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The Foreign Woman in the Works of Emilia Pardo Bazán and Margarita Nelken

by

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Abstract

The introduction of the New Woman in Spain caused a wave of both feminist and anti-feminist sentiments and exposed the deep flaws in Spanish gender relations, namely the lack of opportunities, rights, and freedoms for women. Two feminist authors, Emilia Pardo Bazán and Margarita Nelken, wrote numerous essays and articles arguing against traditional Spanish gender roles and fighting for the rights of women. In their fiction, they were often unable to voice these beliefs as strongly for fear of losing readers or being subject to censorship or social persecution. To avoid repercussions, they employed the character of the foreign woman- a character removed from the story whose foreignness allowed them to criticize Spanish characters and by extension Spanish society. This paper examines how the beliefs and actions of their foreign women, combined with the reactions of the Spanish men to the foreign women, exposed the failings of Spanish masculinity and the shortcomings of Spanish progressive thought to illuminate a previously unexplored angle of Spanish literature.

The foreign woman. A temptress, a puzzle waiting to be solved. The words “foreign woman” invoke a sense of intrigue and seduction in the reader. For some, she is akin to “the other woman”, one who corrupts a man and steals him away from his family and morals. For others, the foreign woman represents freedom from societal gender roles. She offers fresh insight into the problems the other characters face and adds an element of surprise and excitement to the story. She can also be used to express controversial views held by the author in a safe manner and serves as a tool for the author to criticize society. By examining the foreign woman as an extension of the author’s personal beliefs, one can uncover societal and cultural insights that might otherwise be too controversial to be published, therefore revealing a previously hidden side of Spanish critical thought. In this paper, I show how two Spanish authors from different time periods, Emilia Pardo Bazán and Margarita Nelken, used the foreign woman to safely criticize the Spanish man and the shortcomings of Spanish progressive thought. By connecting these two authors through the foreign woman, one is able to see the extent and longevity of the masculinity crisis that gripped Spain and lack of modernization in regards to gender relations.

The early 1900s saw a wave of feminist movements sweeping across Europe and the United States, fueled by the actions of British and American feminists. Gender roles and women’s rights began to be questioned after the Glorious Revolution of 1868, but women were not given economic or political rights, such as suffrage, until 1931.¹ The “ángel del hogar”, or angel of the home, was a term borrowed from Victorian England and adapted to describe the ideal Spanish woman: one who existed primarily in the realm of the house and whose function was to care for her husband and children. She was uneducated, unemployed, and unrepresented

¹ The Glorious Revolution of 1868 overthrew Queen Isabella II and marked the beginning of a liberal government. This did not last long and the monarchy returned in 1875. Women were not given rights until 1931 with the establishment of the Second Republic, a democratic government. (Paredes-Méndez, Harpring, & Ballesteros, 2014).

outside the home. Many desired traits of the angel of the home came from Catholicism and were modeled on those of the Virgin Mary. Based on this idealized image of femininity, Spanish women were instructed to be humble, pious, and submissive to the male figures in their lives while retaining the outward appearance of strictly feminine beauty. Spanish society of the late 1800s and early 1900s was centered on the family as a representation of the nation. A strong family was equated with a strong Spain. (Paredes-Méndez, Harpring, & Ballesteros, 2014, p. 281) A woman who did not fulfill her familial roles, namely birthing and raising children, was not only a detriment to her family but a threat to all of Spain. (Ehrenpreis, 1999)

The angel of the home model was challenged by the arrival of the New Woman, a term coined to describe British feminists and the women's movement in general. The New Woman was everything the angel of the home was not; she was educated, sexually liberated, and independent. In Spain, these concepts were all but unheard of and deemed morally corrupt, "With the exception of the nun, the schoolteacher, and possibly the queen, any woman who located her work outside the home was by definition of questionable morality and thus fair game for sexual exploitation" (Tolliver, 58). The Spanish man did not know how to interact with the New Woman besides using her as a sexual object. He was afraid of her, especially when he could not control her, furthering the masculinity crisis fueled by Spain's economic and political instability.²

In 1898, Spain lost the Spanish-American war to the United States and was forced to hand over its remaining three colonies, signifying the end of the Spanish global empire. Even before the war, Spain had been suffering from a loss of a strong national identity showcased by the internal political and social turmoil amongst the different regions and classes. The disastrous

