THE FEMALE VOICE: GENDER AND GENRE IN *LA MADRE NATURALEZA*

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The configuration of the narrative voice in the nineteenth-century novel has been assessed from many angles. The relationship between the novelist and the voice within the text has intrigued generations of critics, especially in regard to gender, as when a male author creates a female narrator or vice versa. Less sharply focused is the question of the identity of an undramatized, unpersonified narrative voice. The fundamental issue is whether one can—or should—ascribe gender to the narrative voice in the realist novel. [1] In the case of novels authored by men, the point is moot: the narrative voice is assumed to be male unless otherwise specified. The matter becomes problematic only in the conjunction of realism and novels written by women, and in Spain this means principally the novels of Emilia Pardo Bazán. Pardo Bazán clearly positioned herself within the tradition of the realist novel as practiced by male novelists. Conversely, she remained distant from, not to say hostile to, the phenomenon of contemporaneous Spanish women novelists writing in an identifiably female voice for a female audience (frequently addressed as «querida lectora»). By writing within a tradition of male authorship, Pardo Bazán had to contend with the conventions of gender that governed author identity and narrative voice. [2] As a woman adapting the conventions of a masculine genre to her own purposes, what shape does she give to the narrative voice in her novels? [3] Is the question of gender relevant to a study of the narrative voice within a given text? [4] To focus the inquiry more closely, what gender-linked strategies characterize the narrative voice in *La madre naturaleza*?

Of the strategies that define the contours of the narrative voice in *La madre naturaleza,* two serve to establish the nature and degree of narrative authority. [5] I shall characterize the first as the «display of erudition» and the other as the «appeal to consensus.» The invocation of familiar patterns of response functions to corroborate the normative nature of human activity and to insure the reader's acceptance of the specific actions and emotions. Both strategies carry implicit gender identifications which give shape to the narrator's identity through the activation of assumptions and frames of reference shared by the implied reader and the narrator. The «display of erudition» strategy inserts into the narration information that fulfills no function within the narration itself and thus refers back directly to the narrator. A prominent example occurs in an early chapter of *La madre naturaleza* in the description of Perucho and Manolita when, mentioning the heart, the narrator eschews literary language and displays instead a scientific knowledge of anatomy and physiology: «El mancebo le tomó la mano y la paseó por su pecho, hasta colocarla allí, donde, sin estar situado el corazón, se percibe mejor su diástole

y sístole» (34). The narration conveys more information about the narrator than about the emotions of the characters, who recede before the display of scientific language. The world of science and erudition lies almost exclusively within the purview of male culture in late nineteenth-century Spain. This display of learning seems designed to affirm the traditions of male authorship and to assert Pardo Bazán's qualifications to practice them. It is an uneasy and overly obtrusive display of male language in a text written by a woman novelist. [6]

The «appeal to consensus» strategy occurs repeatedly throughout the narration so as to naturalize actions and emotions by calling on the reader's own experience of human behavior. Such a device opens the chapter in which Gabriel experiences insomnia: «Según suele suceder cuando el calor desazona el cuerpo y acontecimientos importantes ocurridos durante el día perturban el espíritu, Gabriel Pardo había pasado la noche en vigilia casi completa» (213). The strategy can also serve to obviate the need for further narrative elaboration; by invoking the pattern of common experience, the narrator avoids detailing the emotions named: «Al entrar en los Pazos experimentó Gabriel la impresión melancólica que sentimos al acercarnos a la sepultura de una persona querida, y la impresión profunda que nos causa ver con los ojos sitios que desde hace mucho tiempo visita nuestra imaginación» (125). The appeal to psychological patterns may bypass the general reader's consensus and rely on the testimony of experts: «Dicen personas expertas en esta clase de lances que ni los testigos oculares, ni las víctimas, son capaces de referir puntualmente las peripecias que se suceden en un abrir y cerrar de los ojos, ni menos recordar de qué manera, guiado por el instinto de conservación, se pone en salva cada quisque» (56). An extended and highly imaginative use of this technique structures the opening paragraph of chapter 6 and prepares the overturning of the diligence as witnessed by Máximo Juncal: «Uno de los deleites más sibaríticos para el feroz egoísmo humano es ver... cómo vence la cuesta... el armatoste de la diligencia» (53).

In the cases just cited, the education, attitudes, and psychology of the narrator begin to take shape and place the narrator squarely within the dominant currents of contemporary scientific and psychological thought. The contours of the narrative voice continue to be male-linked or correspond to non-sex-linked patterns. Instances of specifically female responses are much more limited, but one in particular is uniquely female in nature: the childless woman. [7] In the following example the initial observation on human psychology prepares the introduction of the woman-specific model: the context within the novel is the village cemetery at nightfall as Gabriel peers into the unfamiliar darkness and perceives movement and sound:

