

## Love, Gender and Class in the Nationalist Project of Emilia Pardo Bazán: An Unsentimental Story

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As François Hartog has written, for the great nineteenth-century novelists, portraying the world and perceiving its unique nature meant presenting to their readers a world in the grip of History, permeated and shaped by it. This was the moment at which History acquired almost the same status as that previously enjoyed by theology in terms of giving meaning to the world (Hartog 2013, 9). That History with an upper-case H, understood as time's arrow, confident and creative, as process-progress, was – at the same time – materialising in a myriad of histories with a lower-case h, national and specific histories. The lasting tension between the two – which to a large extent reflects the classic North-South, East-West divides – stems from the fact that those national histories could only be self-aware once they had been inserted into History. It was in this context (with its inescapable tensions) that there emerged the figures of the “national writer” and “nation-builder,” who were, in some but not all cases, one and the same. Both were primarily thought of as masculine, and the social definition of both was bound up in the complex relationships between History and histories, politics and literature, which either brought them together or alienated them from each other.

Certain aspects of these issues are considered by Anne-Marie Thiesse in her recent publication *La fabrique de l'écrivain national. Entre littérature et politique*, whose timidity to challenge the idea that women might also be considered as national writers largely inspired the writing of this chapter. Thiesse correctly notes that “the age of nationalism was also the age of universalism.” In that context, “feminine originality was not enough to warrant the status of recognised national writer, less still the higher rank of universality. And writers from the most powerful literary nations were more universal than others” (Thiesse 2019, 15). This is no doubt a fundamental element, but in my opinion it is too sweeping a statement, and one which conceals the literary operations and political practices of the gender discourses used as a basis for excluding female writers from (or, in exceptional cases, including them within) the category of “national writer,” and also that of “nation-builder.” It also conceals the strategies employed to oppose their exclusion.

What follows is part of an ongoing project addressing this issue; the focus of my chapter is the complex relationships established between nation, gender, and class in the work of the Spanish (and Galician) writer Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851–1921). Over time, these relationships came to designate a very specific, if never categorical, stance on Galician and Spanish identity – and on the fabrication of “North” and “South” – at a crucial moment in the definition of both: the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Despite the fact that she was probably the most famous female Spanish writer of her day, Pardo Bazán was never a “national writer,” in that she never achieved the required level of undisputed acclaim in the public – i.e. national – sphere to be granted that status. Nor, for that matter, did Madame de Staël or George Sand, George Eliot or the Brontës, Bertha von Suttner or Fredrika Bremer in their respective days. None of them succeeded in becoming national writers in the way Sir Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, Alessandro Manzoni, Friedrich Schiller, and Adam Mickiewicz did. And we need to ask why this should be.

There are two women who unquestionably did achieve this status – two apparently very different writers. In England, Jane Austen (1775–1817) wrote about love and levels of income, while in Galicia poet and novelist Rosalía de Castro (1837–1885) also wrote about love, as well as about the emotional bond to one’s *tierra* (homeland or place of birth) and about frustrated ideals. England was the centre of a consolidated nation state. Galicia was a peripheral region of Spain with its own language, a region which at the time was seeking cultural, literary and, increasingly, political recognition. The 1863 publication of Rosalía de Castro’s *Cantares gallegos* [Galician Songs] is conventionally taken as the starting point of the Galician *Rexurdimento*, which was similar, albeit with its own distinctive characteristics, to the Catalan *Renaixença*. Both renaissance movements aroused suspicion, and even profound unease and incomprehension among contemporary Spanish nationalists.

If Jane Austen the “national writer” was above all a Victorian creation, Rosalía de Castro’s equivalent status came out of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century *galleguismo* (Galicianism). In both cases, male relatives played a key role in the authors’ posthumous national canonisation. Austen’s reputation was firmly established by the publication of *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1869) by her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh and the *Letters of Jane Austen* (1884) by her great-nephew Edward, Lord Brabourne. As for Rosalía de Castro, her writings were tirelessly promoted by her historian husband Manuel Martínez Murguía, considered the first great Galician nation-builder (Barreiro 2012).

Jane Austen and the other European women writers listed earlier will be assessed in the context of the (im)possible figure of the “national female writer” as part of the wider-ranging research project mentioned above. Here,

however, I shall touch on the case of Rosalía de Castro, for three closely inter-related reasons. Firstly, Castro (who wrote in both Galician and Spanish) and Emilia Pardo Bazán (who wrote only in Spanish) are the only two women to have entered the Spanish literary canon during a key moment of its development, the final decades of the nineteenth century. Secondly, Castro is still seen, today more than ever, as the undisputed literary embodiment of Galicia – for Galician nationalists, she is the “national female writer” *par excellence*. Thirdly, central to the process of her canonisation was the role played by the historical fabrication of a rivalry between her and Pardo Bazán based not only on literary and political issues, but also on opposing notions of *respectable femininity*.