² Dr. Dorota Heneghan, personal communication, 2020

results of the war only furthered Spain's national desperation and depression. From this pessimism arose a group of artists and authors known as the Generation of '98: mainly men who explored the causes of the *decadencia* or decay of Spanish society through their works. Many of these authors believed that the solutions to Spain's stagnation lay in looking outside and opening the nation to European influences. The main literary movement of this time was modernism, also called "arte por arte" *art for art*. This type of literature and art was characterized by symbolism, pessimism, and the rejection of realism. In Spain, another literary movement grew parallel to modernism called the Generation of '98, named for the men who pioneered the movement and the year of the Spanish-American war. It shared many of the same characteristics as traditional modernism but used these tools to specifically address the decay of Spanish society and the paths toward regeneration. (Pereira-Muro, 2015)

The effects of the war of 1898 were felt well into the 20th century. Spain's loss of its last three overseas colonies in 1898 plunged Spanish society into a period of self-doubt and confusion, marked by a crisis of masculinity.³ This societal and psychological instability was furthered by Spain's disastrous attempt to reassert itself as a global power by waging war on Morocco for territory. The wars lasted for over a decade with the Spanish people suffering heavy casualties. The biggest loss was the Battle of Annual in 1921 during which over 10,000 Spaniards died. Spain's military failures, economic crisis, and lack of public support for the monarchy led to a military takeover by Miguel Primo de Rivera in 1923. Primo de Rivera rose to power by promising to eradicate corruption and return Spanish society to its previous values and morality. (Pereira-Muro, 2015) The political and economic instability that resulted from the numerous wars and regime changes was reflected in the literature and art as authors and artists

³ Heneghan, Lectures from Spanish 4063 Spring 2019

used their work to criticize the state of Spain. However, the conservative monarchy and subsequent dictatorship did not tolerate criticism from more liberal minded individuals and critics were often socially persecuted. One such author was Emilia Pardo Bazán who faced heavy criticism for both her feminist views and her gender in a male dominated field.

Emilia Pardo Bazán was one of the great feminist writers of the late 1800s/early 1900s. Born in 1851, she was the only woman of her time to be elevated to the same status as her male literary counterparts. Her novels and short stories span multiple literary movements, most notably modernism and naturalism, which she is credited with introducing in Spain. Besides writing fiction, Pardo Bazán wrote countless essays, scholarly articles, and literature critiques. She wrote numerous essays analyzing and criticizing gender relations in society and championed equal rights for both sexes, particularly in regards to education. At the time, education was the only means of advancement for women outside of the house or the clergy. Pardo Bazán was a controversial figure, both for her feminist ideas and her gender. As a woman, she was often criticized for being too masculine in her writing, yet only by writing “like a man” was she able to obtain the respect of her male contemporaries. Despite her numerous literary achievements, she was denied critical acclaim and introduction to the Royal Spanish Academy due to her gender. (Paredes-Méndez, Harpring, & Ballesteros, 2014, p. 458-459) While she was denied equality in life, her actions and achievements, along with those of other Spanish feminists, paved the way for one of the first women elected to the Spanish Parliament: Margarita Nelken.

Margarita Nelken was a prolific writer, politician, activist and one of the most influential women in Spain during the Second Republic. She was born María Teresa Lea Nelken y Mansberger in 1898 to Jewish immigrants and showed great artistic talent from a young age. Her parents encouraged her and her sister, Carmen Eva, to pursue academic and creative success,

teaching them multiple languages and sending Margarita to Paris to cultivate her painting ability. Margarita showed great promise as a painter and developed friendships with many of the great artists of the age, such as Diego Rivera and Ignacio Zuloaga y Zabaleta. However, she suffered an eye disease in her late teens and was forced to abandon painting. She turned to writing, first as an art critic, then as a novelist, journalist, and activist, writing in favor of social movements of the time. Her politics and unconventional marriage made her a very controversial figure, with many critics choosing to focus on her personal life and relationship gossip rather than her works. (Preston, 2002)

As a politician and activist, Nelken fought for the socialist party in Spain and spoke on behalf of the rights of women and workers. One of her most famous essays, “La condición social de la mujer en España” (1919) address the economic problems women face and advocates for improved education and economic opportunities for women. She continued to write in favor of education for women and rose through the Socialist party ranks, eventually becoming one of the first three women elected to the Spanish parliament in 1931. Ironically, once elected, she opposed giving women the right to vote, believing that the women of Spain were too uneducated to vote for themselves and would be influenced by the men in their lives, including their priests. Therefore, they would vote how they were directed to and the conservative party would gain more power. Her position on feminism and women’s rights remains controversial with many arguing she could not have been a true feminist if she did not believe in a woman’s right to vote. (Preston, 2002)