> Cuando se produce este género de exaltación, nadie la saborea con más extraño placer que los espíritus fuertes, los incrédulos: es el gozo de la mujer estéril que se siente madre; es un deleite parecido al que causa la lectura de una novela de visiones y espectros a las altas horas de la noche, en la solitaria alcoba, con la persuasión de que no hay palabra de verdad en todo ello, y a la vez con involuntario recelo de mirar hacia los rincones..., por si allí está acechando la *cosa sin nombre,* el elemento sobrenatural que teme y anhela nuestro espíritu, ansioso de romper la pesada envoltura material y el insufrible encadenamiento lógico de las realidades. (247)

The two cases—the childless woman, the scary novel—arise out of the tension between imagination and reason. The momentary belief in the nonexistent, the *cosa sin nombre* that transcends reality, unites the three scenarios: Gabriel's memory of Nucha, the evocation of the unborn child, and the projection into existence of beings who live only in text. The desire for the unknown infuses the power to give life through an act of imagination, a power which Pardo Bazán equates with women and writing. Reading and motherhood share a creative potential, that of bringing into being a life first latent in the body/text and alive only through desire.[8]

A second female-linked example again privileges motherhood but curiously dramatizes Perucho's response to the revelation that he is Pedro's son: «Llevóse ambas manos a los rizos y los mesó con repentino frenesí, con uno de esos ademanes primitivos que suele tener la mujer del pueblo a la vista del cuerpo muerto de su hijo» (269). The emotional experience underlying the Perucho/mother metaphorical association is death: death of a child/love. The gesture of genuine physical anguish with which the mother reacts to the death of a part of her own body corresponds in Perucho to the feeling that the child he nurtured and loved has been brutally and unexpectedly torn from him. The authenticity and immediacy of this rending of the body is triply displaced: on a social plane («primitivo»), in terms of gender and now in terms of class («la mujer del pueblo»), but it is the most immediate correlative to the physicality of Perucho's anguish, the only metaphor to express the brutal scission of a union so recently enacted. Pardo Bazán finds both the physical response and the language to express it in woman's experience.

Female figures constitute a secondary presence in the patriarchal world of *La madre naturaleza.* The one central female character, Manuela, is increasingly eclipsed in the narration by the figure of her uncle, Gabriel. Other women play minor, discontinuous roles in the novel: Catalina, Sabel, María la Sabia. Manolita's mother, Nucha, remains alive through Julián's devotion to her memory and through Gabriel's desire for her daugther. The displacement of the active presence of women by male surrogates is a constant in the novel. Displacement marks female *roles* in the absence of a female *presence.* The role of mother is largely unrepresented, except for the pervasive presence of Mother Nature. Perucho's mother, Sabel, barely makes an appearance, marginated by the fading of her physical attractiveness with age. The function of motherhood is visibly fulfilled by *males*: Perucho functions as Manolita's surrogate mother, and Gabriel fantasizes a mothering relationship to Manolita in a confusion of parent and suitor functions. Two further and more problematic examples of the displacement of female functions onto male characters are marked by the narrator. One is Goros, who serves as Julián's *ama de casa* and whose androgynous nature is specified by the narrator («seres universales y andróginos que reúnen todas las buenas cualidades del varón y de la hembra» [167]; «Goros y él se complementaban» [169]). The other is Sabel's husband, Angel de Naya, who has insinuated himself into the duties of mistress of the Pazos more effectively than Nucha ever did.

Although the women of Cebre and the Pazos appear in bracketed roles, the narration repeatedly includes women in its sweeping gaze, however briefly it focuses on them. The civil servant's wife traveling on the diligence is

viewed with an unsympathetic eye: «La mujer de un empleado de Orense, con el apéndice de un niño de brazo» (41). Narrative scorn attaches momentarily to her self-conscious projection of the moral prerogatives of «buena esposa y madre» (42) and her excessive quantities of baggage which threaten the stability of the top-heavy diligence. The narrator holds the public deportment of women to a standard of communal responsibility. In contrast, Catalina, the wife of Máximo Juncal and his lover in *Los pazos de Ulloa,* is something of an idealized figure: an excellent cook, even-tempered and the perfect antidote to Máximo's bilious nature (63). Perhaps Gabriel's perspective in his enthusiasm for marriage gives her such unique sharing among the women of the novel. But Catalina has a complementary dimension to that of wife, a dual focus to her life which bridges the perfect fulfillment of wifely duties with the continued practice of her profession of *panadera.* Her activity at the mill grants her freedom of movement and an identity in tandem with that of wife. The attention that Catalina and the civil servant's wife receive is gratuitous in the overall shape of the narration and tells us more about the narrative affinities than about the world of the novel. Both examples suggest the need for self-definition beyond the social identity of wife or mother.

The village women attract special narrative attention in *La madre naturaleza* from the opening sentence of chapter 2, where their role in the harvest is described: «durante la noche entera y la madrugada, cuadrillas de mujeres habían estado segando el centeno...» (15). The harsh physical demands of women's work in Galicia leaves its imprint: [9] «Las aldeanas, aunque no se dediquen a labrar la tierra, no conservan, pasados los treinta, atractivo alguno, y en general se ajan y marchitan desde los veinticinco» (125). Throughout the novel the shadow of women working in the harvest and in the threshing, in the halls and in the kitchen, falls across the central action, ever in the narrator's field of vision if only peripheral to the concerns of the characters themselves. The presence of women of all ages and conditions, alone or in tandem with men, constitutes an integral part of the narrator's vision.

