (1-18). Andrew Schultz has pointed out that, although still in an imaginative manner, Goya's *Caprichos* that criticize perceived ignorant or foolish behavior of women rely on an observational realistic mode in straightforward representational terms (105-06). In these etchings, the intended attack against the vanity of women, their extremes in fashion, exaggerated emphasis on beauty, and their role in the relationship between the sexes is easy to identify as the visual equivalent of the literary condemnation of the *petimetra* stereotype. Other *Caprichos*, in contrast, are purely imaginary. For example, in plates 45, captioned *Mucho hay que chupan*; 46 *Correccion*; 49 *Duendecitos*; 50 *Los Chinchillas*, and 51 *Se repulen*, the target of satire and ridicule is more difficult to determine since there

is no correspondence between the image and any perceived object of reality. In opposition to the purely fantastic and monstrous images of these plates, Goya's representation of the *petimetra* is predominantly ruled by the observational realistic mode of neoclassical art.

While Goya's etchings helped literature convey commonly accepted impressions of eighteenth-century women, the function of the visual illustration in the recreation of truth and reality demands a more detailed examination. Contemporary art critics argue for the need to move away from the temptation to interpret any products of the human mind as truthful representations of the world. It is no longer held that there is a direct connection between artistic work and reality. On the contrary, they are two distinct areas governed by their own set of rules that may influence each other yet must be understood separately within their own structural framework. Realism depicts an observation that conforms to the rules of art, in which the likeness of what is imitated is a construction displaced from a certain perception of reality (Knudsen 11). Feminist literary critics such as Hélène Cixous contend, furthermore, that when women appear in representation, they do not signify real women but the artist's own desires and fears (qtd. in Owens 75). Lou Charnon-Deutsch suggests that the role of feminist critics must be to investigate the representation of women from the perspective of gender ideology with the goal of exposing the way structures of male power and male gazing are privileged in literature and visual arts (xii).³

Following this line of inquiry, I understand that the connection of the visual and the literary, instead of offering a realistic representation of women, provides clues to the role Goya's illustrations play in shaping and reinforcing the predominant anxieties and concerns of the time; perhaps his own but mainly those of the Spanish enlightenment. These concerns relate to the declining economy in eighteenth-century Spain as well as to the transformations that commercialization brings to personal relations. Simultaneously, while both literary satires and Goya's illustrations are social registers, transmitting the ideological concerns of eighteenth-century intellectuals, they also embody gender-linked perceptions that have remained unchanged in the Spanish social imagination through the ages. The symbiotic connection between a number of Goya's *Caprichos* and some of *El Censor*'s essays regarding the question of the feminine exposes the visual image's initial capacity to confirm common assumptions at a glance.⁴

El Censor was one of the most controversial publications that appeared in Madrid between 1781 and 1787. It followed the model of the popular British magazines *The Tatler* (1709-1711) and *The Spectator* (1711-1712, 1714) by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. In between various suspensions of its publication by the State censorship and the Spanish Inquisition, *El Censor*'s purpose was to identify and criticize "vicios particulares de nuestra nación y nuestra era: errores capitales é importantísimos, de los quales [. . .] nacen otros infinitos, y que son el origen de todas nuestras miserias" (VII 137: 619). Similar to the British periodicals, *El Censor* did not include conventional news coverage but took as its subject matter a broad range of topics crucial to everyday life in eighteenth-century Spain. José Miguel Caso González has shown that only thanks to the frequent interventions of King Carlos III in favor of the publication, *El Censor* was able to continue with its criticism against the Inquisition, the aristocrats and a broad range of controversial topics (777-99). Among other subjects, *El Censor* addressed topics related to fashion and

education—both men and women’s—and, in line with the role the paper took as a lucid legislator and rational reformer of culture and society, the editors used a variety of rhetorical tools such as allegorical dreams, short moralistic stories, and satires.

