

THE EVOLUTION OF PARDO BAZAN'S VIEWS ON THE NOVEL, 1879-91

Since the 1950's critical interest in the work of Emilia Pardo Bazán has seldom flagged. However there has still been no attempt to make even a moderately-detailed assessment of the author's views on technical aspects of the novel as expressed in the first decade or so of her activity as a writer of fiction. Certainly, a good deal of attention has been paid to the essays of *La cuestión palpitante* (1882-83), and it would indeed be difficult to argue against this important work being given pride of place in any appraisal of Pardo Bazán's early theoretical stances. Yet this celebrated document of the Spanish debate on literary Naturalism has been judged principally, and to some extent understandably, as the Galician novelist's response to Naturalism and its archpriest, Emile Zola. But the critics' preoccupation with *La cuestión palpitante* has almost constantly overshadowed, and even occasionally supplanted, consideration of the prologues (the notable exception being the preface to *Un viaje de novios*) and other literary essays of Pardo Bazán's early years as a practising novelist.¹ Nelly Clémessy's massive and impressive study of Pardo Bazán devotes a chapter to commentary on the individual essays of *La cuestión palpitante*, while the final part of the book – entitled "El arte de la novelista" – looks at, among other things, modes of characterization, the presence of the author in the text, narrative development, and descriptive techniques.² Yet Clémessy does not attempt, here or earlier, to enumerate and discuss Pardo Bazán's theoretical positions on such technical matters.

There is thus a gap to be filled, and in this article I hope to fill a good part of it. Although Pardo Bazán continued to write literary criticism until her death in 1921, this essay will restrict itself to a collation and assessment of her principal pronouncements on fiction and the art of writing novels made between 1879 and 1891. In 1879 Pardo Bazán published her first novel, and in the following ten years wrote most of her best-known fiction. During this period she was also embroiled in the Spanish debate on Realism and Naturalism, and made many of her most detailed and forthright utterances on the art of the contemporary novel as well as setting out her own theoretical positions. Then, in 1891, the fourth edition of *La cuestión palpitante* was published, and in the prologue Pardo Bazán suggested that her ideas had not substantially changed since the first appearance of the essays: "noto más deficiencias en la composición del libro que diferencia entre mis ideas estéticas de entonces y las de ahora. Si intentase *corregir* o *refundir*, tendría que *añadir mucho* sin *variar esencialmente* nada."³ Hereafter I intend to pin-point and discuss the principal aesthetic ideas of this particular work, examine the author's views on fiction which preceded it, and those which emerged after 1882-83, during the period when the Spanish debate on Naturalism became steadily less noisy and, indeed, less relevant.

1 Pardo Bazán's Views on the Novel up to "La cuestión palpitante"

In June 1879 the *Revista de España* began the serialization of Pardo Bazán's first novel, *Pascual López, autobiografía de un estudiante de medicina*. The opening instalment was preceded by a prologue in which Pardo Bazán reveals her awareness of the debate which had been taking place in Spain on the question of purpose in literature, as she describes it: "La acalorada polémica, a cada paso rediviva, del arte docente y el arte desinteresado" (II, 12-13). Here the author combines the issues of purpose and "beauty" in art, first stating that "toda obra bella eleva y enseña de por sí, sin que el autor pretenda añadir a la belleza la lección" (II, 13), and then noting: "De encerrar *Pascual López*, en su género, alguna verdadera belleza, contendría también alguna enseñanza" (II, 13). This notion of "beauty" as the essential quality of art is frequently proclaimed by Pardo Bazán during the ensuing years and will be discussed subsequently, in the light of further statements made by her on the topic. For the moment, suffice it to say that this issue and the question of didacticism in literature constitute the only points of theoretical note in the prologue to *Pascual López*. However two years later, when she wrote the preface to *Un viaje de novios* (1881), Pardo Bazán's interest had clearly switched to the debate on Realism and Naturalism.