La madre naturaleza is structured on the tension between two focalized nuclei: Manolita/Perucho and Gabriel Pardo. With Gabriel's arrival in Cebre in chapter 5, his perspective on people, events, and even himself dominates the narrative. In the early chapters of the novel, in the Manolita-Perucho relationship, a female experiencing self finds expression. This voicing of the female experience is then muted until the central event of the novel, the ascension of the Castros, when Manolita's focalization reemerges and her experience again gives shape to the narration. Manolita's perspective submerges for a second time following the return to the Pazos and is only recovered when, as a woman, she finds her own voice in the closing pages of the novel. By choosing to focalize sexuality through the female experience of difference and passage into womanhood and by allowing the resolution of the narrative structure to rest on Manuela, Pardo Bazán shows her female hand. By creating a narrative voice that privileges female rather than male experience in the three decisive events of the novel, and by placing the resolution in the fe-

male sphere, Pardo Bazán makes the male genre uniquely her own. A defining characteristic of the narrative voice in *La madre naturaleza* is thus the projection of female sexuality from a female perspective and the yielding to Manuela's unmediated voice in the resolution of the conflict.

The female-linked narrative perspective is not limited to Manuela's perceptions and experiences, however. It is Gabriel, for example, who imagines Pedro's seedy guise transformed into the citified version of himself and Gabriel who envisions the female response to the figure Pedro would cut. Here Gabriel gives voice to the female appreciation of the male: «Ceñido aquel mismo abdomen por una faja, bajo un pantalón negro hábilmente cortado; desmochada aquella misma cabeza por un diestro peluquero; raídas aquellas mejillas con afiladísima navaja y suavizada aquella barba con brillantina; añadido a todo ello cierto aire entre galante y grave, que caracteriza a las personas respetables en un salón, es seguro que más de cuatro damas dirían, al ver pasar al marqués de Ulloa: '¡Qué bien conservado! Cuarenta años es lo más que representa'» (116-17). Gabriel transmits the superficiality of female criteria and judgment, but his is a man's appreciation of the attributes that attract women. He is a man judging another man with a woman's eye, which is the perspective the narrative voice finds most comfortable.

Female perceptions are most frequently tied to Manolita. As she moves from adolescence into maturity, she begins to sense her difference, her separateness from the constant companion of her youth and to appreciate the power of control which accompanies that emerging difference: «Al sentirse investida por primera vez de la regia prerrogativa femenina; al comprender claramente cómo y hasta dónde le tenía sujeta la voluntad a su Pedro, se deleitaba en aparentar mal humor...» (38). In evoking this «regia prerrogativa femenina,» the narrator writes from within the female experience and locates in Manolita the self-conscious manipulation of male response that this power confers. Manolita's actions are dictated not by whim or malice but by pleasure, the pleasure deriving from the role reversal that places the female in control of the male.

The narrator also has recourse to Manuela's feminine intuition to explain her awareness that Gabriel is playing a double role, addressing her not only as an uncle but crossing the boundary into another unnamed relationship: «su infalible instinto femenil le dijo que había *algo* inusitado, algo distinto de lo que podía decir un tío a una sobrina en el fondo de un bosque» (146). Manolita's nascent awareness of her own difference, of the strictures on discourse, of the potential of language to violate, define «su infalible instinto femenil.» If Manolita's growing sexual awareness warns her away from Gabriel's playfully seductive rhetoric, his shift in discursive strategy provokes a rapt response which the narrator justifies as a common female predilection for male heroic discourse: «Inclinóse la montañesa hacia su tío, revelando en sus ojos brillantes, en su respiración agitada, el interés con que infaliblemente escucha la mujer toda historia en que juega el valor masculino» (149). Gabriel has stimulated in Manolita the physical responsiveness he has sought, but the verbal strategy which provokes it is military in nature and not amatory. The narrative voice does not fuse with Manolita's perceptions but ironizes Gabriel's defeat from the outside.

The mien of the youthful Adonis, Perucho, projects an image of physical beauty that contrasts throughout the narration with Manolita's perception of her own ugliness. Manolita repeatedly gazes in awe at Perucho: «La luminosa transparencia de la noche permitía ver los graciosos rizos del mancebo... y distinguir la lindeza de sus facciones y de sus azules ojos...» (38). In contrast, Gabriel is—not surprisingly, given his objective of marriage to Manolita—initially repelled by the same characteristics. Gabriel's lengthy contemplation of Perucho concludes in rejection: «para Gabriel, decimos, ...no solamente resultó incomprensible la lindeza de Perucho, sino que a pesar de su predisposición a la simpatía... le parecía hasta antipática e irritante aquella cabeza de joven deidad olímpica...» (122). The projection of Perucho as the model of classical beauty, the invocation of sculpture and painting to authenticate the portrait, are narrative strategies. The narrator's classical and artistic referents join onto Manolita's naive admiration the historical and cultural context for the appreciation of physical perfection unspoiled by bourgeois esthetics: «Para el escultor y el anatómico, belleza era, y de las más perfectas y cumplidas, aquel cuerpo proporcionado y mórbido...» (121). The male form in its natural state constitutes physical beauty; the perceiving eye is female, as Gabriel's initial denial of his rival's physical beauty confirms. The narrator's practiced gaze is seconded by the spontaneous admiration of the adolescent Manolita.