Twelve years after *El Censor* had ceased publication, Francisco de Goya offered his *Caprichos* for public sale in *El Diario de Madrid*, on February 6, 1799.⁵ He advertised his work under the title *Colección de estampas de asuntos caprichosos inventadas y grabadas al aguafuerte*, specifying that the collection of 80 engravings be sold for 320 *reales* per set—the equivalent of one ounce of gold—at a perfume and liquor shop located on *Calle del Desengaño* no. 1, above which the artist lived. The expression *asuntos caprichosos* generally connoted the concern of Goya with artistic freedom and signaled that the collection would be imaginative in nature and would transgress accepted artistic conventions (Schulz 100-01).⁶ Goya, however, had previously suggested the didactic purpose of his dreaming, indicating that his intention was also to eradicate damaging ideas generally accepted by society and to propagate with this work of *caprichos* “the solid testimony of truth.”

One of those pictorial combinations of the author’s dreams and facts from reality is plate number 61 *Volaverunt* (see Appendix 1). In this *capricho* Goya compared the light empty-headed *petimetra* to a hot air balloon. In the satirical caption of his *Capricho* 61, he established that the denser air that occupies fashionable women’s heads must be the natural component that helped them fly and not the aid of the witches they had befriended. According to the manuscript at the Prado Museum, the caption for this plate reads as follows: “El grupo de brujas que sirve de peana a la petimetra más que necesidad es adorno. Hay cabezas tan llenas de gas inflamable que no necesitan para volar ni globo ni brujas.”⁷ The weightless *petimetra* in *Capricho* 61 is a character indulging in a secretive, self-absorbed, luxuriant behavior, whose adornments, as *El Censor* also indicated in its essay number 26, further attest to the degree of her “ligereza, e inestabilidad [y] el grado de inconstancia” (III 26: 115-16).

This *Capricho* visually echoes a satirical piece in *El Censor* concerning anatomical findings on the *petimetra*’s airy disposition, published in 1787. In the science lab, the autopsy of a young girl reveals that the *petimetra*’s chest is reduced to a cavity and her head is full of air, although of a denser type than normal. As the narrator observes her brain tissue through the microscope, he communicates the results of his research, done in the company of a surgeon friend of his, in the following manner:

Reconociendo en su compañía el cadaver de una Dama que se murió estos dias pasados repentinamente [. . .] dirigimonos lo primero al cerebro [. . .]. Pero abierta esta grande glandula, lexos de hallar en ella la abundancia de linfas que esperabamos, la hallamos al contrario extraordinariamente seca, ninguna serosidad de las que alli suele haber en los ventriculos, ni otra cosa que ayre, pero un ayre mas denso de lo regular. Ni en todas las demás partes encontramos otra que esta novedad. Mas reconociendo con el Microscopio los cuerpos striados, se nos presentó el espectáculo mas raro, y menos esperado del mundo. Vimos delineados en ellos, como si fuera en una lamina abierta à buril, una infinidad de lazos de diferentes hechuras,

de redes, de reclamos, y de otros artificios, semejantes a los que se usan para la caza de los animales vivos, de muy estrañas invenciones si, pero no muy perfectos, ni demasiadamente oportunos para el fin à que parecian destinados. (III 49: 214)

Goya's understanding of women's empty-headed nature as represented in the flying *petimetra* of *Capricho* 61 is the visual equivalent of the anatomic analysis of the girl's cadaver. Similar to a hot air balloon, the denser air that occupies women's heads is perhaps the scientific explanation of their natural insubstantiality and their subsequent ability to float.

Twentieth-century literary critics have indeed indicated that the *petimetra* is a female figure "who embodies the scandal of her disobedience and willfulness" against the rationality of enlightened reforms. According to Rebecca Haidt, "*Petimetras* are self-absorbed, overspending, flirtatious women whose desires and habits defy the cultural parameters within which 'appropriate' feminine behavior is to develop" (*Embodying* 9, 110). The fickleness of the *petimetra*, her voluble and inconstant capriciousness that tends to satisfy the thoughtless desires of her uncontrollable vanity, was not only perceived as a sign of women's insubstantiality but also as resulting in spending habits seen as the root of the evils affecting the country.

