

“ASYLUM OF INCURABLY LAZY AND DEPRAVED MEN”

The Philippines as a Space of Degenerate Masculinity in the Late Fiction of Emilia Pardo Bazán

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Abstract

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the presence of the Philippines in Spanish political discourses and media gradually intensified. This was caused by an increase in migration to the archipelago and by the importance that the colonies acquired in the imperialist discourse, which combined constructions of nation, race, and gender. The Spanish writer Emilia Pardo Bazán paid attention to these Pacific islands in several of her stories and articles about the colonial conflict. The perception of the Philippines as an exotic alterity allowed the author to configure the archipelago as a narrative space that subverted the hegemonic discourse where masculinity and nation merged. According to this idea, the loss of the Philippines was associated in her fiction with the absence of women as an active subject in colonial management. In this article, I focus on how Pardo Bazán portrayed the islands in her short stories and novels such as *Memorias de un solterón* (1896) and *La sirena negra* (1908). In these works, the Philippines is depicted as a masculine and pathological space, where men embody racial degeneration and are, indirectly, responsible for the loss of the colonies.

Keywords

Colonial representation of the Philippines; *fin-de-siècle* Spanish literature; Emilia Pardo Bazán; Spanish imperialism; gender, race, and nation in *fin-de-siècle* Spain

About the Author

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From the beginning of her literary career in the late 1870s, Emilia Pardo Bazán was involved in the debates about modernity and national identity in Spain, which were closely related to the last colonies of the reduced Spanish empire. Her first article focused on the Philippines was a book review from 1891. However, the trigger for an increase in the archipelago's presence in her essays and fiction was the Philippine Revolution of 1896. In this article I examine the representation of the Philippines in Pardo Bazán's fiction in the light of the Spanish debates on national degeneration and its intersections with race and gender. The author wrote one review, "España remota" (1891), and two short stories, "Página suelta" (1896) and "La exangüe" (1899), focused on the Philippines, that have been analyzed in depth by the scholars Courtney Blaine Johnson and Joyce Tolliver. With these essential studies in mind, I will explore Pardo Bazán's references to the Philippines in her short stories, "Sedano" (1893), "Página suelta" (1896), "Las Tijeras" (1897), and "La exangüe" (1899), and in her novels *Memorias de un solterón* (1896) and *La sirena negra* (1908). Drawing insights from these essential studies, I suggest that the Philippines becomes an ideal pathogenic space in Pardo Bazán's fiction for representing male degeneration and the failure of the patriarchal order.

After the Spanish Glorious Revolution of 1868, which pursued the construction of a modern nation-state, the status of the overseas provinces became a significant debate amid the expansion of European and American imperialism. According to evolutionary theories, colonial empires showed a higher degree of civilization, that is, a more developed racial and social stage (Marcilhacy 124).¹ In this discursive context, Spain was under enormous international pressure: it had lost most of its colonies throughout the nineteenth century. Only the dominion over Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines allowed Spain to show some strength and maintain its international image as an imperial nation. Maintaining control over these territories was therefore a priority for all political parties in Spain, especially pursued during the first decades of the Restoration, the legitimacy of which was largely based on colonialism (Serrano, "Crisis e ideología" 182). Philippine affairs thus acquired increasing importance.

However, the status of the Pacific provinces differed markedly from that of the Antilles. Unlike the latter, the Philippines never gained representation in the Spanish Parliament (Sánchez Gómez, "Gobierno" 515). Despite the existence of some "assimilationists," most ideological groups (conservatives, religious, many liberals and even republicans) had a conception of Filipinos as child-like. They believed it was necessary to guide the Filipino people in all their actions, making assimilation impossible (Sánchez Gómez, "Gobierno" 514). This stereotype was based on an unquestionable racial basis, which affirmed the superiority of Spaniards over the indigenous people of the archipelago. Thus, in the debates on the Constitution of 1876, a member of the Spanish Parliament, Manuel Azcárraga,

who was Filipino creole, stated that the Philippines were not dominated "por la fuerza de las armas" [by force of arms] but "simplamente por el prestigio de la raza, y hay que cuidar de no perder esa estimación" [simply by the prestige of the race, and we must be careful not to lose that esteem] (qtd. in Celdrán Ruano 174; Johnson 179). Azcárraga's words reveal the ambivalence of the stereotype, as formulated by Homi Bhabha (66-84), since at the same time that the Parliament expressed the conception of the Philippines as total alterity, they also show anxiety about the potential loss of the colony and the desire to maintain it. For this purpose, the attractive stereotype for the metropolis needs to be reiterated. Azcárraga stated that the political consideration of the Pacific archipelago could not resemble that of the Antillean regions:

Siempre se ha interpretado que Cuba y Puerto Rico eran provincias españolas, en las cuales con tales o cuales modificaciones podían y debían regir las leyes constitucionales; pero hasta ahora que yo sepa, nadie ha creído que artículo ninguno de la Constitución pudiera regir en Filipinas; se ha creído generalmente que aquel Archipiélago formaba parte del imperio colonial, que no era propiamente provincia española.

Cuba and Puerto Rico have always been interpreted as Spanish provinces, in which constitutional laws could and should govern with some modifications; but until now, as far as I know, no-one has believed that any article of the Constitution could govern in the Philippines; it has been generally believed that the archipelago was part of the colonial empire, which was not properly a Spanish province. (qtd. in Celdán Ruano 183)

They, therefore, tried to turn the Philippines into a colony in the modern sense of nineteenth-century imperialism (Johnson 174–183), which required increasing its commercial value and attractiveness to the metropolis as a lucrative possession while maintaining its difference. Among the various initiatives taken for this purpose,² I would like to highlight Pablo Feced's *Filipinas: Esbozos y pinceladas* [The Philippines: Sketches and Drawings], and Vicente Barrantes' *Teatro tagalo* [Tagalog Theatre] (1889). Both works insisted on the need to transform the Philippines into a modern colony (Torres-Pou 125-132; 165-168) and were crucial for Pardo Bazán's perception of the Philippines.