One of the first issues on which the author focuses in this preface is something she sees as the product of recent and current debates. This is the wide acceptance of the principle that the novel can no longer be considered as merely a form of entertainment. Pardo Bazán's words are well known but bear repeating: "La novela ha dejado de ser obra de mero entretenimiento, modo de engañar gratamente unas cuantas horas, ascendiendo a estudio social, psicológico, histórico – al cabo, estudio" (III, 572). This idea of the novel as a "study" did not, of course, originate with Zola. Balzac had used the terms "études philosophiques" and "études de mœurs" to describe different kinds of novel within *La Comédie humaine*. Yet it was Zola who made "étude" and "étudier" such an important part of his theoretical armoury, and Pardo Bazán gives a clear hint of the influence of Zola on her ideas when she states in this preface: "no son menos necesarias al novelista que las galas de la fantasía la observación y el análisis" (III, 572). She also echoes Zola's celebrated "une œuvre d'art est un coin de la création vu à travers un tempérament"⁴ when she notes that "la novela es traslado de la vida, y lo único que el autor pone en ella es su modo peculiar de ver las cosas reales" (III, 572).

Up to this point in the preface it appears that Pardo Bazán has been won over to several of the tenets of Zola's Naturalism. However, she soon denounces what she sees as some of the excesses of the new movement, describing it as "una dirección realista, pero errada y torcida en bastantes respectos" (III, 572). Her first specific criticism is that Naturalism stresses the unsavoury aspects of life, thus failing to give a balanced view and generally emitting a depressing tone:

...desapruebo como yerros artísticos la elección sistemática y preferente de asuntos repugnantes o desvergonzados, la prolijidad nimia, y a veces cansada, de las descripciones, y, más que todo ... la perenne solemnidad y tristeza, el ceño siempre torvo, la carencia de notas festivas y de gracia y soltura en el estilo y en la idea. (III, 572)

This lack of balance is condemned because it cannot, Pardo Bazán believes, present a realistic portrayal of life. She goes on to make her position abundantly clear: “siendo la novela, por excelencia, trasunto de la vida humana, conviene que en ella turnen, como en nuestro existir, lágrimas y risas, el fondo de la eterna tragicomedia del mundo” (III, 572). Indeed, Pardo Bazán avers that it is in this kind of appreciation and portrayal of the contrasting aspects of life that Spanish Realism has found its strength, its ability to embrace not only joy and sorrow but also the spiritual as well as the material: “¡Realismo indirecto, inconsciente, y por eso mismo acabado y lleno de inspiración; no desdeñoso del idealismo, y gracias a ello, legítima y profundamente humano, ya que, como el hombre, reúne en sí materia y espíritu, tierra y cielo!” (III, 572-73).

Thus subjectivity (idealism) is lauded in an implied rejection of clinical objectivity. The emphasis on the physical-spiritual duality of Spanish Realism also suggests a rejection of Zola's claim that the soul could be examined just like any physical part of the individual (X, 281) or, alternatively, was simply absent and therefore irrelevant to the study of the human being (I, 520). Certainly, in her “Reflexiones científicas contra el darwinismo” (1877), Pardo Bazán had stressed the duality of man: “el hombre es un ser específicamente uno, compuesto de cuerpo organizado y alma racional” (III, 556), and both as a literary theorist and a novelist she was to emphasize repeatedly the importance of what she normally termed “el cuerpo y el alma”, thereby rejecting Zola's concept of “la machine humaine” or “la bête humaine”.

One final aspect of the preface to *Un viaje de novios* remains to be mentioned – the question of didacticism in literature. In the 1850's French proponents of the Realist novel believed that a certain social utility would derive from such works. Indeed, F. W. J. Hemmings points out that during the second half of the nineteenth century the French Realist novel came increasingly to expose social hypocrisy.⁵ In Spain, meanwhile, the *krausistas* were emphasizing the need for seriousness of purpose in art. Yet there remained the problem of how a moral or message might be effectively conveyed without undermining the work of art. Pardo Bazán addresses this issue in the preface to *Un viaje de novios*. Just as she had done in the prologue to *Pascual López*, the author refers to the goal and concept of “beauty” in literature, but now makes a far more precise statement. After rejecting the view that novels must end with vice being punished and virtue rewarded (III, 573) Pardo Bazán dissociates herself from authors who “preach” at the reader and also from those who preserve a cold detachment:

