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INDIANOS E IMPERIO EN "EL VOTO" Y "BARBASTRO" DE EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

INDIANOS AND EMPIRE IN EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN'S "EL VOTO" AND "BARBASTRO"

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Resumen: Este artículo examina la relación entre los retratos de los indianos en "El voto" y "Barbastro" de Emilia Pardo Bazán y la perspectiva de la autora sobre la crisis colonial de los años noventa del siglo XIX en España. El propósito principal es analizar cómo, mediante la figura del indiano, la escritora contribuye al debate sobre el futuro colonial de la nación, el proceso de modernización, y los males de la patria antes de la guerra de 1898 con los Estados Unidos. Al exponer la conexión entre los cambios en el tratamiento del indiano y el pensamiento de la novelista sobre la política del momento, se mostrará que, a pesar del enfoque regional, la representación cuentística de este personaje permite a doña Emilia reflexionar sobre los asuntos más allá de la emigración gallega.

Palabras clave: Indianos, nación, imperio, colonialismo, modernización, Galicia, emigración

Abstract: This article examines the relationship between the portraits of *indianos* in "El voto" and "Barbastro" by Emilia Pardo Bazán and the perspective of the author on the colonial crisis in 1890s Spain. The aim is to analyze the writer's input, through the figure of the indiano, in the debate about the colonial future, the process of modernization, and the nation's ills before the Spanish-American War of 1898. By exposing the link between changes in the novelist's treatment of the *indiano* and her thoughts on contemporary politics, this essay will demonstrate that despite the regional focus the representation of this character in her short stories allows doña Emilia to brood over issues beyond Galician emigration.

Key words: *Indianos*, nation, empire, colonialism, modernization, Galicia, emigration

Critics who paid attention to Pardo Bazán's character of the *indiano* in her short stories associated him primarily with the sluggish development of social structures and a weak economy in turn-of-the-century Galicia. Walter Pattison, for example, refers to doña Emilia's returnee from the Americas as one of "very few individuals who can be considered as forming a middle class" (Pattison, 1971: 18) in late nineteenth-century Galicia. Juan Paredes Núñez links him to what he calls "uno de los males endémicos de Galicia" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 12), that is, emigration. And Eva Lafuente interprets the author's frequent reconfiguration of *indiano* portraits in her narrative as a venue through which (in addition to her journalistic essays) not only "Pardo Bazán trata del asunto de la emigración y denuncia el abandono de Galicia" (Lafuente, 2009: 412) but also intends "de dar a conocer la realidad gallega a nivel nacional" (Lafuente, 2009: 415).

Of course, since Pardo Bazán developed most of her portraits of the *indiano* in a Galician setting and the largest groups of real-life, turn-of-the-nineteenth-century Spanish emigrants and immigrants originated from the writer's native region (alongside other parts of the northern Peninsula) (Moya, 1998: 15-16; Sánchez-Alonso, 2000: 741-742), it is unsurprising that this character brings to mind the particularities of Galicia's life. Indeed, aspects of actual, contemporary Galicia, such as private residencies and echoes of reports from local newspapers, can be easily recognized in Pardo Bazán's images of *indianos* in her fiction (Taboada Oterino, 2016: 8; Ruiz Negrillo, 1990: 113-115).[1] But the period during which the writer penned most of her short stories related to the figure of the *indiano*, that is, between 1890s

1 For instance, the author's short narrative, "Contra treta" (1912) is based on a true occurrence described in *La Ilustración Artística* in 1905. According to the magazine, a married couple tricked an old, ill *indiano* and took off with his money. For details on the story and the connection between the journalistic account and Pardo Bazán's tale, see Conlon (2002: 83) and Ruiz-Ocaña Dueñas (2004: 200).

and the first years of the twentieth century, coincides with the time during which doña Emilia dedicated a great deal of her thoughts and writings to national and colonial dilemmas (Pattison, 1971: 70-80; Clemèssy, 1982: 192-194; Ruiz-Ocaña Dueñas, 2004: 151-160; Charques Gámez, 2011: 193-203).[2] Thus, considering the author's concerns with such issues as the decline of the Spanish Empire and her interest in Spain's post-imperial relationship with its colonies as well as her critique of emigration as a drain on the entire nation's strength (despite profits from it for the public budget), one wonders whether she indeed portrayed her returnees from the Americas and those who decided to cross the Atlantic to merely address the socioeconomic circumstances of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Galicia?[3] In what follows, I examine the link between Pardo Bazán's depictions of *indianos* in her short stories: "El voto" (1892) and "Barbastro" (1898) and her perspectives on Spain's changing status as an empire. Drawing on doña Emilia's turn-of-the-century journalistic essays and public lectures, this study explores the ways in which the novelist deployed her portraits of *indiano*s to comment on a larger national matter, that is, Spain's imperial future.

Before discussing the aforesaid narratives in detail, it is worth pointing out that in their analysis of Pardo Bazán's stance on the colonial question, critics traditionally privileged the author's non-fictional writings over her short stories. Apart from a handful of studies that foreground the author's representations of the late colonial wars, her concerns with Spain's imperial decline and its post-1898 relations with the United States in her tales

2 The number of recent publications dedicated to Pardo Bazán's writings on colonialism indicates that there is an increasing scholarly interest in the author's engagement with Spain's colonial and post-colonial matters at the turn of the century. On this topic, consult, among others Tolliver (2017: 93-98); Miguélez-Carballeira (2017: 88-92) and Charques Gámez (2007: 349-366).