### 1 Literature, Celebrity, and Politics

Along with writers such as Benito Pérez Galdós and Leopoldo Alas (*Clarín*), Pardo Bazán was a leading figure in the late nineteenth-century revival of Spanish fiction and in the way in which the debate about French naturalism spread throughout Spain. Her novels *Los Pazos de Ulloa* (1886) and *Madre Naturaleza* (1887)<sup>1</sup> are now canonical works of that revival, whose originality was to challenge the tenets of conventional naturalism from within. Although Pardo Bazán is most famous for her novels and short stories, which were a notably different addition to the European literary scene and were translated into a dozen languages during her lifetime, she was also an influential cultural and political journalist, literary critic and historian, cultural entrepreneur, and playwright. She took a pioneering interest in Russian literature and, later, modernism, spiritualism and decadentism, as is evident in such intriguing novels as *Dulce Dueño* [Sweet Master] (1911).

On top of all these accomplishments, one of the most innovative aspects of Pardo Bazán's intellectual trajectory was her introduction of feminism (a term she used openly) to the cultural and political debates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She translated John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) and August Bebel's *La Femme et le Socialisme* [The Woman and Socialism] (1891) for her own publishing enterprise, while in 1889 an extended essay of hers, originally entitled *The Woman of Spain*, whose Spanish version is considered one of the foundational texts of Spanish feminism, was printed in *The Fortnightly Review* (Pardo Bazán 1999). Feminism is addressed in several of

<sup>1</sup> Available in English as *The House of Ulloa* (Penguin Classics) and *Mother Nature* (Bucknell University Press) respectively.

her novels, notably in one of those I shall discuss here, *Insolación* [Sunstroke] (1889),<sup>2</sup> and *Memorias de un Solterón* [Memoirs of a Bachelor] (1896).

At a key moment in the consolidation of the culture of celebrity in Spain and Europe – as new audiences began to take an interest in writers' and artists' private lives as well as admiring their literary or other creative achievements – Pardo Bazán managed to be both an agent and an object of change, attempting – not always successfully – to maintain control over her image as a writer and “famous woman”. As happened with Madame de Staël and George Sand, her passion for public life and her desire to participate in the most important cultural and political debates of the day gave her a literary, political, and cultural celebrity that was always controversial, placing her simultaneously at the heart and on the margins of the public arena (Burdriel 2019).

Furthermore, and most importantly as far as this chapter is concerned, Pardo Bazán's work was steeped to an unusual degree in the notions of History and nation. From the outset of her career as a writer she was aware that constructing a cultural, literary sphere was an indispensable element in forging a modern nation. In that respect, constructing hegemonic national identities – and resisting those identities – were transnational processes which affected all European nation states and drew (or ought to draw) on a hugely diverse range of cultural, imaginative, and emotional material. In that context, Pardo Bazán developed a *defensive*, deeply uneasy form of Spanish nationalism (defensive within Spain and beyond its borders), which sought to make comparisons primarily with France, a country she loved, and England, one she detested. She admired both but resisted the idea of using either as a model (Gabilondo 2009; Torrecilla 2003). Within that uneasy outlook – which had much to do with the exchange of gazes between “North” and “South” (again, inside and outside Spain) – she established a network of reasons and emotions that permeated her idea of Spain and of Galicia: their limitations, their potential and the ghosts that haunted them. I therefore believe, and shall argue here, that the dynamics of political and economic power, and of cultural representation between Western Europe, Spain and Galicia, have to be studied in interconnected fashion in order to understand Pardo Bazán's intentions.

I also want to underline the fact that in order to understand her stance, which was considerably more complex than previously suspected, we cannot limit ourselves to analysing her literary or political criticism. We must also examine her works of fiction – novels, short stories and plays – because Emilia Pardo Bazán was fully aware of two ideas that now pervade the historiography

<sup>2</sup> Available in a Spanish-English bilingual edition (Liverpool University Press).

on nation-building and the construction of national identity. Firstly, the fact that the cultural configuration and orientation of *regions* and the emergence (or lack of emergence) in them of an awareness of nationhood is about not – as has sometimes been thought – the *matryoshka* (Russian doll) principle, but a play of mirrors between nations and regions which has an impact on both (Núñez Seixas 2006; Archilés 2006). Secondly, the fact that the nation is forged (and does not simply materialise) in the domestic space of the emotions, including various different forms of love. In this play of mirrors and levels, the novel – particularly the kind Pardo Bazán wanted to write – was able to become a mechanism (an informal one, we would say now) of enormous intellectual and emotional potential in terms of building or destroying a nation.