Pardo Bazán, who acted as a "nation builder" through her essays and novels, also took a particular stance toward the colonies (Burdíel, "Género y clase" 272; Burdíel, *Emilia Pardo Bazán*; Labanyi 13-14). The representation of the Philippines promoted by the metropolis was initially accepted by the Galician author, as her laudatory review of Feced's work showed (Johnson 234-236; Tolliver, "Over Her Bloodless Body"). The very title of the review, "La España remota" ["Remote Spain"] (1891), referred to the ambivalence of the stereotype by merging what is one's own—that is, familiar—with what is "remote"—that is, not only distant, but

also unknown, vague, and even abject. Pardo Bazán described the nature of the archipelago not only as untamed, but also as pathogenic:

¡Qué lucha tan desigual la del hombre con la naturaleza de semejantes países! Ella le envuelve; le estrecha, se le infiltra, le roba toda acción y toda resolución ...; enervado y vencido, el hombre se entrega a una lasitud perezosa, languidez infinita, que para el infeliz *bago*, el recién llegado europeo, son preludio del *aplatanamiento* final.

What an unequal struggle that of man with the nature of such countries! It envelops him; it narrows him, infiltrates him, robs him of all action and all resolution ...; enervated and defeated, man indulges in a lazy lassitude, infinite languor, which for the unhappy *bago*, the European newcomer, is a prelude to the final *aplatanamiento* [sinking into lethargy. ("La España remota" 80)

The rhetorical debasement of the Philippines in the review of Feced's work "connects it to the need for positive self-definition in times of sociocultural stress" (Spurr 76) caused by the frailty of Spain in the imperialist context. As Courtney Blaine Johnson analyzes, in this review, Pardo Bazán clearly positioned herself against the "assimilationists" and in favor of authors such as Feced and Vicente Barrantes, whom she also mentioned.³ The relevance of this review is in showing how, by assuming the stereotypical representation of the Philippines, Pardo Bazán was able to sustain an "imperial fantasy" that assuaged the anxieties generated by fear of the colonial loss (Johnson 248). Joyce Tolliver extended Johnson's idea through the concept of "colonial fetish," advanced by Derek Hook, which combines the ambivalence of Bhabha's stereotype with Freud's fetish. For Hook, the colonial stereotype functions as a fetish, that is, "the mechanism that reassures the colonizer that his power is not threatened" (Tolliver, "Over Her Bloodless Body" 289).

The ambivalence of the Filipino space also made it an ideal setting onto which racial degeneration could be projected, even before the uprising. In fact, before 1896, allusions to the Philippines as a destination of exile to amend men's misconduct, or to which men of questionable morality went when they had economic problems, were not uncommon in the peninsular fiction of authors such as Benito Pérez Galdós, José María Pereda,⁴ or Pardo Bazán. However, this image was not a mere representation. In fact, Pardo Bazán denounced this practice in the middle of the conflict in the archipelago. The quotation is long, but it captures the perception of the Galician author very well:

Si se consigue apagar el incendio de Filipinas, habrá que pensar después en el modo de que no vuelva a reproducirse; habrá que poner en práctica medidas y arbitrios para que ese inmenso archipiélago, feracísimo y poblado por gentes a las cuales debemos ser

superiores en cultura y en moralidad, no vean en nosotros a una gente inicua, a unos explotadores, sino a unos protectores ... lo cierto que por todos los gobiernos y por todos los partidos políticos, Filipinas ha solido considerarse especie de remediavagos peninsulares, asilo de incurables perezosos o viciosos, ... ¡qué mal suena en nuestros oídos cuando vemos salir trenes y trenes con carga de soldados que van a Oceanía a extinguir con su sangre la hoguera que estas centellas prendieron tal vez!

If the Philippine fire can be extinguished, we will then have to think about how we can ensure it does not recur; it will be necessary to put into practice measures and means so that that immense archipelago, extremely fertile and populated by people to whom we must be superior in culture and morality, do not see in us iniquitous people, exploiters, but protectors... The truth is that the Philippines has often been considered by all governments and by all political parties as a kind of remedy for peninsular shirkers, an asylum of incurably lazy or depraved men,... How bad this sounds to our ears when we see trainload after trainload of soldiers traveling to Oceania to extinguish the bonfire, perhaps lit by these sparks, with their blood! ("Año más")

On the one hand, the author reiterates the idea of protective and civilizing affiliation, inherent in racial superiority. On the other, her words reveal the fear that the cause of the uprising was the degeneration of the Spaniards sent to the Philippines. Pardo Bazán reflects on the Philippines as a metropolitan woman, as a colonizer worried about her property. Her words do not reveal concern about the Philippine people, but about how Spaniards behave and its consequences for the nation. In this sense, the archipelago works as an extension of the metropolis to observe and criticize the Spaniards' behavior. As I have pointed out above, the literary association of the Philippines with Spanish idlers and rakes was not uncommon. Peninsular writers used the archipelago to criticize their metropolitan compatriots, while underpinning in Spanish readers their sense of belonging to the empire. However, in Pardo Bazán's works, these portrayals always had gender connotations. In an era when empire was strongly identified with masculinity, she was particularly interested in representing the male colonist as an agent of moral decline.