... en arte me enamora la enseñanza indirecta que emana de la hermosura, pero aborrezco las píldoras de moral rebozadas en una capa de oro literario. Entre el impudor frío y afectado de los escritores ultranaturalistas y las homilias sentimentales de los autores que toman un púlpito en cada dedo y se van por esos trigos predicando, no escojo; me quedo sin ninguno. (III, 573)

There is one more source for Pardo Bazán's views on the novel before *La cuestión palpitante* appeared, this is the prologue to *La Tribuna*. While the first (undated) edition of this novel was not published until 1883 the prologue itself is dated October 1882 – the month in which Pardo Bazán began to write the essays of *La cuestión palpitante*. But whereas the preface to *Un viaje de novios* is primarily a discussion of literary trends and ideas, the prologue to *La Tribuna* is almost wholly focused on this particular novel and serves, in a rather defensive manner, to justify the subject-matter chosen and the techniques employed. One of its most striking features is Pardo Bazán's admission of the novel's didactic thrust: "en este libro, casi a pesar mío, entra un propósito que puede llamarse *docente*" (II, 103). This avowal is made without reference to "beauty" and is only (unconvincingly) explained on the grounds that, despite the author, the didactic element emerged from the substance of the narrative material (II, 103). But even if one accepts the sincerity of this disclaimer and recognizes that the admission of didacticism might serve to alert the unwary reader, the author's subsequent disclosure of its specific nature appears to be surprisingly blatant: "es absurdo el que un pueblo cifre sus esperanzas de redención y ventura en formas de gobierno que desconoce" (II, 103).

This issue apart, the prologue to *La Tribuna* also reveals a number of useful indicators of Pardo Bazán's position on other technical matters. Thus, after suggesting that this novel is "en el fondo un estudio de costumbres locales" (II, 103), she emphasizes the importance of both imagination and external reality to the creation of fiction: "Este privilegio concedido al novelista de crearse un mundo suyo propio, permite más libre inventiva y no se opone a que los elementos todos del microcosmos estén tomados, como es debido, de la realidad" (II, 103). Pardo Bazán also mentions "el vigor analítico que infunde vida a una obra" (II, 103) and later acknowledges "El método de análisis implacable que nos impone el arte moderno" (II, 103). The prologue closes with a reference to "la difícil vía de la observación, donde no todo son flores para un alma compasiva" (II, 104). Therefore, apart from the admission of overt didacticism – and the indication of its substance – in *La Tribuna*, the prologue to this novel contains nothing that is not consistent with Pardo Bazán's literary ideas as previously expressed. Yet the author does raise one new technical point. This concerns the use of colloquial language, and here Pardo Bazán acknowledges a debt not to the French Realists or Zola, but to her countrymen Galdós and Pereda: "En abono de *La Tribuna* quiero añadir que los maestros Galdós y Pereda abrieron camino a la licencia que me tomo de hacer hablar a mis personajes como realmente se habla en la región en donde los saqué" (II, 104).

From the above it is clear that the introductory essays to Pardo Bazán's first three novels reveal a number of important indications of her views on fiction. These can be summarized as follows:

- a. The novel no longer serves merely to entertain. It is now a *study*, either social, psychological, or historical. (Purpose is, presumably, implied here.)
- b. Imagination or invention, as well as observation and analysis, play an essential part in the creation of the novel.
- c. However, observation and analysis should not be carried to extremes, and should not dwell only on the unpleasant aspects of life.
- d. In rejecting what she regards as the depressing tone and clinical objectivity of Naturalist writing, Pardo Bazán affirms that the novel must incorporate all aspects of life – the good as well as the bad, and the spiritual as well as the physical.
- e. Pardo Bazán is opposed to overt didacticism or “preaching” in the novel. Instruction or edification should stem from an appreciation of “beauty”.
- f. The author should not intrude in the text of the novel. The novel reflects life, and the novelist is simply the agent or conduit in the creative process.
- g. Colloquial language should be employed in the novel where it is appropriate.