Drawing these threads together in order to move my overall argument on, I see Pardo Bazán as a strikingly modern Spanish nation-builder, fully conscious of what she was doing and of the essential role that would have to be played in her task by a literary configuration that incorporated *regional spirit* and the possible or impossible *forms of love* experienced by men and women. One way or another, her entire oeuvre is steeped in that project, in a complex discussion about Spanish nationhood, modernity and emotions – a discussion closely connected to the issue of the place reserved for women in the nation-building sphere. In this respect, Pardo Bazán feminism was conceived as a powerful tool to be used in the new Spanish nationalization project and therefore fundamental for understanding her particular stance towards Galicia and Galician regionalism. To this discussion, it is also important to add the significance of social class (fundamentally important to her and her detractors), which occupies a strategic place in her writings. Pardo Bazán is therefore relevant to discussions of her own time or ours about *how nations are built*, with what materials and in what form, and about the role reserved in them for reason, for emotion, for conscious individual and collective agency, for class and gender conflicts, and for the acceptance – or elimination – of social and cultural diversity.

## 2 The Battle for Galicia: Nation and Gender

I want to begin with an apparently minor or marginal work within Pardo Bazán's literary and critical output: the essay collection *De mi tierra* [About My Land] (1888), effectively the first survey of nineteenth-century Galician-language literature. Its central piece, "La Poesía Regional Gallega" [Galician Regional Poetry], had been given as an address in memory of Rosalía de Castro in A Coruña in September 1885. The publication of the collection (which

includes, among other writings, essays on such key *Rexurdimento* poets as Valentín Lamas, Eduardo Pondal and Benito Losada) three years later was an entirely calculated cultural and political intervention.

On the first reading, Pardo Bazán appears to define “regional literature” as the bridge that linked “high art with the poetry and art of the people”. That connection was produced through emotion, closely associated with childhood, both of which were implicitly (but never explicitly) contrasted with what was understood as maturity, associated with reason, “high art” and *castellano*, the Spanish language. Regional poets, she says, are:

childhood, they are faith, they are tenderness. And dialect, even in countries such as ours, where the educated classes neither speak nor read it, has a welcome and truly restorative aftertaste, which comes unbidden to our lips when we need to *stammer* a loving phrase, lull a baby to sleep, pronounce a festive epigram or let out a sigh of grief; since now that Spanish is our true language, we still feel the closeness of our dialect, which softens it with the warmth of *home* (*italics added*). (Pardo Bazán 1888)<sup>3</sup>

Unsurprisingly, this way of emotionally amalgamating Galicia and Spain was anathema to the great *galleguista* of his generation, Manuel Murguía. Like Pardo Bazán, Rosalía de Castro’s husband was a builder of national emotions. He waited ten years, however, before giving his response to her speech, and when he did react, projected his own increasing antagonism towards her on to an alleged rivalry between Emilia and Rosalía – or at least the version of Rosalía he had gradually invented over the years, particularly since her death. The fact that this hackneyed device stems from a misogynous perception of relationships between brilliant women does not make it any less interesting. It still says much about the social, cultural, and political tensions and emotions in Galicia at the time in general, and about those aroused by the push for *galleguismo* (however much of a minority movement it may have been) in particular. It also says much about the profound gender connotations that governed the establishing of Galicia’s literary canon and the very different places that Castro and Pardo Bazán have occupied in it ever since the late nineteenth century. What was it that Pardo Bazán wanted to say, at that precise political and cultural moment, in speaking about the only other female writer who could rival her in the Galician and Spanish canon?

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3 This and the following quotations are all taken from Pardo Bazán 1888, 7–8.

First and foremost, she wanted to express something that in fact generated tension within her own conception of History, rooted essentially in traditionalist, anti-Enlightenment thinking. In line with most of the theories of European progressive liberalism, she argued that progress moved ever forward, like time's arrow, guided by a kind of Darwinian natural selection of competing nations and languages. From this perspective, the Spanish nation was the great river into which all tributaries – all emotions, all efforts – would have to flow.

Yet Pardo Bazán was too intelligent and too familiar with political traditionalism, on both a personal and an intellectual level, to have such a blunt, linear vision of the processes of change. She understood that there was never just *one time*, that several times existed simultaneously, and that opposition to the trend to homogenise the nation could be exorcised by allowing for diversity. The river that was Spain could only be truly majestic if it accepted the cultural and linguistic diversity of all its tributaries. Primarily, and significantly, this was because she believed good, even great literature could be created in languages other than Spanish and that moreover, in line with her own early naturalist conception of literature, that was exactly what should happen. She read Catalan without difficulty and had a particular appreciation for the work of poet Jacint Verdaguer and novelist Narcís Oller, prominent figures in the Catalan *Renaixença*. She became good friends with the latter, and with the leading Catalan literary critic Josep Yxart, who was involved in the same cultural mission as Verdaguer and Oller. In the 1880s, Pardo Bazán could still wholeheartedly agree with Juan Valera when he wrote to Oller, "In short, I see the fact that we have three literary languages rather than just one as an enviable treasure and one we must never lose, dilute or mix; but I am inclined to think that every Spaniard should understand and study all three, in the sure belief that they will add to and enrich whichever language he may speak and write, without corrupting it in the process." (Oller 1962, 42).