According to this logic, the anonymous writer of *El Censor*'s discourse number 54 understands that women are to blame for the economic ruin of the state and the family, and he validates his thesis through a prophetic vision. The narrator starts this essay by declaring that, although it is not in his mind to make public all the extravagant products of his imagination, he is unable to resist the temptation to publish the singular dream he had a few days ago. He begins his new fantastic story in the following way:

Había pasado la tarde en casa de un Caballero, que tiene un Gavinete muy curioso de instrumentos de Física y Matemática, sumamente entretenido en reconocer diferentes máquinas y modelos, que me parecieron muy particulares, y muy ingeniosos. Las ideas de todas estas cosas llenaron tanto, y agitaron de manera mi imaginación todo el resto del día, que, quando acostado ya me quedé dormido, creí hallarme otra vez en el mismo Gavinete. Allí, después de reconocer otras nuevas máquinas muy estrañas, y que jamás me acordaba de haber visto ni aun delineadas o descritas, fijaron mi atención algunas, que había catóptricas y dióptricas, las quales me parecieron mucho más admirables que las demás. (III 54: 230)

In his dream, the narrator pays special attention to certain optical instruments. His gentleman friend, and owner of the marvelous scientific collection, offers, as a gift to him, this particular and special optical lens. The virtue of this magnifying glass is its ability to show "objetos en su verdadera y natural figura, y de hacer patente lo mas intimo, y recondito de todas las cosas" (III 54: 230). Eager to test the prodigious ability of the instrument, the narrator goes out onto the street where he encounters a crowd of people.

For the narrator, this situation presents a golden opportunity that allows him to test the powers of his recent acquisition.

Placing the lens up to his eye to observe what is passing by in the street, he becomes stunned by what he sees:

[El corazón] de una Dama que se habia asomado à un balcón, no era mas que un agregado de baratijas, como naipes, dados, y bolas de biribis, sumamente pequeñas, y dispuestas de manera que hacian la figura de corazon verdadero. El de otra estaba todo compuesto de rollos de cintas, de escofietas de diversas hechuras, bufandas, sombrerillos, y otras cosas de este genero, menudisimas todas, y contenidas en una bolsa piramidal, hecha de punto de malla. (III 54: 231)

From the perspective of the pre-capitalist Spanish society already under the influences of early British capitalism, this vision in *El Censor* draws attention to the concern among the enlightened Spanish elite over the transformation that commercialization brings to human nature and relations.⁸ Objects mysteriously substitute, direct and even produce a new perception of what it means to be human. As a result, human beings are reduced to, and absorbed by, the commodities they consume.⁹ Although fashion typically refers to outward appearances of the body, in this case women's hearts are absorbed and directed by the passions that material objects foster. These objects appear internalized and at the same time dematerialized; they become part of the intangible environment of the imagination. In this process of fragmentation *El Censor* highlights the degradation of women who feverishly pursue the external elements of contemporary fashions, and the human condition is eclipsed by the accumulation of cheap jewelry, ribbons, lace and hats. The net that envelops all these objects replaces the female emotional potential. The implication, of course, is that this results from the perverse impressions that material things leave in the *petimetra*'s imagination due to her lack of rationality.

Interestingly, the perception of the effects of consumption on the female body and emotions takes place in the context of a dream. Seduced by the abundant artifacts that his friend possesses, *El Censor* describes the fantasies provoked by these artifacts. Taking into consideration this circumstance, the narrator becomes trapped by the peculiar fascination that the mind creates surrounding everything new and different, surprisingly similar to the mindset of the women in his stories. Nonetheless, unlike the reification that the female figures suffer, the imaginary insights of the narrator have great aesthetic and educational value, and are therefore important to share with the reading public. As part of the effort to discipline women's nature, sight and imagination play an important role. For this reason, *El Censor* takes upon itself the task of distinguishing between the correct and incorrect ways of seeing, determining the legitimate and illegitimate ways of observing, and uses and abuses of the imagination. In this process, the object of analysis is the consumer of fashion who is presented as an example of the possible monstrosities that imagination promotes when abandoned to its own excesses. On the other hand, the observer-narrator finds that the tendency toward the marvelous, besides being the object of criticism and control, is ironically his best ally in the enlightened project of social reform. The social critic's imaginative satires and allegorical visions are offered as

intellectual pleasures and pedagogical tools that contribute to the transformation of long-established perceptions into factual and natural reality.