In the 1920s, Nelken began writing fiction and used the genre to criticize Spanish society, especially Spanish culture in regards to feminism and gender roles. The stagnation and uncertainty prevalent in Spanish culture throughout the beginning of the 1900s was formative in

shaping her writings and views of social issues at the time. Her early critiques of Spanish society were largely centered on the influence of the Catholic Church and the gender roles imposed by traditionalist thinkers. Influenced by her own experiences, Nelken worked to normalize female sexuality by giving her female characters more traditionally masculine privileges, such as employment, sexual freedom, and independence. (Preston, 2002) As an author and outspoken political figure, Nelken was strongly criticized for both her liberal views and for being a woman speaking against authority. Like many authors and activists, she was exiled at the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 for her role in fighting against the rise of Franco, something she had managed to avoid during previous dictatorships.

Despite his reputation as a “bland” dictator and champion of social programs, Primo de Rivera did not tolerate criticism of his regime. Several artists and writers, such as Miguel de Unamuno were exiled for producing literature and art that could be interpreted as a criticism of his government. Knowing this, Nelken made sure to hide her beliefs carefully in her works. In “La Aventura de Roma”, all the criticisms of Spanish society are directed towards foreigners or come from foreigners. The novel is also set in Rome, a foreign city that serves to remove the characters from Spanish society. The only Spaniard in the novel is the protagonist and any negative opinions are disguised as humor or are expressed by foreigners. By using the foreign as a metaphor for the familiar, Nelken was able to criticize Spanish society in a way that left her protected from political persecution. This protection allows her characters to more openly criticize Spanish society. While Pardo Bazán also employs a foreign woman as commentary, her criticisms are less direct than Nelken’s and rely on the reader to apply the fictional to the reality.

Pardo Bazán’s novel, *La Sirena Negra*, was published in 1908 and encapsulates the spirit of the Generation of ‘98 through the story of Gaspar Montenegro and his personal development

as a father to a young orphan. Gaspar is a drug addict who is obsessed with death yet he wants to raise his child, Rafael, to be better than him. Both his addiction and obsession with death are criticisms of the mentality of Spain at the time. Even his last name is a reference to the pessimism gripping Spain: mountain of doom. To raise a perfect, modern child, Gaspar hires Miss Annie: An English woman who, in his eyes, is a perfect representation of a modern woman. Over the course of the novel, as Gaspar gains more confidence in his abilities to raise a perfect child without help, he rejects Miss Annie in favor of himself and the Spanish women in his life. However, at the end of the novel, his rejection of Miss Annie and his subsequent attack on her causes the death of the child, which symbolizes the death of the future of Spain.

Miss Annie embodies the conflict between the different schools of thought within Spanish society regarding modernization of the nation and shows the inability of Spain to accept change. At the beginning of the novel Gaspar, who represents Spain, likes Miss Annie, or at the very least believes she will be useful in helping him raise Rafael. However, there is very little description of her personality or her goals, only that she is hygienic, wears white, exists within the novel to “purificar” the child, and is never fully satisfied with her position. She is the voice of progress, yet there are few elements of progress in her beliefs and actions. The phrase “*estilo clase media*” *the style of the middle class* assumes that her primary goal is marriage, a concept contrary to the ideology of modernism and the modern woman. Furthermore, she is not shown to be qualified as an educator. All of these elements combined suggests that Spain likes the idea of a modern woman, but does not know how to create one or what being a modern woman entails. The only thing of importance is the appearance of modernity regardless of its substance.

Gaspar’s feelings towards Miss Annie change throughout the novel, beginning with mild admiration which strengthens into desire and finally becomes dismissal and disinterest. The

majority of his observations about her are physical, yet all make specific mentions of her English heritage. He first remarks on “su figura moderna, atrevida, exótica, componía sobre el fondo de los pinos ancestrales, o al lado del caduco dolmen con barba de musgo” (Pardo Bazán, 79-80).