Xosé Ramón Barreiro has written that "the issue of whether a regional language and literature should be recognised is not directly political but cultural" and that what matters is that Pardo Bazán denied Galician literature that cultural recognition. "We should focus on this rather than on something I see as being of no interest whatsoever, which is what Doña Emilia thought of political Galician regionalism." I myself, however, do not believe it is possible to separate the political and cultural spheres, especially in terms of the debate that raged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I also believe it cannot be said that Pardo Bazán did not appreciate "what the Galician language and literature meant in constructing an identity" (Barreiro 2003, 115–138). She absolutely understood this, in that she was aware of the enormous political power (in terms of its ability to act *on* History) of the close relationship men



such as Murguía were forging between *galleguidad* (Galicianness) and literature written in the Galician language.

Pardo Bazán knew (because it was what she was doing for the Spanish language) that languages too are constructed (and destroyed) and could attain or fail to attain an ability to absorb or marginalise other languages. “The distinction between *dialects* and *national languages* is artificial and has to do only with the form of languages, not their essence” (Pardo Bazán 1888). She was aware of the crucial role played by language, and the emotions surrounding it, in nation-building. Her view on this was, however, anything but essentialist. For her, it was a historical, political process, one which had much to do with cultural power relationships and the “informal” action of individuals such as herself or Murguía.

Murguía’s impassioned response to Pardo Bazán, expressed via a series of articles published in the Galician press in 1896 under the title *Cuentas Ajustadas, Medio Cobradas* [Adjusting Half-settled Accounts], together with the personal tone of his attack, proved that this was a crucial battle for the power to represent Galicia, articulated in terms of the distinct roles assigned to men and women in building and/or embodying the nation. Murguía used Rosalía de Castro as a weapon in this battle, in a way I see as not only biased and decontextualised but also sexist, by quoting the following passage from the prologue (which he is believed to have co-written with her) to *Follas novas* [New Leaves], her 1880 collection of poems in the Galician language: “women’s thoughts are shallow [...] the hard work of meditation is not designed for us. When we engage in it, we imbue it, without even knowing what we do, with an innate weakness, and while it is easy for us to deceive frivolous spirits or those little accustomed to thought, we cannot do the same with men of scholarship and reflection” (Castro 1982, xxiv–xxv). Married to just such a man (an eminent example of the patriarchal authority of scholarship and reflection), Castro would never have attempted to “go beyond the confines of poetry,” an art associated with emotion, as opposed to the history or science which were Murguía’s domain. Her doubts about which language she should write in and the importance she attributed to her writing in Spanish – not to mention the feminist-toned anger that crept into her reflections on homeland, lost love, and abandonment – were destined to remain in the shadows, or even subject to complete censorship.

As far as Murguía was concerned, Pardo Bazán had failed to obey the essential rule of *género*, in its double sense of *genre* and *gender*. She had been too outspoken, and arrogant enough to believe that “in the domains of art and science, nothing was out of bounds, that she could enter them as a conqueror”. The result of this unnatural monstrosity was a “literary magpie” intent on “writing about everything that others had written before her. And I do not blame her for



that. It is part of her condition as female." A condition, however, that she – paradoxically – transgressed time and again with her masculine coldness, ambition, and pride, which were the ultimate expression of an inner chill, “a soul closed to passion and the great emotions”. Pardo Bazán not only lacked “the two qualities required by female poets: imagination and sentiment,” she was also betraying her status as a Galician by moving away from what had always distinguished Galician literature: “[...] a special sweetness of expression [...] which is its true characteristic. Its dominant note is sentiment; to be lacking in this is to be lacking in something natural and essential, it is to deny being a member of the race to which one belongs [...] Only Doña Emilia, who as a woman was *doubly* obliged to follow that general rule, instead entirely diverts from it” (Murguía 2000, 65–118). It is worth emphasising the word *doubly* here.