While observing with his magnifying glass another woman passing by, the narrator's privileged perspective explains the following:

Pero no fue esto lo que me sorprendió mas en esta Dama, sino que todas las cintas, plumas, perlas, y diamantes de que habia visto adornada su cabeza, no me parecieron con mi Lente, sin una multitud de encintas, y gruesos pinos. De manera, que toda aquella cabeza me parecia un dilatado bosque [. . .] Un fenómeno tan prodigioso me la hizo examinar con mas cuidado: y habiendolo hecho, me pareció la muger de cierto Caballero conocido mio, cuyas grandes posesiones dicen estar no poco deterioradas después de su casamiento. De donde congeturé, que aquellos arboles serían acaso unos que hizo cortar poco há, dexando raso un gran bosque, que abastecia de carbon gran parte del año à todo un pueblo. (III 54: 231-32)

According to anthropologist Mary Douglas, the body is the primary classification system for cultures, by means of which notions of order and disorder are represented and managed. As the passage from *El Censor* above explicitly states, the turmoil that the female stereotype of the *petimetra* personifies is the decadence and economic loss of the family and the state. In Spain, since the seventeenth-century, peninsular and colonial consumer demand was satisfied by the importation of foreign goods, a situation that led to a steady increase in foreign debt. During the eighteenth century, Spain's intellectual elite recognized that the increase in consumption of foreign goods was not only detrimental to the already declining national industries, but the increasing international debt also caused a large financial loss for the state.¹⁰ Among other factors, women's vanity and spending habits were held responsible for Spain's declining economy. Therefore, *El Censor* concluded that extravagant and excessive female behavior associated with the consumption of fashions, besides causing women's airy nature, was one of the reasons that determined the economic backwardness of Spain in comparison to neighboring European countries. Indeed, while in England the fashionable female figure served to represent the expansion of the British Empire, in Spain the *petimetra* embodied the economic loss of the country.

In eighteenth-century English literature, the embellished representations of women should be understood both as a celebration of growing British mercantile capitalism and as an embodiment of the dangers of speculation and the financial market underwritten by credit (Brown 103-34; Pocock 91-102). The Spanish fashionable woman, however, unlike her British counterpart, is not endowed, either in literature or in plastic arts, with any congratulatory meaning. Women's alleged preference for foreign products supports the connection traditionally established between women's fashion and the destruction of the family's and the state's wealth as the basis for the negative representation of women's economic role. Rebecca Haidt situates the study of the Spanish *petimetra* "in the context of material culture and eighteenth-century cultures of consumption" ("Luxury" 34). Among the many cultures of consumption of the time, the *petimetra* embodies one based on

scandalous and ungoverned acquisition of imported products from competing empires such as France and Great Britain. Despite the different meanings attached to female behavior, in both British and Spanish representation of the feminine, women's alleged fickleness, instability and inconstancy are the reasons and the foundations for the evolution of empire. At the same time that in England the construction of a new commercial empire is explained in terms of feminine unpredictability, the progressive dissolution of the Spanish Empire is also gendered as feminine, and the feminization of consumption serves to explain the decadence of the Spanish nation.

Both literary satires and Goya's illustrations, therefore, are cultural comments, transmitting the political and economic concerns of eighteenth-century statesmen and intellectual elite. Nevertheless, this symbiotic relation between the literary and the pictorial also embody gender-linked misogynist perceptions that have remained unchanged in the Spanish social imagination through the ages. According to Monica Bolufer, the new reproving images of fashion and excessive luxurious spending prolonged, although in an innovative way, the long-standing thought that women were responsible for the moral and economic excess invested in mere appearances. This prominent critic of the Spanish enlightenment suggests:

[Desde] los intentos de definir los usos correctos y los rectos límites del lujo, las conductas femeninas se situaban en el punto de mira de las reprobaciones, intentos de racionalización y llamadas a la reforma. En este aspecto las nuevas imágenes del lujo prolongaban y trasformaban la acusación que desde hacia siglos venía formulando la Iglesia contra las mujeres como responsables por los excesos morales y económicos de las apariencias. (181)

At the same time that the *petimetra* became the clearest symbol of the threat to the delicate balance of the economic projects of the government, this figure was also the eighteenth-century version of the traditional and common belief in the feeble character of women, propagated by the Catholic Church since its early history.