*Her modern figure, daring, exotic, composed on the backs of the ancestral pines, or next to the deciduous dolmen with a moss beard*⁴. This first description paints her as mysterious and unattainable yet strong and unfeeling. The imagery of a stone grave marker juxtaposed with ancient pine trees already shows her caught between the forces of life and death, foreshadowing Rafael’s tragic end. Gaspar then begins to sexualize her, specifically her skin:

“la franela blanca de su traje masculino...la blancura de la piel inglesa, como ahora. Es un blanco que será desesperante para un pintor: un blanco tintado imperceptiblemente de rosa té, un blanco virginal, <<carne de doncella>>... La misma blancura a lo Van Dyck se nota en la pierna larga, esbelta, derecha... sexual y delicada” (Pardo Bazán, 83).

The white shirt of her masculine suit...the whiteness of her English skin, like now. It is a white that will be infuriating for a painter: a white barely tinted with a hint of pink tea, a virgin white <maiden flesh> ...the same whiteness that Van Dyck noticed on the long leg, slender, straight... sexual and delicate.

By demystifying her and making her a sexual object, she becomes something he wants and thinks he can possess. Her skin is unblemished, reflecting England’s strong colonial history and global imperial status that contrasts with Spain’s recent humiliation. Yet there is still something not quite right about her, she is too masculine, too white, impossible to capture. Nonetheless, Gaspar entertains the thought of her, only to reject her advances in favor of a Spanish woman.

⁴ All translations done by Lillian Roques Mayhall

There is an extreme contrast between Miss Annie and the Spanish women in the novel, like Trini and Camila. When Miss Annie is first introduced, she replaces the role of a Spanish woman in Rafael's life:

“Miss Annie Dogson, de lo castizo británico, más institutriz que nurse, que se limita a presenciar y dirigir el aseo y tocado de Rafael, hecho como antes por Marichu. Es decir, como antes no: la inglesa ha cambiado todos los métodos y sistemas de la vascongada, que lo soporta agriada e impaciente” (Pardo Bazán pág. 60).

Miss Annie Dogson, a pure Britain, better educated as a nurse, who limits herself to attend and manage the grooming and hairstyling of Rafael previously done by Marichu. This is to say, unlike before, the Englishwoman has changed all of the methods and systems of the Basque woman, who puts up with it sour and impatient.

She takes over as his primary female caregiver, focusing on his cleanliness and appearance. Her role in displacing a Spanish woman suggests that Gaspar needs to hire a foreign woman, an Englishwoman, because there is not a Spanish woman who is modern enough or educated enough to properly raise a modern child. By writing Miss Annie as a foreign woman yet making her an integral part of Rafael's development, Pardo Bazán creates a point of view that allows for criticism of Spain outside the story and a commentary about Spanish women within the story as well. Miss Annie's existence allows Pardo Bazán to clearly illustrate the failings of Spanish women at the time. This is to say, through the words, beliefs, and actions of Miss Annie, Pardo Bazán criticizes Spain- a Spain that only values appearance while refusing to let go of traditional values.

Through Gaspar's attitudes towards Miss Annie, Pardo Bazán shows how Spain view itself and its abilities. When he first hires Miss Annie, Gaspar believes himself incapable of

raising Rafael on his own. As to why he cannot, he says ““Porque soy de otra raza, no sé si diga exquisita o gastada y vieja” (Pardo Bazán, 55). *Because I am of another race, I do not know if I would say it is exquisite or worn out and old.* His desperation here coupled with the introduction of Miss Annie as a caregiver to Rafael only five pages later imply that only a foreigner is capable of creating the modern child of his dreams. This also represents Spain’s crisis of masculinity and loss of national identity; as a nation, Spain cannot see a way forward without outside help. Furthermore, the feminist movements sweeping through Europe and the Americas threaten to undermine the fiercely gendered Spanish society by giving women opportunities outside the house and forcing the men to share responsibilities previously held primarily by women, such as child rearing, which leaves the Spanish man uncertain and fearful of his abilities. However, by the end, Gaspar has regained confidence in himself and decides to send Miss Annie away: “Mañana mismo llamaré a miss Annie, la daré rendidas gracias por sus servicios, la haré generoso regalo y la enviaré a Vigo” (Pardo Bazán, 107). *“Tomorrow, I will call Miss Annie, I will give her devoted thanks for her services, I will gift her a generous present, and I will send her to Vigo.* His decision to amicably part ways with Miss Annie shows a decreased reliance on foreign, specifically British, aid. In a time when Spain was struggling to stand on its own, a display of strength such as this would have been a welcome boost to morale.