Murguía’s anger and sexism ended up coming full circle and accepting the very thing that had infuriated him about the way in which Pardo Bazán associated the Galician identity with all that was sentimental, emotional, feminine. His articles of 1896 are therefore of interest not as a mere outburst of rage or somewhat excessive display of personal resentment, but for the insight they give us into the deep-rooted association – and hierarchy – that he establishes between Galicia and femininity on the one hand, and cultural and political *galleguismo* and masculine strength on the other. The supposed rivalry between Emilia and Rosalía is then depicted as pitting a virago (a woman *doubly* treacherous, having betrayed both her nature and her homeland) against a true woman (long-suffering, home-loving and patriotic) protected from one man by another: from Spanish nationalism by Galician nationalism. It is Murguía (who wrote in Spanish but insisted that Rosalía write in Galician) who defines both women, who grants (or denies) them their sexual identity and artistic, canonical, national status, who sets himself up as the authority in these matters. I shall not go any further into the issue of gender and its place in defining and shaping the canon (Galician or Spanish) here, but I see its role as substantial (Pereira-Muro 2013).

I do however want to make the following observation. Manuel Murguía was right in thinking that Pardo Bazán’s objective was the same as his, and that she felt “an overwhelming desire to *preside over* [...] Galician literature, and more besides”. That “more besides” is actually what was truly important. Unlike Murguía’s, Pardo Bazán’s horizons had long since extended beyond the Galician border to encompass all of Spain. In understanding that the cultural and imaginative construction of Galicia was a way of re-creating Spanish national identity, Emilia Pardo Bazán was indeed competing with Manuel Murguía as leader of a *Rexurdimento*, a *galleguismo* which he was increasingly setting against the Spanish nation (emotion) but which she saw differently. Her vision (as Murguía instantly realised) was a *cultural* and *political* rival to his own. Among

other reasons, this was because she (like Castro, whatever the posthumous manipulation of her image may suggest) was not content to be the emotional, sensitive embodiment of a long dreamed-of *tierra* – she wanted to be one of its architects. Pardo Bazán may not have been granted the status of “Spanish national writer,” but she was a “nation builder” who, like Murguía, wanted to delineate, define, and guide that nation. As we have seen, however, in that process of definition the identities of Spain and Galicia are not only closely linked to one another but also (and for that same reason) highly unstable.

### 3 Class and Nation: Two Love Stories

I have serious reservations about applying postcolonial criticism to the national question outside the strictly colonial context – a question whose complexity, in my opinion, still requires calm, composed debate. Nevertheless, as shown by Xavier Andreu for Spain and Helena Miguélez-Carballeira for Galicia – to cite two useful and recent, if very different works – the postcolonial approach can undeniably shed light on the conflicts and dialogues involved in the representation of national identities (Andreu 2016; Miguélez-Carballeira 2013). I am specifically referring here to the way in which the dialogue, and conflict, between Spanish national identity and hegemonic European identities come into contact with the meanings and identities formulated from the spheres of love and domestic life in the various national (or proto-national) projects within the Iberian Peninsula. For decades, we historians have been emphasising the interconnected nature of racial, gender, national or class identities. No identity exists without some form of relationship, without an *other* which is constructed at the same time as the *self*. That two-way relationship is always hierarchical. In fact, a position of economic, social, or political power is largely defined by its capacity to impose subaltern identities – those in which images fabricated by the *other* to legitimise its power are internalised and reproduced as inferior and secondary. Images and relationships that, furthermore, cross the artificial (or rather historical) dividing lines between the private and public spheres.

In this context, class identity has disappeared too quickly from historians' analyses in recent years. It has also vanished from the historiography dealing with the processes involved in constructing national identities, and this, in my view, has dangerous consequences. I shall consider this issue with reference to two of Pardo Bazán's novels, *Insolación* and *Morriña* [Homesickness],<sup>4</sup> pub-

4 An 1891 English translation is available online via Project Gutenberg ([www.gutenberg.org/files/54742/54742-h/54742-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/54742/54742-h/54742-h.htm)).

lished jointly in 1889 (a year after *De mi tierra*) as *Historias Amorosas* [Love Stories]: two novels about Galicians (Galician women, to be precise) in Madrid. My aim is to answer the basic questions arising from the preceding discussion: what kind of Spain and Galicia did Pardo Bazán imagine? And what roles are played here by love, gender, and class?

The plot of *Insolación* can be summarised as follows. Young Galician widow Asís Taboada, Marchioness of Andrade, meets Diego Pacheco, an attractive young gentleman from Cádiz, at an aristocratic *tertulia*, or salon, in Madrid. The topic of debate that day is the influence of climate, specifically the sun, on the rather barbaric and passionate character of Spaniards, regardless of class or gender. On her way to Mass the next morning, Asís bumps into Diego again and allows herself to be talked into accompanying him to the San Isidro festivities – very much the realm of the lower classes. Asís ends up dazed by a combination of heat, noise, and alcohol (which she is unused to drinking), and the two become intimate. The following day, confused and regretful, Asís attempts to remember what happened between them and to distance herself from Diego. He seeks her out, however and, little by little, she has to admit she is attracted to him despite his reputation as a womaniser. The suave Andalusian Don Juan charms the virtuous lady from the rainy north of Spain with his passion and gallantry.