These, then, are the principal literary ideas of Pardo Bazán to emerge before the publication of *La cuestión palpitante*. It now remains to examine how these are developed in *La cuestión palpitante* and in the author's subsequent literary essays to 1891, and also to ascertain what new ideas and concerns surface.

2 *La cuestión palpitante*

The twenty articles which were to constitute the volume entitled *La cuestión palpitante* (1883) first appeared in *La Epoca* between 7 November 1882 and 16 April 1883. And while the central concern of the collection is Pardo Bazán's assessment of Naturalism and Zola, in the third essay she soon indicates her own artistic preference for Realism, seeing it as a broad, almost all-embracing creed:

Si es *real* cuanto tiene existencia verdadera y efectiva, el *realismo* en el arte nos ofrece una teoría más ancha, completa y perfecta que el *naturalismo*. Comprende y abarca lo natural y lo espiritual, el cuerpo y el alma, y concilia y reduce a unidad la oposición del naturalismo y del idealismo racional. En el realismo cabe todo, menos las exageraciones y desvarios de dos escuelas extremas, y por precisa consecuencia, exclusivistas. (III, 582)

This is obviously a fairly general statement, primarily portraying Realism as a middle way between the extremes of Idealism and Naturalism. Yet at the same time it does alight on the crucial subjects of the physical and the spiritual, which were at the heart of Pardo Bazán's response to Zola's Naturalism.

As a Catholic, Pardo Bazán could hardly accept the notion that man's actions were determined by phenomena independent of his own free will, and in *La cuestión palpitante* she soon focuses on this as the principal feature and flaw of Naturalism: “el *naturalismo* riguroso, en literatura y en filosofía, lo refiere todo a la naturaleza; para él no hay más causa de los

actos humanos que la acción de las fuerzas naturales del organismo y el medio ambiente. Su fondo es determinista” (III, 578). Then, after giving a lengthy quotation from *Le Roman expérimental* (1880), in which Zola claims that science demonstrates that the same laws which govern inorganic matter also control the actions and development of living organisms, Pardo Bazán reiterates her view: “Someter el pensamiento y la pasión a las mismas leyes que determinan la caída de la piedra; considerar exclusivamente las influencias físico-químicas, prescindiendo hasta de la espontaneidad individual, es lo que se propone el naturalismo” (III, 580). Thus the Naturalist writer’s characters become, she believes, no more than puppets responding to the conditions imposed by their creator: “van por donde los lleva la fatalidad de su complexión y la tiranía de las circunstancias” (III, 615). And later Pardo Bazán returns to what she regards as this vitiating defect which completely overshadows the relatively minor blemishes in the art of the Naturalists:

Son imputables en particular al naturalismo – no huelga repetirlo – las tendencias deterministas, con defectos de gusto y cierta falta de selección artística; grave delito el primero, leve el segundo, por haber incurrido en él los más ilustres de nuestros dramáticos y novelistas. Lo que importa no son las verrugas de la superficie, sino el fondo. (III, 633)

Yet in the last article of *La cuestión palpitante* Pardo Bazán’s criticism is even more sharply focused, as she suggests that it is solely on the issue of Naturalism’s Deterministic core that it should be condemned: “descartada la perniciosa herejía de negar la libertad humana, no puede imputársele otro género de delito” (III, 645). Thus Pardo Bazán firmly and repeatedly rejects in *La cuestión palpitante* the Deterministic foundations of Naturalism. However, this leaves three important areas of her literary views, as expressed in this collection, to be considered. The first concerns those elements of the Naturalist method which Pardo Bazán finds acceptable; the second relates to the “warts” that she presumably rejects, while the third centres on other principles of literary technique to which she subscribes, or which she may even establish herself.