One of the first allusions to the Philippines as an "asylum of incurably lazy or depraved men" in Pardo Bazán's fiction is in "Sedano" (1893). This short story recounts the life of an old man, a hard worker, formal but poor, gray and excessively helpful. When the narrator, Sedano's office colleague, discovers his story, he learns that the poor man's plight is due to the badly lived life of his protégée's husband, a soldier who had "jugado... fondos que no eran suyos..., la vergüenza..., el deshonor..." [played... funds that were not his... the shame... the dishonor...] (*Cuentos nuevos* 181).⁵ Sedano gave them a considerable sum of money and the couple left for the

Philippines, where the husband, Pepe, continued his pernicious habits until all the good man's savings had been wasted.

The paradox of the story is that this degenerate individual is a soldier. As Julia Chang notes, in the nineteenth century the soldier represented not only "the ideal citizen," but even more "the symbol of national unity" (178-179). The increasing conviction of experiencing racial degeneration led the Spanish *Sanidad Militar* [the military's Sanitary Corps] to implement a biopolitical operation that would ensure this ideal and maintain national unity overseas. For this purpose, they recruited new soldiers following a medical examination of their bodies that guaranteed they were useful men who could project the imperial power in the colonies (Chang 179-185). Pepe, the soldier of the story, is "guapo" [handsome], that is, he has an "able-body," but he is a "perdido" [degenerate man] (*Cuentos nuevos* 181). Therefore, his transfer to the Philippines not only irreparably damages the lives of his wife and Sedano, but also the metropolis they both represent, risking the very unity of the empire. Pardo Bazán thus seemed to warn of the failure, in the first place of the biopolitical measures, since they dealt only with the male body, when the degeneration was not physical but moral. The positivist medical discourse that supported the incipient biopower trusted that the health of the social organism would also favor human perfectibility in a moral sense. On the contrary, in her stories, Pardo Bazán showed that racial decadence was perceived in men's immorality and she warned of its danger once it is exercised from the structures of power.

Secondly, the story questions hegemonic masculinity, by contrasting the soldier, a paradigm of virility, with Sedano, whose behavior is far from the bourgeois male model. Firstly, Sedano is characterized by ambiguous sexuality: "Yo he sido siempre raro..., muy raro..., hasta maniático... en ese particular de las mujeres. Me entraba un encogimiento... Nunca supe..., vamos, empezar." [I've always been weird ... very weird... even manic... about women. I became intimidated... I never knew... well, how to start] (*Cuentos nuevos* 179). He has also devoted his life to raising Enriqueta, the illegitimate daughter of a widow with whom he had a romantic but asexual relationship, and his concerns about the girl would, at the time, have been perceived as maternal: "Llamaba la atención al sacarla a pasear vestidita de terciopelo azul. [...] es mucha la jaqueca que levanta una chiquitina: que la dentición, que el miedo a la difteria, que la educación, que vigilarla para que ningún pillastre la engatuse..." ["She attracted attention when I took her out for a walk dressed in blue velvet [...] a little girl causes a lot of headaches: the teething, the fear of diphtheria, the education, watching over her to make sure no rascal can cajole her into doing anything..."] (*Cuentos nuevos* 180). Finally, Sedano embodies morality, generosity, foresight, and sacrifice, attributes that were associated with women. In the story, these feminine qualities are revealed as productive for society, compared to the male model embodied by the soldier who corrupts it. The impact

that this masculine degeneration can have for the unity of the empire is evinced by referring to the Philippines. The domain of the metropolitan soldier in the colony is parallel to that of the husband over his wife: the pernicious effects of the corrupt man in the family sphere, embodied by Enriqueta and Sedano, can be reproduced in the structures of colonial power causing the instability of the empire. This story states two principles that confer stability to the nation in opposition to hegemonic discourse: feminine attributes (affectivity, domesticity, goodness) and morality as a means of self-regulation.

As Joyce Tolliver has analyzed, Pardo Bazán revisited these feminine attributes in her short story "Página suelta" ["Loose Page"] (1896),⁶ published during the Philippine revolt against the metropolis. In this tale, "remote Spain" also operated as a colonial fetish. On the one hand, Pardo Bazán's story offers a stereotypical depiction of the Philippines: it begins with the description of its wild nature with a "pegajosa, sofocante" [sticky, suffocating] temperature, where "las espesas lianas y los bejucales, . . . la amarillenta sanguijuela . . . , la iguana y la venenosa serpiente palay" [the big lianas and the rattan, . . . the yellowish leech . . . , the iguana and the venomous dahong palay snake] (*Cuentos de Navidad* 73) hinder the advance of Spanish troops. On the other hand, when captain and lieutenant remember it is Christmas Eve, the consequent evocation of the motherland allows them to displace this emotion and realize that "España es también aquí" [Spain is also here] (*Cuentos de Navidad* 72; Tolliver, "Framing Colonial Manliness" 8). But, apart from merely reinforcing the stereotypical depiction of the Philippine colony, Pardo Bazán goes beyond this ambivalence, built on the topic of civilization versus barbarism (Bardavío Estevan, "¡España" 182), and connects it with gender concerns. The construction of masculinity in the story is again far from the bourgeois canon of the soldier. As the sentimental evocation—among others⁷—evinces:

the motivation of the Spanish soldiers is posited by the narrative voice not as any abstract ideal of patriotism or dedication to Spanish nationalism, but rather within the frame of family affiliation. That is, the trope of *madre patria* is transformed so as to emphasize *madre* more than *patria*. (Tolliver, "Framing Colonial Manliness" 5)

The final image of the story—the captain with the baby and the Filipino woman—represents a "curious version of the Nativity" that invokes the Catholic family triangle (Tolliver, "Framing Colonial Manliness" 10). The tale seems to suggest that the maintenance of the colonies must be based on the family affiliation between metropolis and colony, united in religion as a moral foundation.⁸ Like those who opposed the assimilation of the Philippines, the family bond upheld in the story did not claim any type of hybridization between Spaniards and indigenous Filipinos. In order not to forget the alterity of Christianized Filipinos, the story insists on the racial characterization of both the woman, a "china . . . de seno oblongo" [Chinese . . .

with an oblong breast], and the baby, "un muñeco amarillo" and "bien feo" [a yellow doll and very ugly] (*Cuentos de Navidad* 75).