Considering a few examples from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Fray Marín de Córdoba understood in his *El jardín de las nobles doncellas* (1476) that women are by nature mobile and inconstant. Women's volubility "por ventura, les viene de la flebe complexión del cuerpo, así como las mujeres tienen el cuerpo muelle e tierno, así sus voluntades e deseos son variables e no constantes" (qtd. in Vigil 14). With an open misogynist tone, Alfonso Martínez de Toledo in his *Arcipreste de Talavera o Corbacho* (1498) indicated that women's understanding, like the wind, constantly changes direction. Their minds work as a "señal que muestra los vientos: a las vezes es levante, otras vezes a poniente, otra vez a mediodía / quando / quiere a trasmontana. Por ende non creas que muger al mundo seguridad te pueda dar que en breve momento non la veas mudada, por cuanto sola una ora non durará en su propósito" (168). In his didactic writing titled *The Education of a Christian Woman* (1523), Juan Luis Vives also considered that women are more inclined toward pleasure by their natural disposition requiring constant supervision, regulation and structure in their pastimes in order to direct their minds to the solidity of goodness and virtue (55). In *Afeite y mundo mujeril* (1616), Fray Antonio Marqués made the direct

connection between women's inconstancy and fashion. He affirmed that, "las galas y vestidos costosos son argumentos de liviandad" (36).

In *El Ángel del Hogar: Galdós and the Ideology of Domesticity in Spain*, twentieth century literary critic Bridget Aldaraca analyzes the ideological evolution of the duties of women, from Renaissance Spanish writer Fray Luis de León's ideal wife to the nineteenth-century angel of the home. In her view, Fray Luis's philosophical position regarding the role of women is connected to the laws of pre-capitalist agrarian economy. According to these principles, wealth is non-renewable, and to spend is to deplete the state. Therefore, "the primary duty of the perfect wife is that of custodian and judicious administrator of the inherited patrimony of her marriage partner. Her function in the domestic economy is based on a strict division of labor: men produce wealth and women conserve it" (34). The specific landowner interests Fray Luis seeks to protect are endangered by women's moral and natural flaws namely their inherent self-indulgence, to be weakened and to lose control through idleness, and their inability to control their lust for the material. As he affirmed in *La perfecta casada* (1583):

Por que, teniendo [las mujeres] uso de razón, siendo capaces de cosas de virtud y loor, y teniendo ser que puede hollar sobre el cielo y que está llamado al gozo de los bienes de Dios, le deshacen tanto ellas mismas, y se anían así con delicadeza, y se envilecen en tanto grado, que una lagartija y una mariposilla que vuela tiene más tomo que ellas, y la pluma que va por el aire, y el aire mismo es de mas cuerpo y substancia. (110-112)

In the eighteenth century, women continued to receive the reprobation of the Church for their moral weaknesses and thrust for material possessions. The goal of Sunday homilies, pastoral letters and moral treatises was to eradicate the profanity and corruption that women's instability generated on public and domestic life.¹¹

The secularized male projection of the airy *petimetra* clearly drew from, helped to perpetuate and re-contextualized these old accusations that the Catholic Church had made against women for centuries, mostly through manuals of conduct. The evolution from Fray Luis de León's feather-like woman, to *El Censor* and Goya's weightless *petimetra* of the eighteenth century, to the floating women of the nineteenth century (see Appendix 2) forms "paragons of feminine insubstantiality, a chain of slightly eerie, mildly under-clad, and definitely flaky nymphs" (Dijkstra 89).¹² As Barthes would say, for the male myth-reader, women happen as if the image naturally conjured up the concept, as if the woman-signifier gave a foundation to the signified, transforming history into nature and therefore putting the very principle of myth into action (8).