3 In her column, "La vida contemporánea" issued in *La Ilustración Artística* in 1907, Pardo Bazán linked emigration to Spain's ills in this way: ¿Cómo concebir esta gradual despoblación de nuestra patria…? […] En la lista de nuestros males olvidé incluir la emigración, probablemente el mayor de todos. […] Buques y más buques abarrotados de emigrantes se hacen a la mar casi diariamente… Se habla de regionalismo y separatismo, y no se repara en este proceso de desintegración, mil veces más amenazador, en las actuales circunstancias, que todos los alardes de bizkaitarras y catalanistas (Pardo Bazán, 1907: 2). For a summary of peninsular intellectuals' negative views on emigration from Spain at the turn of the century, see Conlon (2002: 36-46). On Pardo Bazán's, earlier, disapproving remarks on this topic, consult Faus (2003: 143).

(Henn, 1999: 417-19; Faus, 2003: 147-50), most works that broach doña Emilia's views on Spanish conquest and colonialism, her reaction to the Spanish-American War and her thoughts on future interactions with the Americas center mainly on the writer's public speeches, her essayistic commentaries and travel writings (Hilton 1952: 135-148; Ruiz Ocaña-Dueñas, 2004: 167-172; Tasende 2015). However, recent works on Pardo Bazán's description of colonial issues in her short stories show that critics have caught on to the complexity of the writer's treatment of the changing status of the Spanish Empire (Bardavío Estevan 2018: 176-203; Chang 2016: 305-322; Tolliver 2010: 285-301; Tolliver, 2012: 3-24). In reference to the author's short narratives about colonies and the United States published in the late 1890s, Joyce Tolliver remarks, for instance, that these stories (despite their common theme) "are not as univocal as they might seem at first glance" (Tolliver, 2010: 286). As they vary in terms of sophistication with which the novelist approached the colonial subject, it is possible to trace, Tolliver further explains, "shifts and variations in Pardo Bazán's writings on the subject" (Tolliver, 2010: 286). I wish to extend on these observations here by suggesting that something analogous could be noted regarding doña Emilia's literary accounts featuring the character of the *indiano*. For, not only, as we shall see—are these narratives only on the surface homogenous—but also, if read in broader context, Pardo Bazán's recurrent modifications of her portraits of *indianos* could be interpreted as reflective of different stages in the author's shifting, and often conflicting, perspectives on Spain's colonial issues.

Consider the writer's depiction of a returned emigrant in her short story, "El voto". Published initially on August 15, 1892 in *El Imparcial* and reprinted in October 1892 (that is, amidst the commemorations of the quadricentennial of Columbus' landfall) in *Nuevo Teatro Crítico* and later in *Cuentos Nuevos* (1894), the tale seems to follow, at least at first glance, the standard Pardo Bazán's *indiano* narrative described by Walter Pattison as follows:

> The *indiano*, the emigrant to Buenos Aires or Montevideo, who had made a fortune in America and returns to the village … [s]ometimes… buys land and builds a magnificent house; sometimes marries the village belle, even though he is old and sickly; sometimes, disillusioned by the stark reality of the home which

> he has overidealized during his lonesome stay in America, … returns to the scene of his success. (Pattison, 1971: 18)

Indeed, like most of Pardo Bazán's literary immigrants, the protagonist in "El voto", Sebastián Becerro, is a wealthy returnee from Buenos Aires, who, after more than two decades of toiling overseas, decides "como todos los de su raza… volver a su nativo terruño, fincar en él y deberle el descanso de sus huesos" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 219). Although the *indiano*'s wealth is a result of his hard work, a part of it, the narrator tells us, is to be credited to Becerro's good luck. "Llegado a la capital de la República Argentina, diríase que un misterioso talismán – acaso la higa de azabache que traía al cuello desde niño – se encargaba de removerle obstáculos" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 219), the narrator affirms in the introductory paragraphs of the story. Terrified by a possible reversal of fortune that might now, after long time of favoring him, "zorregar disciplinazo firme" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 219) and cause all sorts of misfortune that would prevent him from completing his journey ["que el barco embarrancaría a la vista del puerto, o que él, Sebastián, se ahogaría al pie del muelle, o que cogería un tabardillo pintado, o una pulmonía doble" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 219)], the *indiano* pledges that, in addition to funding a chapel, an orphanage, and an asylum in his parish, he will marry the least attractive girl from his native area. However, because shortly thereafter, on his way home, Becerro meets a pretty, young woman at a fountain, who kindly offers him water, he soon realizes that he cannot entirely honor his vow to marry the ugliest girl in the parish, even though he already found one. Upon consultation with a local priest, the main character decides to tie the knot with the good-looking girl that he met at the fountain and offer the ugly one half of his money so that she can find a suitor. The *indiano*'s finances make it possible for the most hideous female in the area to attract a handsome man, who is willing to become her husband. The story ends with the narrator's explanation that the protagonist's donation of half of his assets was not stimulated by a genuine desire to share his riches with the unfortunate looking girl as his deed "era fruto del miedo…" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 221).