The end of the novel with Gaspar’s attack on Miss Annie and the death of Rafael represents the culmination of the tension between modernity and traditional beliefs that had been building throughout the novel and shows Pardo Bazán’s predictions for the future of Spain. Miss Annie begins to lose favor with Gaspar, he refers to her only as “la inglesa” *the Englishwoman*. At the same time, he reunites with Trini and Camila, which is both a positive and negative factor. Their reunification expresses Pardo Bazán’s belief that Spain needs to focus on its own problems

and its people, it should not rely on the outside for solutions to “la decadencia” *the decay*. At lunch, Gaspar says “A mi derecho, Trini; la inglesa, en el puesto inferior, a la izquierda” (Pardo Bazán, 100)” *To my right, Trini; the Englishwoman, in the inferior position, to my left*. This seating arrangement is good: The Spanish woman has the most important position but the Englishwoman- the representation of modernity and progress- is not excluded from the table. The inclusion of both expresses the desire to create a Spanish form of modernity that does not fully abandon the traditional ideals of the past. However, Gaspar is unable to reconcile the traditional and the progressive and rapes Miss Annie, representing the frustration with the concept of modernity that culminates in its destruction and rejection in Spain. His inability to accept both results in the death of Rafael, who represents the future of Spain. Here, Pardo Bazán is stating that Spain needs find a way to fuse modernity and Spanish culture because without the combination of the two, it will fall behind its European counterparts.

Just as Miss Annie exists to showcase the failings of the Spanish woman, she also provides avenues for criticism of the Spanish man, specifically the crisis of masculinity and obsession with death. Through Gaspar’s feelings towards Miss Annie, Pardo Bazán voices her dismay at the state of Spanish society. This is addressed by Gaspar’s monologue in which he mentally confronts the influence Miss Annie has over him:

“Hay en Portodor otra mujer más que Annie? ...En resumen: he aquí que Annie constituye para mí un peligro ...No cantes victoria, hija de pérfida Albión, porque notes la eléctrica sacudida que me causa tu presencia. Yo no soy esa parte de mi ser a quien tu blancura ha trastornado. Yo soy el que piensa, razona, conoce, prevé, diseca. Yo que el que ama otras cosas muy oscuras, muy sombrías; yo soy el galán de la Negra” (pág. 84-85)

Is there any woman in Portodor other than Annie?... In summary, behold that Annie represents a danger for me. Do not sing victory, daughter of treacherous Albion (England), because you notice the electrical jolt your presence causes me. I am not that part of my being to whom your whiteness has upset. I am the one who thinks, reasons, knows, foresees, dissects. I am the one who loves other things very dark, very shadowy: I am the suitor of bad luck/the black

He begins by setting her above other women, particularly the Spanish women of the town, yet slowly realizes the danger of his obsession with her. The dramatic shift from speaking about Miss Annie to speaking directly to her causes the reader to feel personally engaged with the dialogue. By changing the perspective, Pardo Bazán forces the audience to pay attention and confront the issues presented by Gaspar. He calls England “treacherous Albion” for preying on his – and Spain’s – weakness. Pardo Bazán also attempts to show the good things about Spanish culture, mentioning its rational heritage and framing Spain as more than the narrative written by other nations.

Only through the rejection of the foreign woman does Gaspar have a chance at creating a future for Rafael. He speaks to her directly in his mind, saying “El niño puede distraerme de este ensueño viejo; tu no, aunque juegues a salir de las olas, salvo la franela, como Afrodita...” (Pardo Bazán, 86) *The boy can distract me from this old dream: you cannot, even though you may play in the waves, wearing your t-shirt, like Aphrodite...* He addresses her as Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and lust, and solidifies her presence as a seductress. The “old dream” Gaspar mentions recalls his previous love of and desire for “la Negra”, the black siren of death that drew him to Rafael’s mother and calls to him still. She is the decay that has gripped Spain and only by looking towards the future can

she be cast off. She cannot be beaten back by a foreigner, only a Spaniard, inspired by the vision of a Spanish future, can defeat her. This is not to say that Miss Annie is bad, she has simply fulfilled her purpose and it is time to look within Spain for the answers instead of relying on foreign powers.