What interests me in this story is the way in which it is steeped in the issues of gender, class, and nation. The notion of Spanish national character, supposedly distinguished by passion, lack of restraint and the impact of climate, was the subject of heated debate in a Spain immersed in a Europe of nations all looking at one another (and their colonies) in order to define themselves. It is worth remembering that inextricably entwined in this debate were discussions about the constructs of feminine and masculine, which in turn were linked with theories about the degeneration/regeneration of races, classes, and nations, and with representations of Eastern and Western identity.

I believe the open-ended dialogue offered by *Insolación*, with its different perspectives refracted through Asís's doubts and fears, allows us to position this novel – supposedly no more than a love story – in the context of that discussion of the conflicting ideas surrounding Spanish national identity. Was Spain part of Europe or the threshold to Africa? Did it belong to East or West? Were foreign thinkers – the French in particular – correct in their belief that Spaniards were “only any good for dancing the bolero and clicking castanets”? Was Gabriel Pardo, a “secondarily central” character in the novel, right in claiming that all Spaniards, irrespective of their sex, birthplace, or class, were barbaric, African in nature? And was Asís right to challenge him, in the name of her class (and gender), and assert that “ladies” and “well-educated people

were identical in every country of the world”? Was it all a matter of climate, instinct, or race, or was there something else, something more historical and political in nature?

Partially contradicting himself, and thereby revealing the tension between the way we see ourselves and the way others see us, Gabriel Pardo raises the latter issue, one I consider to be of crucial importance, as follows:

[...] here in Spain, since the Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, we've done nothing but cheer each other on. The joke started with all those demonstrations against Don Amadeo: all that business with ornamental combs and mantillas, cropped jackets and wigs, then there was the temerity of the late king when he took to dressing as a *chulo* [Madrid version of a brazen young man], imitated, of course, by all the elegant folk; and now it's become an epidemic of patriotism and flamenco, guitar-playing and *cante jondo*, tambourines with red and yellow tassels, fans decorated with pictures of Frascuelo and Mazzantini and their exploits in the bull ring, we've created a caricature of Spain that's straight out of a Goya tapestry or one of Don Ramón de la Cruz's farces. (Pardo Bazán 1889, 86, 93–94)<sup>5</sup>

What are we to conclude from this? Did that image of patriotism and flamenco correspond to the *real* Spain, or at least to its *real* working classes, or was it a parody of both, created not only from outside but from above, particularly by the aristocracy and élites who had put an end to the democratic monarchy of the Italian-born Amadeo I in the name of Spanish national (and popular) identity? In order to stir up nationalist resistance, many of their members had begun to adopt the fashions of ordinary men and women and to emphasise the shared values that connected Spaniards of all classes. The aim of this symbolic and political process, one in which a young Emilia Pardo Bazán was very much engaged, was what Antonio Cánovas, who served several terms as prime minister, called “the work for Restoration” – the plan being to restore the House of Bourbon in the person of Alphonse XII, son of Isabella II, deposed in the revolution of 1868. In fact, the experience of the *Sexenio Democrático* [Six democratic years] – the period from 1868 to 1874 which included the reign of Amadeo I and the equally short-lived First Spanish Republic – served as the main origins of Spanish modernity for the writers of the Restoration and, above all, the literature steeped in History written by Benito Pérez Galdós and Pardo Bazán. It is no coincidence that the central theme of the latter's first great novel, *La*

5 Quotations from *Insolación* and *Morriña* taken from *Obras Completas* (Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro, 1999. Vol. II.

*Tribuna* [The Tribune] (1883), was the political impact of the 1868 revolution and its (ultimately thwarted) ideals on the female workers of the tobacco factory in A Coruña. In that respect, the political and cultural project of Restoration, and the mobilisation of popular support in its favour, had contained profound social and cultural ambivalences, causing significant concern among the élites leading the project because, as discussed at the Duchess de Sahagún's *tertulia*, the aristocracy and the *pueblo*, or ordinary people, were becoming indistinguishable from one another, and both were equally prone to barbarity.