And so, if indeed, as Paredes Núñez put it in reference to Pardo Bazán's tales of returned emigrants, there is "un denominador común para el indiano que regresa a su terruño, tras largos años de penalidades y sacrificios, con el único anhelo de pisar su

querida 'terra': tristeza, decepción, fracaso, ambición, codicia, engaño, y muerte, es lo único que encuentra a su retorno" (Paredes Núñez, 1979: 53), the somewhat happy ending in "El voto" is what differentiates this story from the author's standard *indiano* narratives. The main character may superficially resemble doña Emilia's typical *indiano* because of his superstitious nature and aging body. He is, after all, portrayed as "cuarentón, con la testa entrecana y el rostro marchito" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 219). However, in contrast to various wealthy re-emigrants relegated to secondary or absent characters (Lafuente, 2009: 416-417), Sebastián Becerro, who refuses to sacrifice his personal happiness and to let others decide his future, remains the central figure of the story. Of course, one could interpret the description of the protagonist's fears and the way he handles them as the author's critique of her countrymen's superstitious and, therefore, backward nature. Although the main character dares to alter his original pledge and free himself from his engagement with an ugly girl, he still bribes Providence with a monetary donation to his ex-bride to avoid possible punishment for his overseas success.[4] However, if read in the context in which Pardo Bazán sketched her portrait of the *indiano* in this story, that is, the fourth centenary of the discovery of America widely celebrated in 1892 in Spain and other countries (Schmidt-Nowara, 2006: 59-68; Blanco, 2012: 79-95; Krauel, 2013: 50-82) as well as the time of capitalism's expansion and a fierce struggle of the great powers for economic outlets overseas (Hobsbawm, 1987: 56-83; Pan-Montojo, 1998: 9-30), one might also view the author's depiction of her protagonist as the artistic expression of her concerns with Spain's colonial future.

In their analysis of Pardo Bazán's essays and lectures related to the 1892 centenary, critics reiterate the writer's pride over "el protagonismo de España en el descubrimiento" (Tasende 2015: 429) and her patriotism (Hilton, 1952: 141-144; Charques Gámez, 2011: 196-197). Indeed, even a superficial reading of doña Emilia's lecture from April of 1892, "Los Franciscanos y Colón", in which she highlighted Spain's criti-

4 The protagonist's behavior makes him resemble a typical Galician who, as Pattison put it, "if … superstitious in extra-mundane affairs… is most astute and clever about practical things" (Pattison, 1971: 15). For more on the author's treatment of superstition in her fiction, see Tenreiro Prego (2013: 85-96).

cal role in Columbus's landfall, shows that in accord with the political purpose of the commemoration, the novelist sought to reinforce "a continuity between past and present colonialism" (Krauel, 2013: 53-54).[5] Yet, even though Pardo Bazán's lecture emits the conviction of Spain's destiny to take part in the conquest and colonization of the New World and the inextricable, cultural, racial, and spiritual ties between the Peninsula and the Spanish-American republics, her writings published before the centenary in which she supports scientific advances such as a Spanish submarine project in 1890 (Zárate, 2002: 156, 163) and texts issued shortly after the event, for instance, her review of Pablo de Alzola y Minondo's *El arte industrial* (1893) which, as Charques Gámez affirms, "atrae inmediatamente la atención de nuestra escritora porque el tema es de suma actualidad" (Charques Gámez, 2011: 213) and in which she foregrounds the need of "protección oficial y espíritu emprendedor" (Pardo Bazán, 1893: 118) to preserve traditional industries, attest to the novelist's awareness that a common language and blood alone were not sufficient factors to "estrechar la presente y la futura relación entre la antigua metrópoli y sus pretéritas colonias" (Blanco, 2012: 81).[6] As in the age of the empire (as Hobsbawm labeled it), and particularly in the 1890s, "capitalism expansion throughout the world accelerated and the last regions were rapidly disappearing" (Mommsen, 1984: 77), it is unsurprising to notice in the author's non-fictional writings and her narrative, her hope for Spain to retain its place among the imperial powers mixed with her anxiety over the challenge of modernization.

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5 The author's effort to strengthen the cultural bonds between Spain and its former American colonies is particularly evident in the concluding part of her lecture in which she stated: "Sí: el descubrimiento de América había de ser gloria de España, y es justo y providencial que en las playas que estábamos destinados a descubrir, se escuche hoy resonar nuestro idioma en lengua de muchas naciones, y que la raza oriunda de nuestra Península, la que lleva en las venas nuestra misma sangre, lleve también la esperanza de nuestro porvenir, y el sol, al ponerse en nuestras costas, se alce límpido y radioso en las costas americanas" (Pardo Bazán, 1892: 30).

6 Pardo Bazán was not the only Spanish intellectual who at the end of the nineteenth century highlighted the need for a more practical base in forging current and future alliance between Spain and its former overseas colonies. Galdós, for instance, in his essay, "Unión Ibero-America" (1886) voiced similar opinion on the matter. For more on Galdós's perspective on the nature of Spain's future interactions with its current and past colonies, see Heneghan (2016: 94-95).