What was subversive in Pardo Bazán's story was that, to inspire courage and consolidate control in the colony, it proposed values considered mainly feminine precisely when the dominant discourse contemplated the colonial uprising as questioning of national virility. Alda Blanco recalls that the person who best formulated this anxiety was Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, despite his criticism of the intervention in Cuba and the Philippines:

España, la nación más viril y fiera de todo el mundo, la que se ha perdido muchas veces por sus instintos bélicos [...] ¿ha perdido ya el legendario valor español? ¿Es que se ha afeminado el pueblo que aún no hace un siglo realizaba contra Napoleón la más asombrosa de las epopeyas?

Spain, the fiercest and most virile nation in the world, the one that has been lost many times through its warlike instincts [...] has it already lost the legendary Spanish courage? Have the people who not yet a century ago performed the astonishing epopee against Napoleon become effeminate? ("El fin del imperio" 12)

Blasco Ibáñez's words remind the readers that, during the nineteenth century and beyond, weakness and disease were linked to women, while strength and health belonged to men. A healthy nation was, therefore, a virile nation. In the medical discourse of the nineteenth century, health had a masculine gender since the model to distinguish between health and sickness was the male body (Jagoe 307). While men represented strength, balance, and reason, women embodied fragility, instability, and passion, typical of the pathological. Therefore, the subject who did not conform to that ideal of normality was considered degenerate or effeminate (Del Pozo 138). The medical discourse extended to the incipient field of sociology, which—based on evolutionary theories—affirmed that a society could not only evolve but also stagnate or degenerate. In the imperialist context, the health or virility of a nation was measured by its colonial domain. Consequently, when an empire lost its territories, it was considered a sick or effeminate nation. By asserting the above-mentioned feminine attributes as a strategy to maintain the colonies, Pardo Bazán rejected this idea and pointed to androcentric discourse and masculine performance as responsible for national decline.

Memorias de un solterón was published in 1896, also coinciding with the conflict in the Philippines. The main theme of this novel is the difficult condition of the new woman in a bourgeois environment and the failure of standardized female models constructed by the heteropatriarchy. One of these normative women, Argos, is dishonestly seduced by don Luis Mejía, the Governor of Marineda. Mauro, the

narrator, considers from the beginning of the novel that Mejía “era dos hombres: uno que el público veía y respetaba en su posición actual, otro que anteriormente se llamó de distinta manera y vivió, sabe Dios dónde y cómo, hasta que alguna tragedia [...] le obligó a echar piel nueva, a mudar nombre y a huir de sí propio” [was two men: one that the public saw and respected in his current position, another who previously had a different name and who lived, God knows where and how, until some tragedy... forced him to slough his skin, to change his name and flee from himself] (Pardo Bazan, *Memorias* 160). As the narrator suggests, Mejía’s nature, which he tries to hide even from himself, is comparable to Kristeva’s notion of the abject, which “disturbs identity, system [and] order” and which “does not respect borders, positions, [and] rules” (Kristeva 4). Interestingly, the in-betweenness of the “ambiguous” and the “composite” (Kristeva 4) in Mejía’s nature was revealed years before in the Philippines. There, the governor “había desempeñado cargos” [had held positions], got married and, finally, “dejaba a una mujer y dos niños en la indigencia” [left a woman and two children in poverty] (Pardo Bazan, *Memorias* 162, 293). The ambiguity of the stereotype, as Yasmina Romero Morales notes, is also abject (158), in such a way that the wild space of the Philippines allows the degenerate nature of the colonizer to be unmasked. The harm inflicted on the wife and children synecdochically represents the detriment to the mother country and its colonies. Back in the metropolis, the “double man,” as Mauro calls him, tries to hide his abjection—to reintegrate himself into civilization. However, at the same time that “[habla] con respetuoso acento de la religión, de la patria, del arte y de la mujer” [he speaks with a respectful accent of religion, country, art and women] (Pardo Bazán, *Memorias* 159), he betrays each concept: he behaves immorally; it is suggested that his government methods are illicit, aggressive, and treacherous; he is a “cursi” [tacky] person (Pardo Bazán, *Memorias* 160); and he systematically abuses women. The governor embodies the normalized immorality that perverts society. As an agent of power, his malady infects the system. This makes the whole nation sick—first in the colony but finally in the metropolis as well. After ruining a woman’s life in the Philippines, in Marineda, he nearly destroys the Neira family by having an affair with Argos and indirectly causing Don Benicio’s death. In this sense, the woman’s body and the domestic sphere represent the damage the nation suffers at the hands of a degenerate man.