The criticism of a false modernity is present in *La Sirena Negra*, especially in respect to matrimony and is encapsulated in the image of the bicycle. Miss Annie is shown to be riding a bicycle multiple times and is usually riding alone:

“sin duda Annie, cada vez más cebada en lo que cree mi conquista, le ha dado buenas despachaderas, marchándose sola, en su bicicleta por las carreteras polvorosas. ...el artefacto deportivo había venido de Vigo, la población europeizada más próxima a Portodor...yo no quería ir con ella, la miss sonreía maliciosamente, me lanzaba los dos rayos de zafir doblote de sus pupilas y continuaba pedaleando...” (Pardo Bazán, 88-89).

Without a doubt Annie, each time more intense in what I believed to be my conquest, had given him good retorts, going alone, on her bicycle, along the dusty roads...the sporting equipment had come from Vigo (Spain), the closest Europeanized town to Portodor... I did not want to go with her, she smiled maliciously, throwing at me rays of sapphire narrowing her pupils and continuing pedaling.

The bicycle is the perfect metaphor for women's progress at this time. While it appears to be on a forward track, women are still trapped by the necessity of marriage for economic security. In this way, there is no true progress and it is cyclical, like the wheel of a bicycle. The spokes appear to be moving forward but they never escape the wheel. Also, before the New Woman, the bicycle was a man's vehicle and it was considered dangerous for a woman to be riding one,

especially riding alone. By riding alone, Miss Annie pedals into a previously male dominated role, to the disapproval of the Spanish man, but is unable to escape her desire for him to join her. (Ehrenpreis 1999)

As another criticism of her false modernity, Miss Annie is presented as a modern woman, but she wants marriage above all else to ensure her security. According to Margarita Nelken, this is not a problem of women's desires but one of economics. Nelken says that women enter into these types of marriages because without them they do not have any security of life. (Nelken, 1919) Even though Miss Annie works, it is not enough to maintain her preferred lifestyle and the need for financial stability leads her to pursue Gaspar as a partner, which ultimately leads to his attack on her. Here, Pardo Bazán not only criticizes the false modernity of Miss Annie, but also the hypocrisy of Spanish society in reaction to a modern woman. The society will not let her be fully modern, but it also does not know how to interact with her in her current state. This theme is mirrored in Nelken and how her Spanish man interacts with the American woman.

Another such example of the foreign woman as a lens for societal critique comes from the short story "La Aventura de Roma" written in 1923. In her novel, Nelken uses the foreign woman to show the shortcomings of Spanish society of the early 1900s, especially when it comes to modernity and gender roles. She further uses the foreign woman to criticize the Spanish man and the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church in gender relations. Like Pardo Bazán, Nelken focused on using the foreign woman to criticize the Spanish man and the masculinity crisis gripping Spain that continued to pervade society for decades after the war.

"La Aventura de Roma" tells the story of a Spaniard, Andrés Marín y Tirado, who meets an American woman, Kate Findley, while traveling abroad in Italy. The novel opens with Andrés sitting alone in a café, musing on his annoyance at the number of pilgrims in the city. In fact,

there are so many people, the waiter is forced to sit a stranger at his table. He is intrigued by her, believing her to be an Englishwoman and a fellow artist. He further warms to her after helping her order in Italian and they strike up a friendship. He flirts with her, offering to be her tour guide, and eventually she accepts. When she leaves, she gives him a card with her name, “Kate Findley”, and Washington written on it, nothing else.

Andrés accompanies Kate on many of her excursions and begins to court her as a romantic and sexual partner. Their interactions are always from his perspective and show her as favorable to his advances, mainly through body language and lack of verbal objection. However, he grows increasingly frustrated by her divided attentions, believing she is too concerned with sightseeing. He eventually asks her for permission to kiss her, which she neither gives nor denies. After the kiss, she leaves, promising to see him again the next day. When he calls on her, he finds that she is gone, leaving only a letter in her place. In the letter, she accuses him of being willfully ignorant of her perspective and reminds him that she is engaged, something she told him from the start. The novel ends with her letter and the reader is left to wonder how much of the story was omitted by Andrés’s bias.

Andrés reflects the culture of Spanish masculinity in the face of modernity: he considers himself a “modern” well-cultured man but his actions and thoughts betray an innate traditionalism and unwillingness to accept differing views. Nelken devotes an entire chapter to his background, introducing him by saying, “Andrés Marín y Tirado era, como se lo había dicho con tan ampulosa vanidad a su improvisada *vis a vis* del Génova, hijo de Andalucía” (Nelken, 278).