The narrative voice interrupts Manolita's contemplation of Perucho to separate narrative language from Manolita's perceptions. The use of free indirect style seems to attribute to Manolita the paean to Perucho's pale curls: «¡Con qué indisciplina encantadora se esparcían por la frente o se agrupaban en la cima de la cabeza, haciéndola semejante a las testas marmóreas de los dioses griegos!» But lest the reader attribute the preceding vision to Manolita, the narrator intervenes to clarify: «Claro está que Manuela no se daba cuenta del carácter clásico de las perfecciones de su amigo, mas no por esto le gustaba menos juguetear con la rizada melena» (210). What began as the narrator's attempt to express Manolita's emotional experience has become the narrator's own exalted expression of ecstasy displaced through the references to classical models. The narrator shares with Manolita the appreciation of Perucho's physical beauty and the response to it, with the difference that the narrator's reaction is self-consciously elaborated.

Manolita's growing awareness of her sexual difference emerges from her contact with Perucho. Her experience of self is presented from within, while Perucho's experience reaches us largely through Manolita's focalization or through the unmediated narrative voice. Manolita's perception of Perucho centers primarily on his physical beauty, which in turn excites her. The shift from Perucho to Manolita is a shift from narrative focalization to the shared focalization of Manolita's gaze: «Su compañera le miraba con disimulo y atención, ...ahora se le figuraba descubrir [la hermosura] en toda su riqueza de pormenores esculturales, cosa que la turbaba mucho ... se avergonzaba la niña de no ser tan linda como su amigo; de ser casi fea» (20). Manolita's view of herself as ugly enhances Perucho's superiority and her own unworthiness in her eyes; she is subordinate to his beauty. Perucho's first plea to Manolita, «¿Me quieres?» is set within her emotional experience and not his. The

narrative voice privileges Manolita's experiencing self, «deliciosamente turbada por la violencia de la pasión» (36), while Perucho's experience is presented as perceived by her.

At the outset of the ascent of the Castros, Perucho initiates the appropriation of Manolita's body by removing her boots as he awakens to the forbidden carnality of her feet. (If the female's fetish is curly locks, the male's is the hidden eroticism of feet.) Perucho's action initially reawakens the memory of the maternal in him; it does not begin as an act of passion. With the emergence of bare flesh, maternal sentiment is displaced by an apprehension of Manolita as woman and by the awed devotion that the female form inspires: «fue para descalzar el otro [pie] con el mismo cariño y religiosa devoción y abarcar ambos con una mano, uniéndolos por la planta» (191). Perucho's perception of both Manolita and himself is transformed here as the autonomous object of desire replaces the dependent child. Manolita remains unresponsive to Perucho's adoration of her as woman and to his attempted appropriation of her carnality: «—Que me aprietas..., que me rompes un dedo... ¡Bruto!» (191). In this scene the narrative voice echoes the male experience of the female body, displacing sensual carnality with devotion to a sacred object. Indeed, the carnality of the infant's foot submerges once Manolita emerges as woman. Perucho's desire for union remains only desire: «halagó con el rostro, sin besarlos, los pies desnudos» (191). The narration privileges his experiencing self over Manolita's to establish her unawareness of herself as desired object and her unresponsiveness to his desire.

The continuous physical proximity to and contact with Perucho in the journey of ascent spark in Manolita the first flames of desire. The siesta of two bodies linked by the arm that Perucho slips under Manolita initiates the inevitable sequence. Infatuated first by the sight of Perucho's beauty, Manolita moves to appropriate that beauty through touch. Reaching out to him, she fondles his curly locks, the tantalizingly forbidden pleasure now within reach: «deshizo [las sortijas] y alborotó con placer inexplicable» (209). A female definition of pleasure, the pleasure of touch, the appropriation of the untouchable, the precisely feminine beauty denied to Manolita: «Aquella cabellera magnífica, tan artísticamente colocada por la naturaleza, tan rica de tono que estaba pidiendo a voces la paleta de un pintor italiano para copiarla, era una de las cosas que más contribuían a mantener la admiración y el culto que desde la infancia tributaba a su compañero» (209). The expression of the physical pleasure of contact is displaced by the description of Manolita's arousal as she appropriates the forbidden curls. (The suspicion surfaces that a displacement of another type occurs concurrently, the substitution of one area of tightly curled locks for another hidden and unnameable one. The displacement continues as Manolita's hands explore further: «redoblando los halagos a los suaves rizos y a las redondas mejillas, donde no apuntaba ni sombra de barba» [211].)