Returning now to "El voto", one might ask how the portrait of the *indiano* in this tale relates to the writer's hope for Spain to maintain its colonial status quo? Consider doña Emilia's depiction of the main character in the opening passages of the story. Resolute, as reinforced by the use of the preterit to describe his actions ["**dejó** su aldea a la edad de diecisiete años … **embarcó** con rumbo a Buenos Aires" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 219); emphasis mine], young and strong (as the presence of the adjectives, *recio*, *fuerte* indicate) Becerro, who succeeds on the other side of Atlantic, exemplifies the ambitious and—not necessarily—the most impoverished class of Spaniards (as the reference to his uncle as a priest suggests) who were determined to improve their economic status through hard work overseas.[7] "Admitido en poderosa casa de comercio, subió desde la plaza más ínfima a la más alta, siendo primero el hombre de confianza; luego, el socio; por último, el amo" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 219). Of course, one can notice in the narrator's summary of the protagonist's steady rise in the word of commerce Pardo Bazán's critique of the crude capitalist society. To get to the top in business and accumulate wealth requires of Becerro the sacrifice of his youth and the chance for love in addition to his exceptional industriousness and commitment described (not without irony) as "vigorosa adquisividad - unida a una probidad de autómata y …. una laboriosidad más propia de máquinas que de seres humanos" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 219). From the first day, we are told, Becerro "vivió sujeto a la monástica abstinencia del que concentra su energía en un fin esencial. Joven y robusto, ni volvió la cabeza para oír la melodía de las sirenas posadas en el escollo" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 219). But if, indeed, as it was claimed in 1880s and 1890s Spain, advancements

7 According to Moya, the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Spaniards' migration overseas should be considered in a larger context than rural penury as it was tied to the unsettling effects of early industrialization in different regions of the Peninsula which brought "poverty for many, opportunities for others, and change, competition, disruption, and motion for a greater number" (Moya, 1998: 44). For instance, "in Zas, a rural municipal district in the Galician province of La Coruña, 70 percent of those who had emigrated by 1897 were literate…" (Moya, 1998: 28). The pattern repeated itself in Galicia and other rural areas: literate, relatively skilled and landed peasants were more likely to emigrate than ignorant ones. In other words, "despite omnipresent pitiful images of rural emigrants in contemporary literature, most of these people confronted the imperatives of capitalism with diligence and vigor" (Moya, 1998: 31). For similar views of emigration as an outcome of an uneven modernization in Galicia and other regions and the profile of these who crossed the Atlantic, see Moya (1998: 13-44); Vázquez González (1988: 90-91) and Miguel (1984: 9-10).

in technology and business did not result from characteristics peculiar to a particular race but from "the work of mankind" (Ferris, 2016: 265) and the present Anglo-Saxon supremacy was not irremediable in the sense that Spaniards could also gain entry into the modern world under the condition that they had the will "to reorient themselves… towards practical and progressive solutions in commerce, science, medicine and engineering as well as…. to change their moral attitude towards making money (Ferris, 2016: 266), Pardo Bazán's *indiano* certainly displays the aptness not just to survive in the callous world of the modern economy but to thrive in it.[8] Equally promising is Becerro's lack of obsession with money. Instead of turning to commerce and pursuing profit in his *raison d'être*, the *indiano* values a union with a pretty, young woman, whose vitality and fertility the narrator denotes through the place where the main character meets her, that is, a fountain, and the fresh water that she offers him.

And yet, if indeed doña Emilia's portrait of the *indiano* functions as an indication of her concerns with Spain's modernization and its imperial future, the depiction of Becerro, as he strays away from rationality into the realm of fears and imagination, points to the author's anxiety over Spaniards' lack of disposition to transform, i.e. industrialize Spain and retain its colonial power. Considered as one of the core attributes of a patriot and a gentleman (*hombre de bien*) in eighteenth-century Spain (Haidt, 1998: 156-171) and highlighted again as one of the crucial components of the bourgeois ideal of masculinity in nineteenth-century western Europe (Erwin, 2010: 24-27, 32-39) rational intelligence, alongside individual initiative, diligence, and merit constituted the indispens-

8 While Pardo Bazán did not entirely subscribe to the views of these who outright rejected the correlation between specific race and progress such as the editor of *El Progreso* Ramón Silvestre Verea García in the 1880s and the Krausist, Rafael María de Labra in 1890s, in that she occasionally deployed the popular binary of Anglo-Saxon advancement and Latin decline in her analysis of Spain's waning imperial power and diminishing economic and political vigor, the novelist retained, nonetheless, her wish for Spaniards to absorb some of the attributes from the more advanced nations to adapt to challenges of modernization. In her essay from May of 1899, "Desde el extranjero", for instance, Pardo Bazán challenged the affirmation of *los castizos* "de que no tenemos nada que aprender de nadie" (Pardo Bazán, 1901: 170) and encouraged a more profound attempt on her countrymen's part to become "tenaces, previsores, laboriosos, aprovechados, prácticos" (Pardo Bazán, 1901: 169). On the author's critique and grudging admiration of the Anglo-Saxon world in her fiction before 1898 and in her turn-of-the-century essays, see Heneghan (2018: 231-34).

able traits to carry out the process of modernization.[9] And so, we already know (through the depiction of his career in commerce overseas) that Pardo Bazán's protagonist is capable of rational thinking. What is troublesome is that his rationality becomes easily overridden by his fears. While the narrator's indulgent tone, which is particularly evident in the concluding remark [*este era fruto del miedo*], might seem to lessen the gravity of the main character's apprehension, the importance that the *indiano* attaches to his vow (as marked fittingly through the narrative's title) is far from inconsequential. Consumed by his fears even before he sets foot in his village and throughout the rest of the story, Becerro, who could deploy his time, capital and experience in commerce to engage in productive i.e. wealth-creating endeavors in his community, does not seek or pursue such opportunities. Instead (and because of his fear), he allocates his assets to the construction of religious and charitable institutions ["una capilla, un asilo, un manicomio" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 220)], a dowry for an unattractive woman ["hizo donación de la mitad de sus bienes a la fea, que … no tardó en encontrar marido muy apuesto y joven" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 221)] and "su casa, que proyectaba transformar en suntuoso palacete" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 220). In doing so, the protagonist, like many pre-1898 *indianos*, plays no decisive role in stimulating industrial and commercial growth in his region, as his only input in his village is his plan to enrich it aesthetically.