Andrés Marín y Tirado was, as [it] had been said with pompous vanity at his impromptu face to face [of] Génova, son of Andalucía. She describes him as a “son of Andalucía,” a typical Spaniard in all regards, a sentiment echoed by Kate. However, many things about him contradict

with the positive view Spain and Spaniards have of themselves. For starters, he is ruled by his emotions and unable to separate fact from reality. He allows jealousy and anger to cloud his judgement and he is insecure in his relationships. When Kate praises another artist, he pouts and works to win back her attention by showing her more sites. Similarly, when he meets another artist, he is unable to say that he is also an artist, betraying a lack of confidence in himself and his work.

Furthermore, through her descriptions of Andrés, his upbringing, and his interactions with Kate, Nelken exposes a vulnerability in Spanish masculinity and alludes to its nonexistence in the traditional sense. Andrés's masculinity is in crisis, highlighted by his inability to choose a career for himself, his bachelor status, and his apathy regarding his future. Nelken shows that this passive state is far from uncommon; "A los dieciocho años, Andrés era un muchacho *como todos*; sin vocación claramente definida" (Nelken 279). *At 18 years old, Andrés was a boy like any other: without a clearly defined vocation.* Andrés is an orphan raised by two aunts and a convent of nuns; he has no father figure in his life and his primary masculine role models are clergy members. He has no experience with a modern woman or even a modern man and therefore has no reference frame for modernity. By continuing to frame Andrés as a typical Spaniard, Nelken describes traditional Spanish masculinity as fragile at best. His unconventional upbringing shows the breakdown of the family in a time when Spanish politics was focused on restoring the family as the building block of society.

While Nelken describes Andrés in great detail, Kate remains a stranger, both to the Andrés and the reader. All the information about her is given by Andrés, until the very end. Her thoughts and motivations are kept secret, forcing readers to rely on Andrés' physical descriptions of her and inferences of her actions. Andrés describes her as "alta, un poco masculina, ... bajo la

nariz, algo grande, una boca carnososa y sensual” (Nelken, 274). *Tall, a little masculine, ... under her nose, a large mouth, fleshy and sensual.* She appears to be the physical foil of Spanish feminine beauty: tall, masculine, and sexual. By describing her features as sexual, Andrés continues the trope of the foreign woman as a seductress. Furthermore, “Amazon” was a common term to refer to the New Woman, often designed as an insult. This is a reference to the Amazonian warriors of Greek myth: a strong army composed entirely of women, often described as tall and masculine in features. (Ehrenpreis, 1999) Her physical description as well as her liberated mentality serve to further distance her from the Spanish woman. Throughout the novel, Andrés returns to her physical appearance as her default description. Curiously, he makes a point to emphasize that she is not particularly beautiful, she is of average attractiveness at best. What draws him to her is her foreignness, the stark differences between her and Spanish women.

Kate Findley defies many of the gender roles inherent in Spanish society: she is a woman traveling alone, she has a profession, and she openly criticizes religious worship. In her essay, “La condición social de la mujer en España” (1919), Nelken refers to marriage as “enslavement” for a middle-class Spanish woman, calling it the result of a lack of choice. She writes that a woman without a man cannot economically sustain herself while maintaining a middle-class lifestyle due to the strict limitations on employment for women. A single woman without male relatives to provide for her would be forced to work as a prostitute to survive. However, by marrying, a Spanish woman gives up her personal freedom. Kate’s ability to maintain her freedom and individuality in a relationship serves as a lesson for Spanish society. As she is an American, her lifestyle is not seen as a threat to the Spanish man because he can dismiss her as foreign, but her gender allows her to speak to the Spanish woman in the hopes that others might emulate her. (Nelken, 1919)

On the topic of religion, Nelken was extremely opposed to the Catholic Church and its influence in Spanish society. Kate reflects this viewpoint, calling the worship of the religious pilgrims “horrible...escandaloso...Abominable corrupción! ¡Reprobable idolatría!” (Nelken 286). *Horrible, scandalous, abominable corruption, reprehensible idolatry*. Both Kate and Andrés express beliefs that the culture surrounding religious worship has corrupted it, with more focus being put on outward displays of devotion than true faith. Nelken is careful to keep these views firmly centered on the foreign: the more radical criticisms come from Kate and are directed at French and English pilgrims. While her remarks betray a fundamental dislike of the practice, Andrés’s comments are framed as a mockery of the foreign pilgrims. His criticisms can therefore be seen as only applicable to foreigners expressing their religion, leaving Spanish religious practice untouched. (Nelken, 1923)