Perucho does not react to Manolita's touch and the sense of her presence; he is the passive recipient now. The narration elaborates their differing responses with some care: «Ni el pensamiento de otras venturas le cruzaba por las mientes, y, aunque la respiración de Manuela le calentaba el rostro

y su mano le desordenaba y acariciaba el pelo, no hervía con ímpetu su sangre moza; sólo parecía correr con mayor regularidad por sus venas» (210).[10] Although he has orchestrated the day's adventure and their physical proximity at the siesta hour, it is Manuela's innocent pleasure that initiates their mutual arousal, a process which the narrator traces from within Manolita's experience, recording Perucho's passivity in response to her ministrations: «De vez en cuando, a un leve estremecimiento del follaje charolado del roble, a una caricia más viva, más nerviosa y eléctrica de los dedos de Manuela, Pedro entreabría los párpados, y su mirada clara y azul se cruzaba con la de aquellas pupilas negras, quebradas y enlanguidecidas a la sazón, que lo devoraban» (211). Manuela's increasing stimulation is visible in the enlarged dark pupils that project her desire and ultimately stimulate his. At the climax of their journey, Perucho is presented as the object of Manuela's passionate feelings; his experience of his own sexuality gives him a self-awareness she lacks in her innocent virginity. As presented by the narrative voice, the attraction of the perfect male form in physical contact with an innocent girl produces a desire for touch, for appropriation of that beauty, which in turn arouses the female desire for the male and stimulates his response. The focus on female sexuality and the process of female stimulation expand the identity of the narrative voice.

From chapter 5 onward the narrative voice displaces Manolita's experience of events and again privileges her uncle's perspective and emotions. Between her ascension of the Castros with Perucho and the novel's close, Manolita appears twice, both times through Gabriel's eyes: once in his glimpse of the entwined couple fused into one body after descending from the mountain and again in the closing chapter of the novel, as Gabriel tries to dissuade her from entering a convent. Only in this final scene does Manuela's voice dominate the lives of the men in whose world she lives: her father, Pedro; her uncle/suitor, Gabriel; her brother/lover, Perucho. Caught between the now forbidden world of nature and the unfamiliar world of the city, Manuela chooses the double distancing of the convent in Santiago with its geographical and moral isolation from the world she shared with Perucho. Separation from the world of nature that nurtured her love for Perucho implies rejection of her own nature, her newly discovered physical self, and the accompanying rejection of matrimony. Closing out both nature and society, the embrace of the convent walls keeps intact the life of memory by foreshortening the life of experience.

The metamorphosis of Manuela from the child of nature into a woman in society is made explicit by the radical transformation of Manuela's physical self from a child unaffected by the natural elements into a young woman afflicted by the maladies of high-strung, nervous, and unsatisfied city women: fits, epilectic seizures, and fevers.[11] Manuela's body rebels not against womanhood freely expressed but against her artificial separation from the natural environment, against the proscribed expression of her womanhood, against enclosure. The fever of Manuela's renunciation of Perucho/self/nature burns within her, but hers is a consciously controlled act of self-immolation. A female in a patriarchal world, Manuela accepts the self-sacrificial role of woman, not primarily as a sacrifice for God but for Perucho. Gabriel perceived

in Perucho the obstacle to his union with Manuela and removed him, but Gabriel never assessed clearly the forces at play in the world around him. [12] Manuela, on the other hand, sees much more starkly her relationship to a patriarchal world that has never acknowledged her rightful place. She is the obstacle to the fulfillment of the desires of others, as was her mother before her, and Manuela responds by removing herself from that patriarchal realm. The cause at birth both of her mother's margination in the Pazos and, to some extent, of her mother's death, Manuela repeats the cycle of her mother's life: margination, obstacle, departure. Like her mother, Manuela looks to Julián for a mode of escape, for a way to separate herself from the patriarchal world of the Pazos. Closing the circle opened with her mother's childhood in Santiago, Manuela elects the destiny the patriarchy denied her mother: the seclusion of a convent. [13] Manuela chooses a «matriachal» enclosure within the patriarchal sphere, a community of women, over the patriarchy of the Pazos or of Santiago society. [14]