Economic historians agree that late nineteenth-century immigrants did not, in general, hinder the slow process of modernization of the agrarian structures in Galicia (García-Lombardero, 1987: 223-227). By funding educational institutions, they contributed, in fact, to the region's cultural progress (Vázquez González, 1988: 99). As the only group at that time, however, who could have invested in industry rather than use their capital to purchase land and perpetuate the traditional agrarian system, they represented a missed opportunity for the potential industrialization of Galicia and by extension Spain. Of course, as Vázquez González

9 Although, as Erwin argues, "Spain lacked the material conditions that would allow most Spanish men to embody modern masculinity in the late nineteenth century" (Erwin, 2010: IV), this does not mean that the qualities of a successful bourgeois man that produced rewarding results in England and other advanced nations were not desired on the Peninsula considering the Spanish elites' attraction to "the message of modernization and progress" (Cruz, 1996: 276).

explains, it was not always a matter of choice for *indianos* to invest in industry, as "la vuelta a la tierra" (Vázquez González, 1988: 100) often constituted the only viable option "ante la falta de oportunidades de inversión industrial y la ausencia de industria durante la mayor parte del XIX y su carácter localizado" (Vázquez González, 1988: 100).[10] This is perhaps why, in 1892, Pardo Bazán avoided an accusatory tone in her depiction of an *indiano*. All in all, Becerro's instinctive desire for a relation with a pretty, young woman ["La llamó, sin que él mismo supiese para qué" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 220)] discloses his wish for a family and thus perhaps growth in the future. Moreover, even though doña Emilia accentuated the absurdity of the main character's pledge through a reference to Polycrates, she did not rule out the protagonist's contribution to the modernizing process in the time to come.[11] As his

10 This is not to say that the immigrants in Galicia, Asturias or Catalonia did not attempt and, at times, successfully develop different industrial sectors in their respective regions or that their remittances did not influence the growth of the Spanish banking system, infrastructure and other industrial and commercial ventures. Isolated cases of returnees, nonetheless, who undertook to establish or further develop already existing industries of diverse types (glass, cotton, iron-and-steel products) whether in Galicia, Asturias or even Catalonia still did not impact the process of industrialization on the national scale. On *indianos*' influence in industrial, commercial, financial and cultural spheres in their respective geographic areas, see Villares Paz (1984: 32-34); Carmona Badía (1984: 45-49) and Ojeda and San Miguel (1984: 74-75 and 77-90). The individual cases of *indianos* who were affluent enough to become influential figures in state politics and economy but who still used their capital to further enrich themselves rather than industrialize the country are discussed in Surwillo (2014: 149-150 and 220).

11 Known as the tyrant of Samos from 538 BC to 522 BC, Polycrates was foretold the reversal of his fortune, which he tried to escape by sacrificing what was most precious to him, that is, by throwing his jewel-crusted ring into the sea. The ring was returned to him inside of a large fish caught by a fisherman who gave it to Polycrates as a gift to eat. Although references to Polycrates in "El voto" might be viewed as Pardo Bazán's way to accentuate her protagonist's exaggerated fears ["Y con superstición análoga a la que obligó al tirano de Samos a echar al mar la rica esmeralda de su anillo, Sebastián, deseoso de ofrecer expiatorio holocausto, ideó ser la víctima" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 219)] they also serve to emphasize—through the contrast between Becerro and the Greek ruler of Samos, the irrationality of the *indiano*'s behavior. While Polycrates was warned by others that misfortune will befall his kingdom and could not have avoided punishment for gaining power by "having murdered one brother and banished another" (Hart, 1982: 30), it is Becerro himself who invents his retribution from Destiny. The absurdity of Becerro's pledge is evident in light of Polycrates' story in the sense that doña Emilia's protagonist, who, unlike the Greek tyrant did not steal his fortune but earned it through his hard work, has nothing to avoid or be penalized for. Hence the subtle irony in the second reference to the Greek tyrant: "Cuando le dijeron que el espantojo estaba a merecer … vio en el caso lo contrario que Policrates en el hallazgo de su esmeralda al abrir el vientre de un pez; vio el perdón del Destino" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 220). For more on Polycrates' prophecy, see Hart (1982: 30-32).

surname suggests, Becerro stands for a type of man who will still develop, although, considering his age, it is, similarly to Spain, a case of a belated growth. Finally, it is scarcely a coincidence that the author presented the immigrant in places that are symbolically in-between different alternatives and opportunities, such as on a boat in the ocean between the New World and Spain or at a fountain near his village. By portraying the *indiano* at the fountain, which, as the sun goes down, heightens the sensation of a stagnant, sleepy village, where nothing ever changes, since for Becerro it is the same spot "donde mil veces había bebido siendo rapaz" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 220), but which might be emblematic of a new life, as he meets his bride there, the author brought to surface subtly that it was in her returnee's own hands to define his future, as it was still largely up to the pre-1898 elites to determine Spain's colonial path.