It has already been pointed out that by 1881 Pardo Bazán had accepted that the novel had become, and should be written as, a “study”. In *La cuestión palpitante* she uses the term “study” in the context of Balzac, Flaubert, and Zola, but never discusses what precisely she means by it. The reader is left to infer that while Pardo Bazán clearly espouses the notion of the novel as a “study” she nevertheless rejects the hypotheses on which Zola’s experiments and “studies” are based. And as for the related techniques of observation and analysis: again, Pardo Bazán mentions these only in passing, and only with reference to Balzac and Flaubert. It is as if observation and analysis are simply taken for granted as an essential part of the modern novelist’s procedure. Although the topic of documentation is mentioned only in connection with Daudet and the Goncourt brothers, Pardo Bazán does at least address herself directly to Zola on the matter of

descriptive technique. One observation applauds his technical skill in this area: “No por eso es lícito decir que las descripciones de Zola se reducen a meros inventarios. Debían los que lo aseguran probar a hacer inventarios así” (III, 629). Another comment, however, is altogether critical of what Pardo Bazán sees as Zola’s propensity to over-indulge himself in the disagreeable facets of reality: “el método de *acumulación* que emplea Zola sirve para hinchar la realidad, es decir, lo negro y triste de la realidad” (III, 630).

This judgement on the subject of descriptive technique leads into the issue of tone, with Pardo Bazán stating: “tengo a Zola por pesimista, y creo que ve la humanidad aún más fea, cínica y vil de lo que es” (III, 630). Here, of course, the author is reiterating a view already expressed in the preface to *Un viaje de novios*, where Zola was condemned for his refusal or inability to reveal the good as well as the bad in society, the joy as well as the sorrow. In this same preface another duality had been touched on by Pardo Bazán when she suggested that “*materia y espíritu*” were fundamental features of the Spanish Realist tradition. However it was not until *La cuestión palpitante* that the author made frequent references to this particular topic and stressed its importance to the modern novel. In asserting the existence of the spirit, and the symbiotic nature of the spiritual and the physical, Pardo Bazán is clearly rejecting Zola’s proposition that the soul does not exist as some intangible moral adjudicator, or that if it does exist, then it is part of the physiological mechanism of the body and thereby subject to the laws of physiology and chemistry. And while as a devout Catholic Pardo Bazán was obliged to uphold the doctrine of free will, as a writer and critic she saw the study of the soul – the organ of will, reason, and thought – as an integral part of the novelist’s area of study and creativity.

In *La cuestión palpitante* the subject of the physical and the spiritual is first raised in the context of free will and Catholic doctrine, with Pardo Bazán referring to “la mutua influencia del cuerpo y del alma” (III, 579). However she soon suggests the literary implications of the topic. Thus Realism, as was noted earlier, is viewed as encompassing “lo natural y lo espiritual, el cuerpo y el alma” (III, 582). And much later in the work, during her observations on Stendhal, Pardo Bazán proclaims: “*Stendhal* analiza y disecciona el alma humana, y aunque a Zola no le cuadre, el que acierta en ese género de estudio se coloca muy alto” (III, 604). Indeed, she sees Stendhal’s achievement in this sphere, now broadened to psychological examination, as his main claim to fame. Once more Pardo Bazán makes the point tell against Zola when she comments on Stendhal’s “lucidez de psicólogo realista que nos presenta un alma desnuda, cautivándonos con el espectáculo de la rica y variada vida espiritual, espectáculo tanto o más interesante, diga Zola lo que quiera, que el de los mercados en *El vientre de París*” (III, 605). Similarly, Galdós is praised for the psychological penetration of his recent novels: “en sus últimas obras ha adoptado

el método de la novela moderna y ahondado más y más en el corazón humano” (III, 642), while in the final article of the series Pardo Bazán reiterates her view on the importance and rewards of the psychological exploration of character: “de todos los territorios que puede explorar el novelista realista y reflexivo, el más rico, el más variado e interesante es sin duda el psicológico, y la influencia innegable del cuerpo en el alma, y viceversa, le brinda magnífico tesoro de observaciones y experimentos” (III, 645). Worth noting here is the fact that, despite the anti-Zola thrust of some of these views on the topic of the spiritual-psychological plumbing of character, Pardo Bazán can still employ terminology – “observaciones y experimentos” – which is clearly reminiscent of Zola’s theoretical jargon.