However, *Capricho* 61 *Volaverunt* (see Appendix 1) was insufficient to portray women as an empty-headed burden whose very existence was a regressive influence on men's rational schemes. Using the witches as the base upon which the *petimetra* stood, or making the *petimetra* herself a flying witch, Goya emphasized that this female prototype was, in fact, more dangerous. In her general characteristics and in the nature of her desires, the *petimetra* was closely allied with the darker forces of superstition and the irrational. In the eyes of Goya and *El Censor*, the portrayed *petimetra* was now a raving, predatory animal

“who delights in adornments,” a creature who preyed on men out of secretive self-indulgence. As shown in Goya’s *Mujer y serpiente* and in the early nineteenth-century anonymous Spanish print, *Las cargas de un marido. Tomado de los mil modelos del día* (see Appendices 3 and 4), women seemed the sort of regressive creature that had leapt from ancient bewitching rituals to coil herself snakelike around the body of her patient and suffering husband and provider.

To keep women from entering and dwelling on forbidden explorations of their desires and imagination, Goya devised a telling image. The floating woman of plate 61 *Volaverunt* (see Appendix 1) has a great deal in common with *capricho* 26, *Ya tienen asiento* (see Appendix 5), that examines the insanity of women who do not behave according to rational expectations of masculine mastery. This *capricho* shows two half-naked women upon whose heads two chairs are balanced. According to the Prado Museum manuscripts, the caption for plate 26 reads as follows: “Para que las niñas casquivanas tengan asiento no hay mejor cosa que ponerselo en la cabeza” (qtd. in Helman 218). The manuscript of the National Library is more explicit in its symbolic association between reason and seat: “Muchas mujeres solo tendran juicio, ó asiento en sus cabezas, cuando se pongan las sillas sobre ellas. Tal es el furor de descubrir su medio cuerpo, sin notar que los pillastrones se burlan de ellas” (Helman 218). One of the meanings of “assiento” (seat) included in the *Diccionario de la lengua castellana* of 1726 is “Dar ò tomar assiento en las cosas.” This entry indicates that assuming a seat in problems means “disponerlas, arreglarlas, ponerlas en el estado que deben tener, dando el orden conveniente segun lo que se ha de tratar.” The dictionary also indicates that a “hombre de assiento” is “cuerdo, madúro prudente, de acreditada experiéncia, y de conocido juício è inteligencia” (I, 446).

Goya’s *capricho* may well represent the dream of masculine mastery in the most literal way imaginable, seeing women threatened by their own desires, and therefore helplessly in need of male rationality. With this image, Goya is defending women even against themselves and if they do not behave according to rational expectations, they are declared not only perverse, as in plate number 61, but also devoid of common sense. If women stubbornly refuse to comply with the demands of domesticity, they become carnivalesque objects of laughter and targets of public scorn. Men and society lash out at them in jeering vengeance, as *capricho* 26 shows. The obsessive persistence regarding the domestication of woman can be seen in Francois-Rupert Carabin’s nineteenth-century drawing *A Seat* (see Appendix 6). This image further insisted on seeing women not only as a piece of household furniture as Dijkstra points out but also as the base of male domestic comfort and rationality (117-18). The female counterpart of the mythological Atlas is to accept her role as the base of the domestic world.¹³

In conclusion, the satiric representation of women in *El Censor* and *Los caprichos* is thus born at a metaphoric crossroad. The *petimetra*’s body is a timeless projection of male fears and fantasies that exists mostly in men’s imagination, therefore signifying something other than itself. As Charnon-Deutsch has observed, in relation to Spanish nineteenth-century female images, “the symbiotic relation between verbal and iconic representations of women reveals an addictive tendency to seek empirical confirmation of both desirable and undesirable cultural commonplaces about women” (1). The everlasting affair of