While the portrait of the *indiano* in "El voto" displays some traces of Pardo Bazán's hopefulness regarding Spain's colonial prospects, her sketch of an immigrant in "Barbastro" (1898) reveals the writer's less sanguine position on the matter. Published in *El Liberal* on February 13, 1898 (that is, a few months before the declaration of the Spanish-American War on April 18, 1898), "Barbastro" is a story that, similar to "El voto", follows—only to a certain extent—the typical plot of Pardo Bazán's *indiano* narrative. The main character, Barbastro, is a wealthy immigrant from Montevideo, who returns to his hometown "deseoso de realizar dos ensueños: construir una casa de campo nunca vista y desposarse con una muchacha sin bienes, pero linda y virtuosa" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 69). In contrast to Becerro, who first marries and then plans to build a house, Barbastro, like many real-life, successful *indianos*, starts with the construction of a magnificent residence and then intends to wed a pretty girl from his hometown. "Empezó por la quinta: primero el nido; después vendría el ave de amor, el ave tierna y arrulladora" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 69), we are told in the tale. However, unlike Becerro, who manages to tie the knot with a woman of his choice, Barbastro never marries his dream bride. Because of his plans to build a mansion surrounded by a lavish garden and his desire that "la verja que debía rodear la posesión tenía elegante forma oval" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 69), he develops an obsession to purchase an adjacent piece of land that belongs to his neighbor, Dominga de Alfónsiga. Unable to convince her to sell her land to him (without which his property would not

have the perfect oval shape for his garden) and incapable to let go of his dream that depends on the purchase of Dominga's small plot, the *indiano* marries the stubborn neighbor to complete his project. Trapped in a loveless marriage to a dominant, ugly woman, Barbastro spends his days showing visitors his splendid residence, which attests to his past success overseas and which, at the same time, bears witness to his current, self-imposed stagnation and unhappiness. In the concluding paragraph, the character described as "aquella discreta viuda" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 68), who accompanies the narrator to the *indiano*'s estate, summarizes the protagonist's present life as follows: "Ella, la Domingona, ha vencido en la lucha; hace lo que quiere, le tiene bajo el zapato; se pasa la vida echando traguetes de licor, y merendando, y jugando a la brisca con las doncellas y el cocinero; y él para consolarse de su atroz mujer, enseña a todo el mundo las bellezas de su amada, de su verdadera novia…, que es la quinta" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 70).

And so, considering that the focus on Barbastro's residence is what differentiates the story from other *indiano* tales by Pardo Bazán, it is tempting to assume that the writer deployed the architectural splendor and exotic features of the protagonist's mansion to mark, as in the case of real-life immigrants' *casonas*, "the transplanted quality of the house and its occupants" (Surwillo, 2014: 134). As Lisa Surwillo explains, "the nineteenth-century *casonas* imitated traditional aristocratic houses in size and grandeur" (Surwillo, 2014: 133; author's italics). However, while "the great European house… is less a domestic space than an architectural statement of family lines, history, and integration with the land … the *indiano's* house is an architectural monument to a personal itinerary and reflects the founder's fundamental uprootedness" (Surwillo, 2014: 133; author's italics). Surwillo's findings are useful as they allow us to see that at least on the surface Barbastro's residence displays the aspects of a typical *casona*. The protagonist's house with its palace-like surroundings, i.e. "estatuas de mármol… terraza monumental" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 68) and uncommon flora ["la vegetación de raras orquídeas" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 68)] functions as visible proof of the *indiano*'s social and financial ascent as well as his transatlantic venture. It is also during the visit to Barbastro's estate that the narrator observes the protagonist's transplanted features, noticeable in the immigrant's overly polite behavior. "A mi llamada, acudió … un criado, que… se dio prisa a guiarnos

hasta un mirador…donde encontramos a los dueños de la regia finca … Él se levantó, obsequioso, con esa cortesía algo almidonada de los que han residido en América largo tiempo" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 68).

And yet, while at first the architectural marvels and the returnee's quirky manner capture the narrator-tourist's attention, ultimately, it is the *indiano*'s emotional connection to his estate, manifest in his fondness of his mini-empire and his fixation on its shape and size, that the two sightseers place in the center of the narrative. "La finca es de un millonario, el señor Barbastro, que se ha gastado en ella muy buenos pesos duros, y tiene… gusto en ostentarla y lucirla, y en que se la alaben y ponderen" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 68), we are told by the widow, who, later, also recounts the *indiano*'s desperate refusal to curb his ambition and to accept something other than his originally desired contours of his domain. "Barbastro …. hubiese dado, no ya dinero, sangre de las venas, por el trozo de prado que estropeaba su creación… Hay motas de terruño colindantes que pueden ser pedazos del alma, médula del deseo…" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 70). Given the time and the political climate during which Pardo Bazán penned the story, that is, the pro-war atmosphere prior to the official declaration of the Spanish-American conflict in April 1898, during which the peninsular elites and the popular press called for the unconditional defense of the colonial remnants (Charnon-Deutsch, 2008: 109-144; Balfour, 1997: 11-28), the account of Barbastro's inflexibility and the consequences for his obsession with the estate beg allegorical interpretation. For, if read in the light of these circumstances in Spain and the general political atmosphere in Europe and the rest of the western world at the end of the nineteenth century when, in Álvarez Junco's words, "the possession of an empire, became the supreme criterion by which not merely a State, but the *nation* which it represented, was judged" (Álvarez Junco, 2011: 296; author's italics), it is possible to view the writer's portrait of the *indiano* as a safe vehicle to channel her concerns with the cost of Spaniards' holding on too tightly to their past imperial glory.