During the dispute between Don Benicio and the governor, Mejía’s abjection reappears when he confronts his “turbio pasado” [murky past], the “repugnancia [de] mirarlo frente a frente” [repugnance at looking it in the face] (Pardo Bazán, *Memorias* 292). At that moment even his face is transformed: “un júbilo malicioso y satánico animaba sus facciones [...] la sonrisa de burla [...] dilataba los pálidos labios del gobernador” [a malicious and satanic joy animated his features [...] the mocking smile [...] dilated the governor’s pale lips] (Pardo Bazán, *Memorias* 294), while Argos’ inconsolable father lies defeated on the couch where Mejía and his

daughter had had sexual relations. When the governor regains his composure, Neira stabs him with a sword. Mejía's death serves to reinforce his abject image, but also to denounce how widespread the moral illness that corrupted the system was, given that the authorities themselves prefer to ignore the murder in order to prevent "nidadas de sapos y culebrones" [nest of toads and snakes] being discovered "en los antecedentes de un Gobernador" [in the background of a governor] (Pardo Bazán, *Memorias* 299). Paradoxically, those who partially repair the damage and manage to save Neira's family are Mauro and Feíta, the embodiment of new gender models through which "Pardo Bazán seeks to challenge the established gender order and create new spaces of subjectivity for both men and women" (Tsuchiya 135).

The ambivalence of the Filipino stereotype became a frequent device to show the moral decadence that weakened the race, always embodied by male figures, and the consequences this could have for the nation, represented by the violence exerted on women or on the family. Another example can be found in the tale "Las tijeras" ["The Scissors"] (1897).⁹ "Las tijeras" narrates the story of a married couple, an example of unconditional love, whose joy is ruined by their only son, "un pendenciero, estragado y derrochador" [a troublemaker, a depraved and wasteful man] (*Cuentos sacro-profanos* 43), who is sent to the Philippines with the idea of reforming him. There he dies in a fight, causing the illness and death of his mother and the desolation of his father. In the discursive context of the late nineteenth century, both characters—Mejía and the bad son—represented the decline of society and race. Their behavior, dissociated from any feminine attributes, harms and sickens the metropolis embodied by those destroyed women and families. When moving to the colony, their supposed racial superiority should serve to exert a civilizing influence, either as agents of authority or as simple inhabitants. However, given their degenerate condition, they not only fail, but become completely corrupted or even die in contact with barbarism. In fact, Spaniards from the Peninsula and from the archipelago shared the idea that the savage environment of the Philippines had a pernicious influence on Spanish people. As Rocío Ortuño points out, Ignacio del Villar, the main cartoonist in Manila at the end of the century, parodied the Spaniards' "brutalization due to the «uncivilized»" (19). In Pardo Bazán's fiction, the parody becomes drama.

The defeat of 1898 confirmed for many that Spain was a dying nation (Álvarez Junco, *Mater Dolorosa* 586) and fostered a proliferation of essays on the causes and remedies for national degeneration.¹⁰ This literature maintained an association between degeneration and feminization, regardless of its ideology. Conservatives attributed the effeminacy to the imitation of the foreign and to the oblivion of the strong moral customs of their ancestors, which made the country an "invincible power." Republicans and liberals, on the other hand, blamed the colonial disaster on the clergy for having feminized Spain and making it lose the warlike virtues

of its ancestors, mentioned by Blasco Ibáñez in the preceding quotation (Álvarez Junco, "¿Modernidad o atraso?" 86). As Nerea Aresti notes, the hegemonic debate about the decay of the empire was posed as a confrontation between masculinities, setting women apart from the issue (20).

Pardo Bazán participated very actively in this debate.¹¹ One of her first public interventions was the lecture she gave in Paris on 18 April 1899, entitled *La España de ayer y la de hoy*, where she distanced herself from both positions. Against the liberals, Pardo Bazán defended "la escasa influencia moral del clero" [the little moral influence of the clergy] (Pardo Bazán, *La España* 75). Unlike the conservatives, she considered that taking refuge in the golden legend had fed "la pereza y la rutina" [laziness and routine] and "falseado nuestro sentimiento y nuestro juicio" [falsified our feeling and our judgment] (Pardo Bazán, *La España* 69). Furthermore, she blamed "moral customs" for the absolute marginalization of women in the public sphere and, in the face of the discourse of her male colleagues, she argued that it was "Error profundo, imaginar que adelantará la raza mientras la mujer se estacione. Al pararse la mujer, párase todo; el hogar detiene la evolución, y como no es posible estancarse enteramente, vendrá el retroceso" [a profound mistake, imagining that the race will advance while women remain still. When women stop, everything stops; the home stops evolution, and since it is not possible to stagnate entirely, the regression will come] (Pardo Bazán, *La España* 80). As might be expected, Pardo Bazán's discourse on national regeneration incorporated gender tensions but subverted the meaning that was hegemonically given to them. National decadence had nothing to do with feminization or womanhood, separated as they were from power. On the contrary, their marginalization could be a reason for the debacle.

This same idea was reflected in the story "La exangüe" ["Bloodless woman"] (1899),¹² published in *Blanco y Negro* just three days before the lecture in Paris. In it, Pardo Bazán began to rework the image of the Philippines in connection with national degeneration. After the loss of the colonies, the ambivalence that had characterized the representation of the Pacific colony as an integral but alien and unfamiliar part of the empire contributed to its transformation into a symbolic space onto which the pathological state of the nation was projected (Bardavío Estevan, "¡España" 188-195). Of course, this reflection was inseparably linked to gender tensions (Tolliver, "Over Her Bloodless Body" 290; Burdiel, *Emilia Pardo Bazán* 479). "La exangüe" is a framed narration in which the narrator, the doctor Sánchez de Abrojo, recounts the story of an anemic patient, a woman who, a few years earlier, had moved to the Philippines with her brother. Their lives passed peacefully until some rebels attacked their village. During the combat, the priest died, and brother and sister were captured. The woman then negotiated with the rebel leader, offering her blood in exchange for her brother's. He agreed, and for a week subjected the woman to a slow bleeding. When the Spanish troops rescued

her, the woman discovered her brother had been hanged. Ill, she returned to Spain where, after a while, she began treatment with Sánchez de Abrojo. Compared to "Página suelta" (1896), this story denounces the denial in which Spanish society lived, clinging to that colonial fetish built on the stereotypical image of the naive and helpful Filipino (Tolliver, "Over Her Bloodless Body" 290).