It has already been noted that while, from the very beginning, Pardo Bazán espoused the principle of seriousness of purpose in art, she also rejected the practice of “preaching” or, indeed, the inclusion in literature of any kind of overt didacticism. Even the idea that there should be a just settling of accounts by the end of a work (already pronounced unacceptable in the preface to *Un viaje de novios*) is firmly rejected in *La cuestión palpitante* on both artistic (realistic) and religious grounds: “Es opinión general que la moralidad de una obra consiste en presentar la virtud premiada y castigado el vicio: doctrina insostenible ante la realidad y ante la fe” (III, 631). Pardo Bazán also reaffirms her views on moralizing in the novel, stating that “la enseñanza moral de los realistas no se formula en sermones ni en axiomas: hay que leerla en los hechos” (III, 633). Indeed, she later criticizes novelists of the English school for their apparent missionary zeal, their “afán de salvar al lector” (III, 636). The early novels of Galdós are also criticized on this score, although Pardo Bazán’s assessment of his development as a novelist in fact ends by focusing on the quest for beauty in art: “en *El amigo Manso* y en *La desheredada* comprendió que la novela hoy, más que enseñar o condenar estos o aquellos ideales políticos, ha de tomar nota de la verdad ambiente y realizar con libertad y desembarazo la hermosura” (III, 643).

While this goal of “beauty” is mentioned a number of times in *La cuestión palpitante* Pardo Bazán is no more precise on what she means by it than she had been in her previous references to the topic. At one point she states: “el artista que se proponga fines distintos de la realización de la belleza, tarde o temprano, con seguridad infalible, verá desmoronarse el edificio que erija” (III, 624). And later, referring to the large number of female English novelists, the author observes: “A consecuencia de este predominio de la mujer, la novela inglesa propende a enseñar y predicar, más bien que a realizar la belleza” (III, 635). But what exactly Pardo Bazán means by “la hermosura” or “la belleza” is difficult to ascertain. Robert Osborne believes that this key concern reflects the influence of Feijóo on Pardo Bazán’s ideas.⁶ Maurice Hemingway, on the other hand, sees her preoccupation with “beauty” as stemming from the French “art

for art's sake" school, and in particular Théophile Gautier, the Goncourt brothers, and Flaubert.⁷ Yet the Goncourt brothers' concern with colour and pictorial effect, Flaubert's obsession with style and his celebrated "Viser au beau est le principal", do not correspond neatly to Pardo Bazán's apparent notion of "la belleza". Her suggestions in the prefatory remarks to her first two novels that "beauty" is the source of "enseñanza" or "enseñanza indirecta", coupled with later references to the concept, seem to imply that the reader will gain some kind of truth or insight from the writer's achievement of "beauty" without the writer having to bludgeon home the message through the use of crude didacticism.

Consonant with such an interpretation is the fact that while Pardo Bazán accepts in *La cuestión palpitante* (III, 581), just as she had done in the preface to *Un viaje de novios*, Zola's notion of the writer's "tempérament" as being the sole indication of his stamp on the narrative, she also appears to acknowledge the need for Flaubert's "impassibilité": "Si exceptuamos a Daudet, todos los naturalistas y realistas modernos imitan a Flaubert en la *impersonalidad*, reprimiéndose en manifestar sus sentimientos, no interviniendo en la narración y evitando interrumpirla con digresiones o raciocinios" (III, 627). Nevertheless, Pardo Bazán does not always give the impression in *La cuestión palpitante* of being unreservedly enthusiastic about what she terms on one occasion "la severa impersonalidad de un Flaubert" (III, 616). Indeed, she complements Alphonse Daudet for being "el narrador apasionado, que simpatiza con unos héroes y se indigna contra otros" (III, 617). Thus while Pardo Bazán can acknowledge the importance of "observación impersonal" for objectivity and the gaining of psychological insight (III, 636), she sometimes seems reluctant to accept that the novelist should be quite as "impersonal" as Flaubert or as coldly detached and clinical as Zola.