From this perspective, it is not just that *Insolación* contains an orientalist vision, with its masculine and feminine stereotypes reversed, as brilliantly analysed by Akiko Tsuchiya in her treatment of the relationship between an initially reserved noblewoman from the cold, wet North of Spain and an Andalusian gentleman who embodies all the temptations of the passionate, uninhibited South (Tsuchiya 2011, 136–61). A South closely tied to Africa, brimming with ethnic and cultural traces of its Arabic past, the internal *other* of a nineteenth-century Spain whose own identity as European was being questioned at this time. This is one aspect of *Insolación*, but there is more to the novel than that. It is a profound (and profoundly unsettling) consideration of class to the extent that through the Cádiz-born Diego Pacheco, the novel's cultural and emotional mediator, Asís comes into contact with the ordinary men and women whom Emilia Pardo Bazán and her circle celebrated, imitated and adulated, and whom they attempted to use and bring under their control during that key political battle of 1868–74.

As a result of that contact, this demure, aristocratic lady sees the very foundations of her primordial identity, that of respectable female, begin to shake, as she allows herself to be swept along in a tide of picturesque plebeian Spanishness. It is the *chulos* and *chulas*, gypsies and cigar-girls who *approach* them, *watch* them, and *touch* them, who excite and daze Asís. It is that whirlwind of voices and hands, staring eyes and laughing mouths, colours and smells, violence and expectation, that constitutes the real *internal other*: the common people, both familiar and alien, a source of both attraction and horror. The barbaric, oriental *pueblo*, which taints all it touches but on which was based a specific idea of Spanish national identity, one that might turn out to be ungovernable, even dangerous. It is not the sun that maddens her, it is mixing with the hot, sweaty crowds of ordinary people beneath that sun, “in whose destructive light she saw an infinite number of things she had always believed to be firm and solid begin to totter”.

The symbolic plebeianisation of Spanish national identity, and not only its orientalisation, is therefore a central theme in *Insolación* which, like many of its author's other works, revolves around what Spain was, what it might be,

and what the relationship between the *pueblo* and the élites should be in any process of regeneration. It is more than just another manifestation of the “defensive nationalism” to which I alluded above. It is an exploration of the fluctuating, threatening shadows, the enormous confusion of identity and emotions evinced by *close contact* with the *pueblo* which if excessive, physically or symbolically, would lead to barbarism. This theme, incidentally, recurs in Pardo Bazán’s oeuvre, from *Los Pazos de Ulloa* to *Dulce Dueño*. The ease with which, despite all the political theories of developed and liberal Europe, the so-called “civilising influence of the upper classes” could be inverted and subverted – an aspect also discussed (not without irony) in *Insolación*.

The Marquesa, however, emerges unscathed from her encounter with the *internal other* and plebeian *passions* because Diego Pacheco is a gentleman who knows he is dealing with a lady. A gentleman, as the critic Juan Sardá joked at the time, “as rare as a winning lottery ticket”. A second-rate Tenorio, “so delicate, so discreet, so prudent; a kite who has sharp talons but sheathes them when he sneaks into the dove’s nest so as not to scratch her [...] until the yielding dove more or less says, ‘Come, dear kite, sink your talons into me!’” Everything is realistic apart from the “idealisation, in other words Pacheco’s exceptional nature” (Sardá 1889). But that was exactly the point – Asís, marchioness of Andrade, can play with fire and not get burnt.

Any notion of either idealising a Don Juan figure or granting a woman salvation is entirely absent from *Morriña* (1889), a love story that rivals *Insolación* for beauty and outdoes it for both tenderness and cruelty. This is one of Pardo Bazán’s most finely-written novels, with a subtler sense of humour and a melancholic lucidity that lingers long in the memory. Its qualities were not, however, recognised by two of the most influential critics at the time, Luis Alfonso and Leopoldo Alas (*Clarín*). Both found the novel dull because (according to the former), “a village woman might be made interesting, even a woman of lowly birth [...] but it is far more difficult to do so with a domestic servant” (Alas 1889; Alfonso 1889). The servant in question, Esclavitud (meaning “slavery”) is gentle and submissive, but “gets above her station” when she believes that the interest shown in her by Rogelio, the *señorito* (the young master of the house), might have something to do with love. A romantic servant! One homesick for Galicia, even though not even the memory of her *tierra* offers her any comfort, since it is associated with the shame of her birth as the illegitimate child of a priest and his servant-girl.

With nothing at all to fall back on, Esclavitud seems doomed to repeat the traumatic experiences of so many village girls and servants: seduction, loss of virginity, abandonment, illegitimate children. The subject that had always interested Pardo Bazán, who had once written (in indignant tone) about the *señoritos* of her class who went looking for lower-class girls, especially servants,

as if they were out to shoot partridges. It becomes more complex here, through discussion of the good intentions of the lady of the house, the Galician Doña Aurora Nogueira de Pardiñas, who welcomes Esclavitud in spite of her background and tries to help her despite what some of those around her think.