The relative positions of Gabriel and Manuela in the closing chapter emblematize their respective relationships to the patriarchal world. Whereas earlier Gabriel was the innocent outsider, uninitiated in the ways of the natural world and dependent on Manuela to guide him, at the novel's close he stands with the authority of his familial and social position over the recumbent figure of the sickly and feverish Manuela. As always, Gabriel treats her as a child, not as the woman Perucho has known. Manuela holds fast to the normative role of woman as sacrificial object. Sacrificed by Gabriel to social taboo, his own jealousy, and his hobby horse, Manuela is intent only on making the nature of her sacrifice mediate Perucho's salvation, not Gabriel's. A true Manuel/a, she opens the way to Perucho's social rehabilitation and in the process confounds Gabriel's desire for an incestuous marriage to the child he longs to educate, to mold, to initiate, in a confused projection of the roles of father and husband. He thereby replicates as well the latent incest of his relationship with Nucha, his surrogate mother and surrogate first love. Manuela's death-in-society frees Gabriel again from an incestuous and illusory desire, as Nucha's death freed him to enter manhood. If Manuela's trajectory parallels Nucha's and if Gabriel repeats his child/lover role reversal in his desire to marry Manuela, Gabriel and Perucho also repeat the pattern of love for the sister, a sister to whom they stand in a parent/child relationship. The monstrous love which Gabriel accuses Perucho of having enacted is the same love he himself dimly desired in his relationship with Nucha and which has drawn him to Nucha's daughter for fulfillment. The totalizing parent-sibling love of Perucho and Manuela's embrace mirrors Gabriel's dream of marriage to Manuela. The fusing of sibling/sexual roles finds authentic expression only in the natural world; the judgment of society against the sibling lovers comes from Gabriel, the mirror image of Perucho.

Manuela's choice of convent over marriage thus not only resolves Gabriel's own moral contradictions but rescues the other victim of the socio-economic order that she renounces. By entering a convent, Manuela dies in the world, and her death frees social and economic interests to eliminate her. With Manuela buried behind the convent walls, Nucha's brief sojourn in the world of the Pazos is well and truly un-written, erased. Manuela's death-in-

life also authenticates Perucho, freeing him from the burden of anonymity by renouncing her own name and granting him in effect her name as heir to the Moscoso line. Manuela accepts the destiny of the maternal Pardo line, the role of abnegation. Society sacrificed Nucha in its own interests: her father, Pedro, even Gabriel and Julián collaborated in the sacrifice of Nucha. Manuela, however, *chooses* her future of sacrifice and by so doing shapes the future of the men who have tried to impose their desires on her existence. By becoming the sacrificial victim, Manuela writes the happy ending to the story and reduces Gabriel to her servant as her messenger to Perucho: «dígale que así que yo esté en el convento, él vuelve aquí, y mi padre queda satisfecho, y todos bien, todos bien» (319). With her decision Manuela has written the script for her father (fathered him in turn), for Perucho (mothered her surrogate mother), and for Gabriel (released him from the burden of memory); she has also erased the memory of her mother from the space of the Pazos. In renouncing marriage and motherhood, Manuela becomes a mother figure, a life-giver, the nurturer of men. She has exercised the opportunity—her only opportunity—to give life in a new context to all the men who so distorted her own destiny. Hers is the ultimate act of will, of self and selflessness; a renunciation, it is also an affirmation of self.

Literature plays a structuring role in projecting models for resolving conflictive situations in *La madre naturaleza.* Gabriel, for example, elaborates a plot that involves burning down the Pazos and escaping with Manolita as a solution to the threat posed by his rival, Perucho (250). The conscious literaturization of action reaches its apex in Manuela's manipulation of it. The only literary model consciously enacted within the text is scripted and played out by Manuela, in contrast to her mother's failed projection of a literary model for escape in the earlier novel. In the end, Manuela's story is shaped not by the structures of romance or adventure tales but by the most traditional expression of the woman's role, the sacrosanct vision of woman as sacrifice. Manuela finds within this female response her authentic female voice and subverts the significance of the sacrifice to her own purpose. In a radical reworking of the quest tale, the object of Gabriel's quest, Manolita, passes out of his control and assumes responsibility for her own future in order to rescue the vanquished opponent. This female rewriting of the male quest myth involves not triumph over the rival and attainment of the boon but the restoration of the rival's inheritance and the withholding of the boon from both suitors. Self-sacrifice is the female's price for freedom. [15]

At the opposite pole from the literaturization of structure is the demythification of literary language. As Perucho and Manolita lie down for a siesta in the warm embrace of nature, the idyllic scene is suddenly disrupted by Perucho's unexpected concern for the physical effects of lying on the ground. His actions cease to reproduce those of the solicitous mother/lover and forestall a practical consequence of this otherwise romantic gesture: a neck cramp. Literary language gives way without warning to the prosaic reality of the human body. The result momentaritly disconcerts the reader as the referent of the language shifts: «En seguida se tendió al lado de la monta-

ñesa, poniéndose bajo la nuca su hongo gris para no coger una tortícolis» (209). It is hard to imagine a concern less in harmony with the tone of the preceding passage; the introduction of a possible «tortícolis» functions as a deflationary gesture and reestablishes the touchstone of direct experience. So unexpected is this intrusion into the harmony of man and nature that the voice of experience, of authorial experience, is unmistakable.

A similar irruption of everyday experience occurs when Perucho first caresses Manolita's naked foot: literary language and the prosaic reality of walking intertwine. The description of Manolita's foot is shaped as much by the requisites of representation of the female body as by the experience of walking. The small, arched, smooth, white patrician foot also displays callouses, pressure spots, and an overlapping toe. The pink skin tones of archetypal language are alternatively the red pressure spots of the language of realism: «los dedos rosados o más bien rojizos de la presión de la bota» (190). The narrative voice here practices intentional deflation, not unconscious puncturing with reference to a «tortícolis.» The beads of sweat with which the description closes burst the vision asunder and ground the description firmly in referential reality. The narrative voice knows to manipulate literary language, but it also knows women's shoes.

