

HANDOUT

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Database landing page for the journal article:



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL www.jstor.org/stable/30203371?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents. The page features the JSTOR logo and navigation links: Home, Search, Browse, MyJSTOR, Help, and Contact Us. Below the navigation is the University of Pennsylvania Press logo. The breadcrumb trail reads: [Revista Hispánica Moderna](#) > [Año 47, No. 1, Jun., 1994](#) > [Small Talk: Towards ...](#). The main content area is titled "JOURNAL ARTICLE" and displays the article title "Small Talk: Towards a Poetics of the Detail in Galdós" by Hazel Gold. The article is from *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, Año 47, No. 1 (Jun., 1994), pp. 30-46. It is published by the University of Pennsylvania Press. The stable URL is <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30203371> and the page count is 17. The article is categorized under topics: [Novels](#), [Narratives](#), [Narrators](#), [Poetics](#), [Literary criticism](#), [Novelists](#), [Allegory](#), [Aesthetics](#), [Poetry](#), and [Authors](#). A small image of the journal cover is visible on the left side of the article entry.

Source (*Fuente*) 3

First page of the journal article:

SMALL TALK: TOWARDS A POETICS OF THE DETAIL IN GALDÓS

WHILE applauding the spontaneity of dialogue, the daring experiments of form, and the breadth of social portraiture that characterize Galdós's novelistic art, critics have often indicated that many a Galdós novel appears to have been conceived under the sign of excess. Writing on *Miau*, for instance, Clarín remarked that Galdós seemed irresistibly drawn to copying virtually everything he observed on the contemporary scene. As a result, the principal shared defect of such works as *Fortunata y Jacinta* and *Miau* is a certain repetitiousness, a "delectación morosa con que el autor se detiene a describir y narrar ciertos objetos y acontecimientos que importan poco y no añaden elemento alguno de belleza, ni siquiera de curiosidad a la obra artística" (*Mezclilla* 271). Despite his admiration for the scrutiny Galdós affords Ramón Villaamil's petty bourgeois world, he feels compelled to point out the novel's many moments of narrative inertia and superfluous dialogue, its unnecessary amplifications and "por menores menos significativos."

Ironically, Alas himself was not exempt from the descriptive zeal – "este prurito de pararse en lo minucioso" – that he attributes to his colleague. Reviewers of *La Regenta* were quick to note that the portraits of Ana Ozores and Vetusta were exhaustive of their subject matter and exhausting to their readers. For Rafael de Altamira's taste, "Hay demasiadas cosas en *La Regenta*, aunque están maravillosamente contadas," while another critic, Natalio Vida, wondered: "¿A qué ese prurito del detalle? A qué tanto personaje con los que sobra para hacer una novela?" (qtd. in Tintoré 226; 155). Frequently identified in pathological terms as a "prurito," "vicio," or "manía," the immoderate use of detail was labelled by such Krausist commentators as Jerónimo Vida as an "achaque de escuela," an affliction variously attributed to the rise of individualism, the interest in the physiological datum evinced by the naturalist movement, and the beguiling examples provided by Flaubert and Zola. Comparing Clarín's most famous novel to Cervantes's, Luis Vidart concurred: "si alguna falta pudiera notarse en la obra del señor Alas, es precisamente esta exageración descriptiva" (qtd. in Tintoré 165; 229).

From frustrated students who complain that Galdós's long-winded passages of description hinder the progress of the plot and overwhelm them with archaeological minutiae of which they have little knowledge or interest, to literary critics who examine the devices and conventions that create the illusion of the text's identification with the referent, readers of classical realist fiction everywhere stumble upon that pernicky little element: the detail. In his recent biography of Vladimir Nabokov, Brian Boyd recounts that in the literature classes he taught at Cornell University, the Russian-born author often fixed on the most minute of textual particles, as in the following, not atypical exam question on *Madame Bovary*: "Describe Emma's eyes, hands, sunshade, hairdo,



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Last page of the journal article:

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HAZEL GOLD

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- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, trans. *Of Grammatology*. By Jacques Derrida. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976.
- Stewart, Susan. *On Longing*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984.
- Tintoré, María José. "La Regenta" de Clarín y la crítica de su tiempo. Barcelona: Lumen, 1987.
- Turner, Harriet S. "Rhetoric in *La sombra*: The Author and His Story." *Anales Galdosianos* 6 (1971): 5-19.