Commenting on the author's claim in reference to her postition on the Spanish-American War in her article from August of 1899, "Respirando por la herida", that "cuando la guerra se declaró … me gané el dictado de *mala española* por sostener que a toda costa debía evitarse aquel horrendo y fatídico conflicto" (Pardo Bazán, 1899: 137; Pardo Bazán's italics), Ruiz-Ocaña

Dueñas asserts that doña Emilia's "postura se parece entonces a la de quienes, a toro pasado, dicen *ya lo veía yo venir*, pues lo cierto es que en sus artículos anteriores de *La Ilustración Artística* no se encuentra ninguna advertencia de ese tipo" (Ruiz-Ocaña Dueñas, 2004: 155-156; author's italics). Significantly, however, while generally supportive of Spain's imperial status—prior to the 1898 conflict—the writer questioned the cost and benefit for Spaniards to retain their last colonial possessions. In her essay, "Vil metal" (1896), doña Emilia stated:

> La isla de Cuba, desde hace muchos años, oigo decir que nos empeña. […] Aun sin guerra me han asegurado que Cuba nos dejaba un déficit. Con la guerra, estamos enterrando allí millonadas. Ya sé que al defender a Cuba defendemos nuestra honra, procedemos como procede una nación que se tiene en algo. No censuro ni puedo censurar a los que han entendido así el honor nacional. (Pardo Bazán, 1896b: 70)

Pardo Bazán's caution (evident in the use of such phrases as: *oigo decir*, *me han asegurado*) already in 1896, as she broached the sensitive link between national honor and colonial prestige, perhaps explains best the lack of a direct critique in the author's journalistic essays of the peninsular engagement in the conflict with the United States and Spain's overall colonial experience shortly before the 1898 War. However, that doña Emilia did not address her reservations about the Spanish-American confrontation in her articles in the aggressive, pro-war environment during the months leading to the 1898 events, does not mean that she did not voice them at all in other venues, i.e. her literary writings such as her *indiano* narrative.[12]

At first sight, it might be difficult to consider "Barbastro" as a reflection of Pardo Bazán's qualms about the looming 1898 War and her concerns with Spain's colonial future. As in many of the author's *indiano* tales, in "Barbastro", the audience is not

12 In addition to the author's outright disapproval of Spain's possible (as it was speculated in 1896) engagement in the military confrontation with the United States in her essay "Guerra y paz" (1896), in which she stated: "nadie que tenga la cabeza sana deseará la guerra, otra guerra, guerra con un enemigo tan inconsiderado y tan ricachón" (Pardo Bazán, 1896a: 54), already in March of 1898, doña Emilia, according to Pilar Faus, "parece dar por hecho el fatal desenlace" (Faus, 2003: 138) of the conflict. A detailed account of Pardo Bazán's concerns with the 1898 conflict and the colonial wars in her journalistic writings is provided in Faus (2003: 133-145).

provided with references to the past or then-current sociopolitical events and there are hardly any indications as to the story's geographic setting. More importantly, however, when we meet the protagonist, he has already sacrificed himself for the land that he wanted so badly, and it is too late for him to undo his actions. But it is precisely this after-the-fact scenario that one might see as Pardo Bazán's invitation for her readers to sneak a peek at the consequences of Barbastro's misadventure. One cue here is that, similar to the manner in which doña Emilia organized her thoughts about the late colonial affairs in her lectures and essays shortly before and after 1898, that is, in terms of assets and liabilities, she structured the story in a way that readers find themselves forthwith engaged in weighing the costs and benefits of the *indiano*'s uncompromising pursuit of his aspiration.[13] Unsurprisingly, therefore, the horrendous price (even before we learn about Barbastro's marriage to Dominga) to expand the limits of his parents' land and to preserve his enlarged domain in exchange for meager—if any—benefits that the property brings in (except for boosting the *indiano*'s ego and providing a gratis sight for visitors) is accentuated more than once in the story. In addition to the aforementioned, initial remark that "el señor Barbastro … se ha gastado en ella muy buenos pesos duros" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 68), the heavy cost of the *indiano*'s mini-empire (which does not add much in economic terms to his hometown other than a decorative value) is corroborated, or rather shouted out by the protagonist's half-intoxicated wife: "-Miren, miren por ahí cuanto 'haiga'… Dicen que está muy precioso. No se encuentra otra cosa así en toda la provincia. ¡Vaya!… Tampoco nadie se gastó el dinero como nosotros. ¿Eh, Barbastro?" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 68). But Dominga's mandate to marvel at the residence confirms more than an excessive amount of money spent on the estate. Although it has been the *indiano*'s transatlantic enterprise that affords *la castellana's*

13 For instance, in May of 1898, in her essay, "Elegía", Pardo Bazán considered the colonial experience a liability for Spain: "sólo desdichas nos **han valido** nuestra aventura transatlántica" (Pardo Bazán, 1898: 111; emphasis mine). Her resentment of the high price that Spain paid for the colonial status is evident also in her reference to Spain's overseas possessions as "colonias que… nada **valían** y sólo reportaban beneficios a los productores catalanes" (Pardo Bazán, 2010: 294; emphasis mine) in her 1899 lecture "La España de ayer y la de hoy." Note the frequent use of the verb *valer* in the author's writings on the subject.