The intrusion of the voice of experience into the coherence of the narration occurs in other contexts in the novel as well. In a paean to the art of brewing coffee, for example, Pedro unexpectedly demonstrates an appreciation for the slow filtration method rather than the new-fangled coffee pot the narrator scorns. This concern for coffee brewing again seems to refer back to the narrator, to a woman's appreciation of a fine male palate and suggests female sensibility to the arcana of gentlemanly pleasures: coffee, cigars, wines, and liqueurs. The narrative circumstance does not relate directly to the life of the Pazos but to an acknowledgement of and admiration for male prerogatives and their mystique. That is to say, the male pleasures are represented from an external perspective, as viewed rather than as experienced, and the viewing eye is not located within the Pazos. So inappropriate are these talents in Pedro that the narrator has recourse to heredity as an explanation for them: class heredity is buttressed by examples of racial heredity in an unabashed concatenation of stereotypes: «Ni él mismo podía decir dónde había adquirido esta ciencia: acaso le venía de casta, como al gitano ser chalán y al árabe apreciar armas y caballos» (232): the aristocratic male, the gypsy, the Arab, all equally mysterious and equally bound by the laws of their own heredity —and all seen from a perspective of difference and distance.

Maleness is further explored in *La madre naturaleza* in the private spaces that Pedro and *El Gallo* inhabit. The association between *El Gallo* and the furnishings of the Pazos is repeatedly drawn and underscores the distaste they provoke in both Gabriel and the narrator. *El Gallo*'s presence in the ancestral home of the Moscosos is represented by the furniture, table settings, and knickknacks that mark his invasion of aristocratic space. The night table is an amenity that only el Gallo enjoys, but his is «uno de los más feos ejemplares de la especie, con su tableta de mármol y demás requilorios» (213). At the crucial moment of Gabriel's command interview with Perucho, the narrator takes the time to comment satirically on *El Gallo*'s uncritical apeing

of bourgeois fashions in home furnishing, in themselves a vulgar debasement of artistic quality and good taste. The *cursilería* of *El Gallo*'s decor diverts the narrator from continuing the progress of the action; instead, the narrator grants equal weight to *El Gallo*'s presence in the Pazos and to the pending revelation that it is not justified by his fathering of Perucho.

What stands out is that *El Gallo*'s infatuation with all the trappings of bourgeois pretensions seems feminine. His collection of *bibelots*—«los cromos, las cajas de cartón, las orquestas de perritos y gatitos de loza, las figuras de yeso teñidas con purpurina imitando bronce» (263)—fills his private quarters and gives them a feminine fussiness distasteful to the narrator both for its busyness and for the quality of the objects collected. This predilection of *El Gallo*'s gives the reader a strong clue to his role in the house: he fills the vacuum left by the death of the lady of the house. The equation comes most sharply into focus at the table laid for Gabriel's first meal with his brother-in-law. The fine old Pardo china, «alguna soberbia vajilla hecha para un Pardo magnate o virrey» (190), holds Gabriel's attention, while the narrator explains its resurrection: «El ramo de pompas y vanidades corría de cuenta del insigne *Gallo*, en quien latía la inclinación más irresistible al fausto y esplendor, y que procuraba deslumbrar al huésped con la vajilla y con cuanto pudiese» (131). Nothing could be farther from Pedro's careless disregard of his estate. *El Gallo* represents the pretensions to mobility of the villagers and the hereditary lack of esthetic sensibility among the lower classes; his concern for pomp and circumstance confirms that by inclination and sensibility he cannot be Perucho's father. Although class distinctions mark the target, what is most striking is that *El Gallo*'s attributes are feminine, as is his role in the household.

In contrast to the cheap imitations and bad taste that characterize *El Gallo* and Sabel's private quarters, the space that most intimately bears the stamp of Pedro's presence is unquestionably masculine. The same clutter characterizes it but derives from his male activities and maleness: «Parecía un nido de urraca: tal revoltillo de cachivaches había en ella. Olía allí a perro de caza y a ese otro tufillo llamado de *hombre*, siendo cosa segura que no lo despide ningún hombre aseado y sí el tabaco frío, la ropa mal cuidada y el rancio sudor» (275). A man's occupations, a man's space, but a woman's point of view. The enumeration of objects in the male inventory attempts to define textually and visually the male space Pedro inhabits: «Escopetas, morrales, polainas raídas, sombreros de distintas formas y materias, bastones, garrotes, cachiporras, calabazas, frascos de pólvora, mugrientos collares de cascabeles... yacían amontonados por los rincones, cubiertos con una capa de polvo, sobre la cual era factible no sólo escribir con el dedo, sino hasta grabar en hueco con buen realce» (275-76). This is a male world from which women are excluded, but it is seen from a woman's perspective in which the inventory constitutes an untidy assortment of unrelated objects. The fussy finger writing in the dust is inevitably female. [16]

Writing within a male-defined genre, Pardo Bazán creates a dual-voiced narration by speaking both through and beneath the narrative voice. Her unquestionable domination of the strategies of narrative control that underlie the realist genre establish her authority within that tradition. At the same

time, through her maneuverings within these genre conventions, she opens up a space for the voicing of female experience within the narrative itself. In *La madre naturaleza* she integrates the silenced voice of female experience into the narration of the male world without disrupting the surface of that world. By listening for the female voice within the male-voiced tradition, we can hear the subversive scratches of Pardo Bazán's pen as it writes the female experience into the language of the realist novel.