Furthermore, the tale also shows a vampiric relationship with the woman (Tolliver, "Over Her Bloodless Body"). The female protagonist is obviously a victim of the Philippine leader, but she is also a victim—in a much more subtle way—of Spanish men when she returns to the metropolis. On the one hand, the doctor does not cure the woman motivated by duty or a humanitarian feeling, but by a narcissistic pleasure: "Es para mí deleite refinado arrancar a la nada su presa... Los que nacen para tenorios se desviven por 'una más' en la lista." [To me, it is a refined delight to snatch his prey from the abyss... Those born to be *tenorios* crave "one more" for the list.] (Pardo Bazán, *Cuentos de la patria* 168). On the other hand, the *Modernista* painter who listens to Sánchez de Abrojo's story is interested in the patient as a mere object: the perfect model to represent the bloodless nation (Tolliver, "Over Her Bloodless Body"). The double male appropriation of the woman shows "that behind the feminine aesthetic object, and behind the disembodied representation of woman that serves as nationalistic fetish, is the silent, almost lifeless, face of a flesh-and-blood woman" (Tolliver, "Over Her Bloodless Body" 298). The woman is a victim both in the old colony and in Spain, because in none of the spaces dominated by the patriarchal order is she recognized as a subject. In the story, male dominance is evident in that the woman's voice is never reproduced. She is not even the narrator of her story, and the doctor never gives her the floor (Tolliver, "Over Her Bloodless Body" 295). Discourse, that is, power, is utterly masculine. The woman, and therefore the Spanish nation she embodies, is a victim of the violence of the patriarchal order.

The disease suffered by the woman is not borne of her fragile nature, as the hegemonic discourse postulated, but it has instead been caused. Feminine values, which Pardo Bazán claimed in "Página suelta," "Sedano," and indirectly in *Memorias de un solterón* to strengthen colonial domain, are completely absent in the behavior of the male characters in this story. The Philippines, as part of the nation, reproduces this conduct, but as a savage space also allows the radical representation of violence. In this sense, male physical sadism is only exerted in the wild, although all male characters in the story lack sentimentality and humanity. At the aforementioned Paris conference, Pardo Bazán also denounced the coldness of Spanish society:

la masa popular española llega a mirar con criminal indiferencia los más graves sucesos; que nos arranquen nuestras colonias, que no nos quede una pulgada del mundo

que descubrimos, que cruja siniestramente la unidad nacional, no habrá de alterarse la fúnebre serenidad del pueblo, ... monstruoso fenómeno de una nación convertida en estatua.

[the Spanish popular masses are capable of watching the most serious events with criminal indifference: our colonies are taken from us; we no longer have an inch of the world we discovered; national unity is creaking disastrously; but the funereal serenity of the people will not be disturbed,... the monstrous phenomenon of a nation turned into a statue.] (*La España* 89)

The fictional nature of the stories allowed the author to specify the impassive "popular masses" and attribute the coldness to male characters with power within society. Unlike them, the woman embodies affectivity: she negotiates with the Filipino leader, sacrifices herself for her brother, and enacts her love for the country in moments of agony when, in her delirium, she kisses the floor of her cell. Women possess the sentimentality necessary to maintain that "national unity." If women are relegated from power, if feminine values are removed from the public sphere, the nation is broken. As Pardo Bazán asserted in December of that year:

Pensad ahora en España y en su dominación [...] veréis cómo carece de eso que [...] es la transición a un estado definitivo de cultura, el constante propósito civilizador, proyectado de dentro afuera, único que produce la amalgama nacional. No supimos dar nuestro calor, cobijar en nuestro corazón lo que abarcaba nuestro brazo, entonces fuerte, membrudo y velludo.

Now think of Spain and its domination ... you will see how it lacks what ... is the transition to a definitive state of culture, the constant civilizing purpose, projected from the inside out, the unique thing that produces national amalgam. We did not know how to give our warmth, to shelter in our hearts what our arm, then strong, thick, and hairy, encompassed. (*Discurso inaugural* 16-17)

Thus, what failed was that male arm, masculine power, because the heart was not used. Against the androcentric discourse that considered national decadence as a feminization process, Pardo Bazán claimed feminine attributes and women as the way to regenerate and strengthen the nation. Furthermore, she used the female body and the family space to represent the violence exerted both on women and on the empire itself by the domination of morally degenerate men whose weakness could not maintain control in the colonies. Colonial loss was thus conceptualized as the consequence of a racial degeneration unable to contain the force of the wild (Bardavío Estevan, "¡España" 196), and the ambivalence of the stereotype made the Philippines into the ideal setting to represent the harmful environment that corrupts body and mind. The weakening of the race was defined in Pardo Bazán's

narrative as a product of the masculinity upheld by the patriarchal order, which was categorically disassociated from emotions and religious morality. The national disease therefore had nothing to do with femininity or women; it concerned male corruption.