(as the visitors refer to Barabstro's wife) leisurely, if not wasteful, lifestyle, as her excessive consumption of alcohol ["tenía a su lado una mesita cargada con licorera y copas" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 68)], expensive outfits and jewelry ["vestía de seda, con lujo y faralaes, en sus negruzcos dedos brillaban anillos caros" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 68)], and playing cards (*jugando a la brisca*) imply, Dominga's uncaring attitude toward the estate, evident in her first words (*miren por ahí cuanto 'haiga'... dicen que*) shows the low esteem in which she holds her husband as well as the returnee's lack of authority and agency inside and outside of his hard-fought-for mini-empire.[14]

Barbastro's effeminacy, evident in his silence and embarrassment for his wife's behavior ["Observé que al interpelado dueño le salían a la cara los colores… acongojado y confuso, se apresuró a sacarnos de allí" (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 68)] is, no doubt, symptomatic of Spain's imperial decline. After all, as the British scholar, John Tosh, affirms (albeit in reference to the link between manliness and the New Imperialism 1880-1900 in Britain) "empire was a man's business" (Tosh, 2005: 193), since its acquisition, control and expansion depended "on the supply of men of a certain type—practical, resourceful and self-reliant" (Tosh, 2005: 193). But, there is something else troubling about the *indiano*'s marriage, aside from the reversal of the conventional gender roles, patent in Dominga's drinking, shouting, and playing cards like a man (in addition to the symbolic value of her first name which reinforces the idea of her domination over her spouse) and apart from Barbastro's withdrawal from the public sphere into his house and garden, both traditionally feminine domains. Consider the opening sentence in the story, which starts with the introduction of *aquella discreta viuda* and continues with the description of the overgrowing garden in Barbastro's estate. The presence of a widow at the beginning and the end of the tale infuses the feeling of death and signals the fiasco of the marriage in the story. By choosing the widow to

14 The reference to Barbastro's wife as *la castellana* is hardly gratuitous, as she seems to embody the notion presented by Maeztu of Castille in "La meseta castellana" published in his collection of essays "Hacia otra España" issued between 1896 and 1899. In it, as Conlon observes, "Castille… is portrayed as a dead and barren country that only saps the energy away from the strong periphery of Spain… infused with the innovation of its returned emigrants" (Conlon, 2002: 176).

recount Barbastro's unfortunate verdict to wed Dominga, the narrator dramatizes, furthermore, the *indiano*'s poor decision for his future and, metaphorically, Spain's ill-fated choice for its prospects in 1898. Fittingly, the widow depicts the moment when Barbastro plunges into the disastrous dealing with Dominga—when he should have retreated from it—as the returnee's suicide.

> Barbastro entró en la casuca de la aldeana, como quien se lanza al mar, resuelto a todo…, se hallaba tan ofuscado, tan emperrado, tan fuera de sí, que cerró los ojos, a manera del que se precipita a un abismo, y… entregó su mano y sus millones a Dominga (Pardo Bazán, 1990: 70).

Likewise, the description of the garden with overgrowing plants and sprawling water (as the use of verbs *rebasar*, *extender*, *desparramar* suggests) represents more than a contrast to Barbastro's mansion. While the vitality of plants and water sharpen the notion of the lifelessness of Barbastro's residence (which, because of the lack of details related to a household and family, resembles a tomb with the protagonist as a living dead), the overgrowing garden also illustrates the impossibility for Barbastro to control his domain. The author's long depiction of the growing plants and the water marks then, right from the start, the futility of Barbastro's attempt (and by extension of the pre-1898 Spanish public) to hold on to the past and the fixed-in-size-and-shape, untouched-by-time, mini-empire. As visitors come and go, while Barbastro remains stuck in love with his estate, doña Emilia made it clear that the only way for him to move on with his life is to cut his losses and separate himself from Dominga. In other words, already before her 1901 lecture,"Discurso pronunciado en los Juegos Florales de Orense", in which Pardo Bazán postulated, "[a]trás lo pasado: vengamos a lo actual" (Pardo Bazán, 2010: 318), she fictionalized this thought in "Barbastro" by urging her *indiano* and, by extension, Spaniards to let go of the past and direct their attention to the present.

To conclude, written during the conflicted time that witnessed the reorganization of colonial possessions in Spain and the rest of the western world, the *indiano* stories provide insights into Pardo Bazán's changing perspectives on the waning Spanish Empire. While it is undeniable that the author availed herself of

familiar Galician settings to pen her *indiano* tales, these narratives, as we have seen in "El voto" and "Barbastro" and as doña Emilia continued to make it patent in her post-1898 stories and articles on the subject, served the writer to air her reactions to contemporary national issues. As in her essay "La casa del indiano" (1899) in which a real-life *indiano*'s house inspired Pardo Bazán to discuss Spain's present and future relationship with the Americas alongside the concept of race, progress, and regeneration and to reflect on her personal desire to cross the Atlantic ["también quisiera yo emigrar algún tiempo, y probar… la emoción del trasplanto [*sic*] y la alegría sentimental del regreso" (qtd. in Docampo Jorge, 2019: 59)], the *indiano* stories function as the platform from which she contemplated the figure of the re-emigrant, at times as a source of renewed hope to modernize the country and retain colonial power, at times as an embodiment of the disillusionment with Spain's colonial politics. Although not as optimistic as the new generation of writers who, like Maeztu, saw in the turn-of-the-century Spanish immigrant a New Man, a modern conquistador, who would not only venture to "hacer las Américas" but also "hacer España" (Conlon, 2002: 177-178), Pardo Bazán did not ignore in these to whom she referred as "cada cual es un pequeño Colón" ("La casa del indiano" qtd. in Docampo Jorge, 2019: 59) and their overseas experience the potential for the influx of innovative ideas and the possibility of a new dialogue between the New World and Spain.

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