women's nature and weaknesses intensified during the enlightenment, a period of cultural change, and, in the view of Spanish *ilustrados* the topic demanded renewed debate and definition. In eighteenth-century Spanish literature and art, the *petimetra* prototype derives from and recaptures the contemporary intellectual concerns of the national enlightenment. Reflecting such political, and economic uncertainties, *El Censor* and Goya concurred with the proponents of reason and reform and devoted their work to satirizing social and political corruptions, which in the satirists' views were due to, among other reasons, the feminization of culture and consumption. Women's vanity, extremes in fashion, exaggerated emphasis on beauty, and a freer role of women in male-female relationships and in marriage were, presumably, contemporary behaviors that had contaminated all levels of eighteenth-century life, particularly the market place. It has been my contention that *El Censor's* essays and Goya's *Caprichos* representing the fashionable *petimetra* exemplified the political concerns of the Spanish enlightenment in connection to cultural, social, and economic discussions of the time. Simultaneously, *El Censor* and Goya made use of gender-linked behavior stereotypes, first explored and exploited by the Church, perpetuating in the secular realm the ancient myth of women as feeble and unstable.

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Notes

- ¹ Edith Helman has recognized thematic connections between *Los Caprichos* and the satires of the enlightened erudite of the time, such as Leandro Fernández de Moratín, José Cadalso, Juan Meléndez Valdés, and Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos. In addition to corresponding associations with such major late eighteenth-century Spanish authors, Edith Helman uncovered specific textual allusions in the captions of *Los Caprichos*. She demonstrated that the caption for plate number 2, *El sí pronuncian y alargan la mano al primero que llega* quotes lines 62 and 63 from the satirical poem *A Arnesto* by Jovellanos. Among other national iniquities, the poem satirized perceived dominant relations between the sexes and was published in issue number 99 of *El Censor* (80-83). For further information regarding the connection between *Los Caprichos* and *El Censor* see Alcalá Flecha.

The relationship between literature and the visual arts was of course not new or infrequent in the eighteenth century. However, the association of painting with writing that ridicules “human error and vice” was, according to British art critic Reva Wolf, a fairly recent phenomenon that can be traced back to the ideas of William Hogart (27). According to Wolf, Goya’s own awareness of the association of satirical imagery with literature is explicitly signaled by three characteristics: First, his use of a self-portrait as the first plate of the *Caprichos*; second, his quoting of lines from the satirical poem *A Arnesto*; finally, the association of the *Caprichos* with the Spanish literary tradition of the satirical *Sueño* would have been established if Goya had originally conceived of plate number 43, *The Dream of Reason Produces Monsters*, as the first plate of the series as art critics believe (29).

- ² The series generally known as *The Magic Mirror* was not part of any “sketchbook.” Scholars hold that Goya painted the series around 1797 and 1799, precisely at the same time as *Los Caprichos* (Gassier 489-97; Stoichita 60).
- ³ This is Charnon-Deutsch’s thesis in *Gender and Representation*. In her book, she analyzes a number of drawings published in the nineteenth-century Spanish periodicals *Madrid Cómico* and *La Ilustración Española y Americana*. She locates and decodes cultural stereotypes that reflect historical realities and the myths and psychological constructs of the male psyche. According to Deutsch, all forms of illustrations are “social registers, transmitting the ideological baggage” of a specific society. Those images, however, also transmit “the stereotypes of gender-linked behavior that have survived in the social myths of all ages” (2). In this way, for Charnon-Deutsch, modern feminist scholars are what Roland Barthes called “myth decipherers.” This critical approach demands concentrating on the mythical speech, image or rituals in which the critic must distinguish between the meaning and the form with the purpose of analyzing the distortion that form imposes on meaning, undoing the signification of the myth (Barthes 8).
- ⁴ Nevertheless, this is not to say that Goya utterly failed to analyze or mitigate long-established perceptions and concepts about women. On the contrary, at the same time that Goya’s satirical *caprichos* helped to perpetuate the stories repeatedly heard regarding women’s insubstantiality and irrationality they also destabilized these notions by presenting the *petimetra* as a victim of men’s fixated perceptions. The fashionable women in *Caprichos* 61 and 26 are equally the objects of satire as the

subject of compassion. The posture of the flying woman opens this image to religious interpretations, allowing a possible assimilation of the *petimetra* to a willing victim voluntarily accepting her crucifixion. Similarly, the two *petimetros* in *Capricho* 26 are satirized for their lack of rationality as much as men are criticized for laughing at them. I owe my colleague from University of Miami, Hugo Achugar, the comparison between the *petimetra* of *Capricho* 61 and the figure of the Christ.