One of the greatest failures of Spanish society, according to Nelken, was the lack of education for women. In “La condición social de la mujer en España” (1919), she professes that education is the single most important tool for the modernization of Spain. The shortcomings of Spanish education are especially prevalent in “La Aventura de Roma” (1923), with both Andrés and Kate remarking on it. When describing Andrés’s education, Nelken harshly criticizes the practice of placing priests in charge of academic schooling, claiming that priests prefer to focus on the sins of the world rather than the problems and evils of daily life. Nelken writes “el muchacho español, educado en la severa separación de sexos que alimenta toda la baja lujuria burguesa española” (Nelken 1923). *The Spanish boy, educated in the severe separation of the sexes that feeds all of the sick lust of the Spanish bourgeoisie*. She blames the education system, both the religious aspect and the failure to include women, for widening the divide between the sexes. Nelken points out that Kate’s education and ability to converse with Andrés on a

multitude of academic subjects is what draws him to her, not any conventional physical beauty. She uses Kate to show the benefits of academic equality, framing it as a desirable quality rather than a threat to masculinity.

The absence of Kate's perspective throughout the novel symbolizes the lack of consideration given to female voices in society. All of her actions are narrated by a man, making her seem passive and controlled by the story instead of being an active participant. In fact, when the reader is finally introduced to her through her letter, her personality and recollection of the events of the novel directly contradict with the image of her drawn by Andrés. In her letter, she excuses his behavior by telling him he is a Spaniard and she a North-American; their cultures differences led to varying perceptions of events. By reminding him that she is not Spanish, she firmly establishes herself as a foreigner, which allows the reader to excuse her criticisms as foreign ignorance. By drawing such sharp lines between Kate and a Spanish woman, Nelken attempts to show the reader the distance between Spain and the rest of the world in terms of social modernization and gender relations (Nelken, 1923).

The foreign woman, Kate Findley, serves as both a criticism of the Spanish man and a role model for the Spanish woman. Nelken specifically chose a foreign woman to illustrate the depth of Spanish gender inequality while protecting herself from political backlash. By using an American woman in the 1920s, she directly contrasts the feminist victories in other countries with the lack of women's rights in Spain. Kate Findley would have had the right to vote, marry for non-economic reasons, receive an income working in a respectable profession, and earn an education, all of which were unavailable to the majority of Spanish women. Nelken's juxtaposition of a modern woman with a self-proclaimed modern Spanish man also illustrates the lack of modernity in Spanish masculine society. By exploring the foreign woman, one can better

understand the mentality of gender relations in Spain and examine how authors sought to bring about societal change.

Despite coming into their primes nearly three decades apart, the time periods and social circumstances under which Emilia Pardo Bazán and Margarita Nelken wrote were remarkably similar. Primarily, both wrote during periods of political and socio-economic crisis. For Pardo Bazán, this was the period directly after the Spanish American war of 1898 when Spain was struggling to recover a strong national identity. For Nelken, it was the aftermath of the Battle of Annual and the loss of the war in Morocco coupled with the rise of the dictatorship of Primo Rivera. Both periods were characterized by economic and social uncertainty as well as a crisis of masculinity. The Spanish men still living after the wars were unsure how to move Spain forward into modernity with the rest of Europe, especially in regards to feminism and the new woman.

Both Miss Annie and Kate are representations of the New Woman, the modern woman in Spain. Neither are accepted as they are by the Spanish men in their lives and this rejection highlights the failings of Spanish gender relations. As Pardo Bazán said, “for the Spaniard, I do not hesitate to say, however liberal and advanced his ideas may be, the ideal of woman is not in the future but in the past...He would conjure up a woman who was both ‘stoic’ and ‘angel’ whom he would then ‘place within a crystal barrier which should separate her from the world through the help of ignorance’”(Ferris, 154). Neither Miss Annie nor Kate are angels of the home. While Miss Annie makes an attempt and tries to impress Gaspar, she is too modern and educated to truly fill that role. Kate reflects the changing feminist sentiments with her more carefree attitude and indifference to the opinion of the Spanish man. Despite their differences, both foreign women expose the weaknesses of the Spanish men and by doing so criticize Spanish gendered society as a whole. By analyzing similar themes of stagnation in regards to modernity

in works by different authors writing in different times periods, one is able to trace the lack of social progress across decades especially in regards to gender relations in early 1900s Spain.

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