Between 1896 and 1899, the presence of the Philippines in Pardo Bazán's literature had been part of the debate on national regeneration, which implied a critical reflection on the Spanish State's institutions and biopolitics. In 1905, however—due to a confluence of personal, political, and literary factors—Pardo Bazán's works moved away from the project of construction of the modern nation-state, typical of the realistic and naturalist novel (Labanyi 52-90), to develop a modernist fiction—subjective, impressionist, fragmentary, and elitist. However, that shift did not erase the presence of the Philippines or the analysis of degeneration from her work. On the contrary, in a letter to López Ballesteros, Pardo Bazán acknowledged that her new novels focused on the reflection "sobre el alma contemporánea" [on the contemporary soul] that she perceived to be "enferma de veras, desequilibrada y devorada por la concupiscencia" [truly sick, unbalanced and devoured by lust] (Sotelo, "Más noticias" 212). Thus, instead of connecting the Philippines with the nation's decline, the malfunction of dominant structures, and the consequent mismanagement of the colonies, she linked the archipelago to the representation of decadent individuals who embodied that "generación enferma" [sick generation].

From Pardo Bazán's words, it can be inferred that the pathology of these individuals has a moral nature. An in-depth analysis of *La sirena negra* [*The Black Siren*] (1908) and its male protagonist reveals that the origin of the evil that had corrupted the individual came from the absence of self-regulatory norms, such as those provided by religion. Anomie, in the sense proposed by Émile Durkheim, became the root of degeneration in Pardo Bazán's fiction, and this moral decline was mainly male. Compared to women, men had distanced themselves from the Church as they assumed positivist thinking, particularly during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The patriarchal order and the dominant androcentric discourse caused anomie and, therefore, degeneration to spread throughout the nation. Gaspar de Montenegro, protagonist of *La sirena negra*, embodies that decadent who finally manages to redeem himself through his final religious conversion (Bardavío Estevan, "Un estado de la conciencia").

In this context, the novel includes a significant allusion to the Philippines, linked to the character of Rita de Quiñones. The trigger for the scarce action in the novel is Gaspar's attraction to this woman, sick with tuberculosis and a single mother of a child. The necrophiliac attraction of the protagonist for Rita recalls Sánchez de Brojo's vampiric relationship with "La exangüe." Gaspar is really curious to know

the origin of Rita's pathology and he gradually discovers that it comes from her relationship with her father in the Philippines:

Me ha contado que nació en Cádiz; que su familia era antigua, y de las buenas, venida a menos; que después de apuros y miserias estuvieron en Manila varios años...

—¿Empleado alguien? ¿Su padre de usted...?

Al nombre de su padre, los ojos hondos y calenturientos se velan como de una nube de humo... Sin duda el papá se mostró inhumano para ella; y continúa:

—Sí, empleado fue... ¡Qué tierra aquella! Calor pegajoso..., y está uno tan flojo, tan débil... Falta el ánimo, todo le da a uno igual... A eso llaman *aplattanarse*... Luego nos volvimos a España... En Madrid nació Rafaelín, pobrecito mío...

She has told me that she was born in Cádiz; she came from one of the good, old families, in decline; that after hardships and miseries they were for several years in Manila...

—Anyone employed? Your father...?

When her father is mentioned, her deep and feverish eyes are veiled as if with a cloud of smoke... Without a doubt, she saw her father as inhuman; and she continues:

—Yes, he was an employee... What a land! Sticky heat..., and one is so feeble, so weak... Lack of courage, nothing matters... That's what they call *aplattanarse*... Then we returned to Spain... In Madrid, Rafaelín was born, my poor little thing... (*La sirena negra* 27)

The father, therefore, embodies one of the anomic men depicted in the preceding examples, who, after ruining his family, left for the Philippines in search of fortune. Rita's description of the archipelago's nature reproduces the earlier representation, in Feced's review (1891), of the pathogenic environment that causes *aplattanamiento*. However, a decade after the loss of the colonies, debasement no longer functions rhetorically as the alterity that defines civilization, but as a reflection or a metaphorical and hyperbolic projection of metropolitan racial degeneration. Rita's father, the representative of that depleted race, succumbs in contact with the barbarous and harmful environment of Manila, until he becomes savage. During the confession of the sick woman on her deathbed, Gaspar finally understands the moral pain that tormented the weak consumptive and made her repeat that she was "mala, muy mala" [bad, very bad] (12): her father had abused her and the child was the son of that incestuous relationship. This "sublime horror pagano" [sublime pagan horror] (58), as Gaspar calls the taboo par excellence, constitutes the most inhuman and uncivilized act, the regression to a primitive state prior to any social norm, and as such, it can only occur in a wild environment. Symbolically, incest also represents the rupture of the paternal/maternal relationship that should exist between the metropolis and the colony, where the outraged part is the nation itself, embodied in Rita. Ultimately, the greatest casualty is woman, annulled by a system fully dominated by the degenerate man who systematically abuses her. Rita is a

victim of her father but also of Gaspar, who appropriates her. The classic-tinged story about the abominable progenitor is framed in a novel that focuses on the degeneration of the "contemporary soul" so that it works as an *exemplum* to show how far the state of masculine anomie embodied by Gaspar can degenerate. The Philippines thus becomes an ideal setting to portray the culmination of national decadence, the wild space that takes hold of the degenerate race, nullifying any hint of civilization. Rita does not naturally embody the disease, as the dominant discourse held, but she is the victim of the male moral decadence that has corrupted the nation and nullifies women.