- ⁵ The full advertisement is reproduced in Helman 48-49. Andrew Schulz observes that it would have been hard to miss the ad, as it appeared on page one of the *Diario de Madrid*, right below the meteorological and astrological charts for the previous day and continue onto the following page. The lengthy advertisement and conspicuous search for potential buyers suggests Goya's awareness of the distinctive nature of his *Caprichos* that did not conform within the contours of Spanish printmaking tradition. The prints could not be purchased individually and the relatively low asking price probably reflected Goya's uncertainty regarding the public acceptance of this work (98).
- ⁶ Regarding the concept of *capricho*, as it appears in a wide variety of eighteenth-century texts, see Ilie and Dowling. For late-eighteenth-century aesthetic definitions of the term see Palomino 343; Martínez 64; and Terreros 348.
- ⁷ The legend included in the Ayala manuscript indicates that the image in *Capricho* 61 is that of "La Duquesa de Alba. Tres toreros la levantan de cascos". The manuscript of Madrid's National Library explains that, "Tres toreros levantan de cascos á la Duquesa de Alba, que pierde al fin la chaveta por su veleidad" (Qtd. in Helman 225).
- ⁸ Regarding the development of the early British commercial capitalism see Appleby 162; Hill 212; and Mukerji 168-209.
- ⁹ In the twentieth century, the symbolic-fantastic power of objects is explained through fetishization theories formulated from different perspectives. Among them is the anthropological theory of primitive religion. According to this formulation, the fetish refers to a sacred object to which a particular community attributes magical properties. The Marxist theory of cultural commodification uses the fetish to explain the ways commodities in the capitalist system acquire special meanings, particularly, when the object is endowed with intrinsic powers, properties, values and meanings. In a third interpretation, the psychoanalytical theory of sexual perversion applies this term to explain how certain objects are associated with sexual feelings to the point that the individual needs the object to reach sexual pleasure. There is also the sociological theory of institutional reification. For a general account regarding the theoretical studies of the fetish see Apter 1-14. For a discussion about commodity fetishism in non-capitalist societies, see Taussig 3-38.
- ¹⁰ See Cadalso 185-86; Sempere y 2:85; Romero del Álamo 18; Bitar Letayf 105-115, 159. Contemporary historians who have studied the economic dependency of eighteenth-century Spanish and Spanish American markets of international imports are Fortea Pérez; McLachlan; and Nadal Farreras.
- ¹¹ For the most popular works of the time see Campoo y Otazu; Calatayud; and Osorio de la Cadena.
- ¹² In *Idols of Perversity*, Bram Dijkstra shows how in a large number of late nineteenth-century European paintings, women were represented floating weightlessly in the breeze (87). According to Dijkstra, "woman's weightlessness was still a sign of her willing—helpless—submission, still allowed the male to remain uninvolved, still

permitted him to maintain his voyeur's distance from this culture of nature, this creature that was nature, who both fascinated and frightened him" (87-9).

- ¹³ In 1890 the sculptor François-Rupert Carabin (1862–1932) made over 600 photographic studies for female nudes to decorate his furniture. For these he made the models, many of them prostitutes, adopt poses much more suggestive than those in the finished works.

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Appendix 1 Francisco de Goya, "Volaverunt," *Capricho* 61. Madrid National Library.



Appendix 2. Paul Legrand, “The Snow,” Victor Nadal, *La Un au Salon* (1902).



Appendix. 3. Francisco de Goya, "La mujer y la serpiente," Prado Museum.



Appendix 4. Anonymous, “Las cargas de un marido. Tomado de los mil modelos del día,” Madrid National Library.



Appendix 5. Francisco de Goya, "Ya tienen asiento," *Capricho* 26. Madrid National Library.



Appendix 6. François-Rupert Carabin, "A Seat," *Catalogue Illustré, Exposition Nationale des Beaux-Arts*, Salon de 1893.