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NOTES

[1] Lanser argues that readers will equate author and narrative voice unless their conventions of reading rule out such identification (151). «The conventional case,» she adds, «is one of homogeneity between the extrafictional and the public narrative voice» (167), which leaves open the question whether in the late nineteenth-century novel the author's gender or the fictional genre dominated the conventions of the reading public.

[2] The «contradictions of genre and gender» are discussed by Gilbert and Gubar (67).

[3] In a provocative elaboration on the concept of a reader-created image of the author's voice, Lanser reaches the following conclusion: «even if a woman writer, for instance, writes exactly what a man might write, her discourse may still be subject to a different reading when the reader recreates her voice according to the community's norms» (117).

[4] In her examination of *La gaviota,* Kirkpatrick argues that «a gender-sensitive analysis elucidates dominant as well as submerged or muted conventions by showing the operation of their mutual interaction» (323). My reading of Pardo Bazán attempts to uncover these gender-linked conventions.

[5] Joanne Frye defines traditional narrative authority as a «function of communal standards, shared assumptions, a kind of 'general consciousness.'» «The authority of a culture's commonly held assumptions about human experience» is precisely what the narrative voice in *La madre naturaleza* invokes to establish its own authority.

[6] The narrator of the earlier novel, *Los pazos de Ulloa,* engages more frequently in the display of erudition strategy. The voice of specialized authority also appears more often.

[7] The theme of the sterile woman finds expression in several of Pardo Bazán's short stories, including «La mujer estéril,» and in characters like Doña Milagros in the novel of the same name.

[8] The equation of women and writing as sources of creative potential is predicated on male-linked character types: «los espíritus fuertes, los incrédulos.» Although the life-giving experience is woman-specific, its activation is tied to individuals with male-specific attributes of strength of character and unbelief. The implication is that both the childless woman and the (woman) writer transcend the limitations of gender in the intensity of their desire to bring into being the unformed life.

[9] In a series of articles on «The Women of Spain» for the *Fortnightly Review* (1889), Pardo Bazán commented on the manual labor that rural Galician women perform and on the resulting degeneration of their physical condition. Sabel's appearance in *La madre naturaleza* anticipates the radical transformation depicted in the later essays: «Quien la hubiese visto cosa de dieciocho años antes, cuando quería hacer prevaricar a los capellanes de la casa, no la conocería ahora» (125).

[10] The narrative voice points repeatedly to the stimulation of touch provoked by the involuntary and indirect caress of breath or the direct contact of the hand (see, e.g., 149-52, 250).

[11] Both Manuela and Gabriel manifest their response to emotional trauma with nervous fevers and delirium. Are these symptoms the shared expression of the passage from adolescence to adulthood common to both sexes? In the case of the young Gabriel, is this a feminization of emotional experience emblematic of his arrested manhood from which Nucha's death releases him? Does this feminization of male emotional experience represent a limitation in the author's formulation of male experience?

[12] Gabriel's disastrous infatuation in childhood with his sister Rita's canary and his attempt to hold the bird prefigure the destructive outcome of his effort to bind Manolita to him. Neither Manolita nor the canary is predisposed towards Gabriel; as a result of his intervention, each is lost to him and to the world.

[13] It is surely significant that Manuela bears the name of her grandfather, Manuel Pardo.

[14] To some extent the Pardo household in Nucha's youth is a community of women within a patriarchal structure. Such communities are rare among the urban bourgeoisie or the rural gentry in Pardo Bazán's novels, whereas communities of rural women appear frequently. In *Los pazos de Ulloa,* Sabel and María la Sabia gather a *tertulia* in the kitchen; in *La madre naturaleza,* Catalina meets daily with her «antiguas colegas.» Nina Auerbach has examined female communities.

[15] At the authorial level, the most carefully elaborated example of literary structuring is the intertextual resonance of Fray Luis de León's commentary on the *Song of Songs.* The mythic quest that underlies Gabriel's pursuit of Manolita constitutes another extended case of literaturization that structures a portion of the novel.

[16] Female space remains hidden from view in *La madre naturaleza.* Manolita's space in the Pazos, for example, is neither defined nor seen, its absence from the text replicating her lack of place in the patriarchal world. At the same time, the absence of enclosure connotes her exteriority to the circumscribed female world. Female functions and the definition of female space are at times transposed onto male figures, most notably Goros and *El Gallo.*

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