Dulce dueño (1911), Pardo Bazán's last novel, once again took up the vision of the Philippines as a pathogenic space.¹³ The novel narrates the story of a decadent woman, Lina. Her "apócrifo" [apocryphal] father, a "bala perdida" [loose cannon] (*Dulce dueño* 120), a drinker and a "cabeza de chorlito" [dimwit] (116), dies in the former Pacific colony because, as the protagonist points out, the "clima de Filipinas es mortífero para sujetos como mi padre" [the Filipino climate is deadly for people like my father] (120). In good measure, this final representation of the archipelago in Pardo Bazán's fiction was indebted to the set of meanings attributed to the ex-colony from the revolution of 1868. The condition of a modern colony conferred on the Philippines, in contrast to the Antillean provinces, led to the creation of that ambivalent stereotype that would facilitate the return to a wild and negative exoticism after its loss.

The debates on the degeneration of the Spanish race and nation, inevitably linked to gender, derived largely from the loss of the colonies at the peak of imperialist expansion. While hegemonic discourse conceptualized decadence or disease as a symptom of effeminacy, Pardo Bazán tried to subvert the solid links between masculinity, health, and nation. With this purpose, she turned the Philippines into a symbolic space upon which to present her proposal through fiction. Initially, Pardo Bazán championed feminine values as appropriate for consolidating dominance in the colony and strengthening Spanish national unity. Later, after the defeat of 1898, the archipelago became the context for reflecting on male degeneration, responsible for Spain's colonial loss and moral decadence.

Notes

- * All English translations in this paper were made by the author.
1. David Marcilhacy and Joshua Goode offer two thorough studies of the concept of race and the debates about it in the context of the Spanish Restoration.
 2. In the 1880s, the Philippines was promoted economically through the founding of large colonial companies such as the Compañía General de Tabacos de Filipinas and the Compañía Transatlántica. These helped foster interest among part of the Spanish political and business class (Sánchez Gómez, "Gobierno" 514). Conversely, there was an attempt to naturalize the Filipino's stereotype through the successful Philippines Exhibition of 1887 in Madrid (Sánchez Gómez, *Un imperio*; Blanco, *Cultura y conciencia*) and the participation of the Philippines at the Barcelona Universal Exposition of 1888, as well as the reports of both events and the publication of works.
 3. The author refers to Vicente Barrantes to praise his prose above that of Feced. Barrantes had maintained an arduous controversy with José Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, so praising him without alluding to Filipino writers showed Pardo Bazán's stance (Johnson 237-245).
 4. Pereda makes allusions in *Pedro Sánchez* (1883), *Los hombres de Pro* (1884) and *Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera* (1878). There are mentions in Pérez Galdós with this negative meaning, particularly in works written after the loss of the colony such as *Narváez* (1902), *Los duendes de la camarilla* (1903), and *O'Donell* (1904), although it was also where the degenerate Pedro Polo intended to go in *Tormento* (1884). More examples can be found in Carlos Valmaseda's article.
 5. "Sedano" was first published in *El Liberal*, April 24, 1893, and after in *Cuentos nuevos*, Madrid, Agustín Avrial, 1894. I quote from this edition.
 6. "Página suelta" was published in *El Liberal* on December 20, 1896, and was included in *Cuentos de Navidad y Reyes*, Madrid, Establecimiento Tipográfico Idamor Moreno, 1902.
 7. The memories that awaken the spirit of the troops are all linked to the feminine and domestic sphere (Christmas meals, cousins, aunts, the captain's son). The vindication of the home is reinforced with the feminization of the lieutenant, characterized by his "dulce cara femenil" [sweet feminine face] (70). The final scene is filled with emotion, with the embrace between the priest and the captain, and the tenderness awakened in the latter when he takes an orphaned Filipino baby in his arms.
 8. The defense of paternalism and the presence of the Church in the Philippines coincided with the positions of Vicente Barrantes and Pablo Feced, although many liberals criticized the excessive power of religious orders in the archipelago, both before 1896 and during the conflict on the islands (Pérez Ledesma 110-112). This short story shows that Pardo Bazán clearly supported the work of the Church in the archipelago (Bardavío Estevan, "¡España" 182-183).
 9. "Las Tijeras" was first published in *El Imparcial*, January 2, 1897, and after in *Cuentos sacro-profanos* (1899). I quote from this edition.

10. Some of these are Macías Picavea's *El problema nacional* (1899), Vidal Fité's *Las desdichas de la Patria* (1899), and José Rodríguez Martínez' *Los desastres y la regeneración de España* (1899). All were commented on by Pardo Bazán in the bibliographic review included in *La España de ayer y de hoy* (1899).
11. Among Pardo Bazán's works related to the national regeneration are "Asfixia" or "Respirando por la herida," *La España de ayer y de hoy* (1899), *Discurso inaugural del Ateneo de Valencia* (1899), some articles in *Cuarenta días en la Exposición* (1901) and *Por la Europa católica* (1902), and the discourse at the *Juegos Florales de Orense* (1901). A work of fiction related to this topic is *El Niño de Guzmán o Cuentos de la Patria* (1902). On this topic, see José Manuel González Herrán ("Emilia;" "La opinión;" "Poema"), Guadalupe Gómez Ferrer-Morant, David Henn, Marisa Sotelo ("Emilia;" "Aproximación"), Laureano Bonet and Cristina Patiño Eirín, Joyce Tolliver ("Over Her Bloodless;" "Framing Colonial Manliness"), Carmen Pereira-Muro, and Susana Bardavío Estevan ("¡España").
12. *Blanco y Negro*, April 15, 1899. It was included in *Cuentos de la patria*, Madrid, Establecimiento Tipográfico de Idamor Moreno, 1902.
13. Another allusion to the Philippines as an "asylum of incurably lazy and depraved men" is in "La cana," a short story published first in *Los contemporáneos*, 106, 1911 and later in *En Cuentos trágicos*, Madrid: Renacimiento, 1912.

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