In the end, though, when Doña Aurora realises that her only beloved son, a spoiled fop devoid of any recognisable personality of his own, is attracted to Esclavitud, she makes a “moral sacrifice,” dismissing the girl and abandoning her in Madrid while she returns to Galicia with her son. Not even the convent (an option for fallen women of higher social status) is open to Esclavitud, who is now *sin patria*, homeless in every sense, and decides to end her life. She has neither the personal strength nor the capacity for rebellion of the protagonist of *La Tribuna* (1883). And of course, she does not have the wealth and cultural background of Asís in *Insolación* (1889). She is not a factory worker or a noblewoman, she is a humble servant. A figure whose life was thought by some not to be the stuff of novels.

It took a writer such as Pardo Bazán, who always lived between two worlds, to prove that it was. To use the prosaic, sordid practice of the exploitation of servant girls by rich young men for their own sexual initiation in order to reflect on the ways in which gender and class picked at the seams of the nation. A singular and deeply moving reflection achieved by reversing or at least challenging its one-directional gaze, by giving voice to the voiceless Esclavitud.

Everyone at Doña Aurora's *tertulia* gossips about Esclavitud – her origins, her fate, her chances of escaping it. She does not escape it, but not for reasons of immorality or socially or racially congenital submissiveness. Unlike Murguía, for example, who had been so vocal on the matter, Pardo Bazán was always sceptical about the importance of race (Maiz 1984, 137–80). Esclavitud cannot escape her fate because Doña Aurora, her friends, and the guests at her *tertulia* decide that the person who needs to be saved from this “lapse of judgement” is young Rogelio. The reason for Esclavitud's suicide is not the “sombre temperament of the Celtic race”. Every day and in every province of Spain, the author tells us, the newspapers report similar cases of suicide. This has nothing to do with *tierra* or *race*. It is all about class. Esclavitud is not seduced, abandoned, and mistreated because she is Galician, but because she is a servant. Esclavitud – the radical subaltern: one who cannot speak for herself – chooses suicide because it is the only way she can speak, leave a memory of herself, use the tragedy of her death to make an impact on the respectable world of these Galician worthies who have treated her life as if they were watching some sporting event or observing a clinical trial.<sup>6</sup>

6 I am of course alluding here to Gayatri Spivak's seminal, and still controversial, formulation (Spivak 1985).



#### 4 Conclusion: An Unsentimental Story

The construct of the Spanish nation presented by Emilia Pardo Bazán, notwithstanding a few sporadic and measured declarations of patriotic passion, is fundamentally anti-sentimental. Try as it might, no nation can ever fully provide an emotional, cultural identity that can rescue its people from the concerns that inevitably run through History and the histories of modernity. Those concerns are the stage on which the nation plays out. They a hard and complex stage, home to interwoven class and gender conflicts that are entirely modern and at once universal and local. Conflicts that transcend the inclusive capacity of a nation, or two nations (Spain and Galicia) so closely linked to one another and so profoundly unstable; historically, politically, and culturally unsure of themselves.

In my view, much of the uniqueness of Pardo Bazán's work, of her Galicia, especially in *Los Pasos de Ulloa* and *La madre naturaleza*, books which Jo Labanyi has analysed so meticulously and insightfully, lies in her ability to surpass the essentially picturesque celebration of rural, local, regional life we find in the work of other Restoration writers and, largely, to avoid proto-nationalist regionalism (Labanyi 2011, 409–465). Pardo Bazán was interested in dismantling something so prevalent in the work of many of those writers, namely the contrast between a neurotic, degenerate modernity, embodied by the modern nation and, specifically, by Madrid, and a *natural instinct* to withdraw to the region, to a healthy, virtuous *homeland*. In her novels in particular she challenged the dichotomy between the modern, artificial nation and the region, anchored in the past, in tradition, in the old language and old land, in all that was *essential* and *natural*.

More than that, and this is what is truly original about her writing, she raised the possibility that there is no single, all-encompassing, *real* cure for the malaise of modernity by which both sides of that supposed dichotomy were affected. The *truth* of the nation that solves every problem, and the individual and collective solutions involved in the search for that truth, were always relative and therefore political, subject to discussion. That led to her querying the illusions surrounding what is *essential* or *natural* in a way which, for me, is unmatched by any other novelist of her generation. This is especially true of her ability to open up the debate on the importance of class and the status of women, on the supposed nature of *femininity*, as crucial symptoms of the great internal contradictions of liberalism, democracy and nationalism. Emilia Pardo Bazán is therefore a thinker whose work has to be taken into account if we are to understand the late nineteenth-century tensions – social, political and cultural – between

“North” and “South” in Europe, in Spain and in Galicia. The malaise, fears and ghosts that haunted her are utterly modern, are entirely ours.

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