It remains to comment briefly on a number of observations made in *La cuestión palpitante* which, although not of major importance within the work, none the less shed light on other aspects of Pardo Bazán's literary theory. On the question of style, for example, she is most uncomplimentary to Stendhal, referring to his style as "no sólo descarnado, sino escabroso" (III, 604). And while Pardo Bazán proclaims her admiration for the Goncourt brothers' ability to skilfully convey colours, sensations, and impressions (III, 613-14), she reserves her accolade for Flaubert: "Es un estilo cabal, conciso sin pobreza, correcto sin frialdad, intachable sin purismo, irónico y natural a un tiempo" (III, 609). Then, immediately after this glowing assessment, Pardo Bazán praises Flaubert's adroitness in the narrative use of descriptive material:

Las descripciones en *Madame Bovary* realizan el ideal del género. No comete Flaubert, aunque describe mucho, el pecado de pintar por pintar; si estudia lo que hoy se llama el *medio ambiente*, no lo hace por satisfacer un capricho de artista, o por lucirse hablando de cosas que conoce bien, sino que importa al asunto o a los caracteres. (III, 609)

Finally, mention should be made of Pardo Bazán's observations on Zola's technique of revealing his characters' thoughts, which, with its attempted psychological and linguistic fidelity, seems to be a harbinger of the "stream of consciousness" method: "presenta las ideas en la misma forma irregular y sucesión desordenada, pero lógica, en que afluyen al cerebro, sin arreglarlas en períodos oratorios ni encadenarlas en discretos razonamientos" (III, 627). Here, and by no means for the first time in *La cuestión palpitante*, Pardo Bazán is acknowledging Zola's contribution to the development of the modern novel. Yet, as has been frequently noted, she was certainly not an unquestioning admirer of all that Zola practised in his novels or proposed in his literary treatises. And while Pardo Bazán's assessment of Zola's fiction and theories is undoubtedly the centre-piece of *La cuestión palpitante*, the principal importance of the work as a whole resides in the revelations of what its author thought the novel should or should not be. Hence, it becomes the key document when considering Pardo Bazán's views on the novel and, indeed, when assessing the extent to which she put theory into practice in her own fiction.

3 *Pardo Bazán's Views on the Novel, 1884-91*

Instead of attempting at this stage to collate what, by the time of the appearance of the final essay of *La cuestión palpitante*, Pardo Bazán accepted, rejected, modified, or generally proposed with regard to the content of contemporary fiction, I now intend to consider relevant statements made by her between 1884 and 1891. I will then itemize her principal observations on the novel as expressed during the whole of the period 1879-91.

In the years 1884-91 Pardo Bazán continues to reject Determinism, but at the same time acknowledges that aspects of Zola's theories and practices can be adopted. Thus, in the so-called "Carta magna", published in *La Epoca* on 5 May 1884, she comments: "insisto en que aceptemos del naturalismo de Zola lo bueno, lo serio, el método, y desechemos lo erróneo, la arbitraria conclusión especulativa, *antimetafísica* que encierra" (III, 658). Three years later, in *La revolución y la novela en Rusia*, Pardo Bazán reaffirms her belief in the techniques of observation and analysis: "que, universalmente, la novela se ha convertido en obra de observación, en estudio analítico, es cosa que no puede dudarse" (III, 878). Then, in *El P. Luis Coloma* (1891), the author alights once more on the issue of Determinism, remarking of French Naturalism: "se diferencia del realismo tradicional en nuestras letras, no tanto por los procedimientos cuanto por el fondo filosófico de sus doctrinas. El que no sea determinista, fatalista y materialista no puede aceptar el fondo de Zola" (III, 1459). Yet she immediately proceeds to play down the Deterministic basis of Zola's work, praising instead its artistic qualities and the experimental method: "pero

este fondo es lo que menos vale y significa en el gran poeta épico, y hasta es independiente del método analítico y experimental a que debe su importancia y su espléndido desarrollo la novela en nuestros días” (III, 1459). So, by 1891, Pardo Bazán's less severe attitude to the importance of Determinism in Zola's fiction, and her unqualified acknowledgement of the significance for the modern novel of his literary method, represent a considerable modification to her stance of a few years before.

Other comments made by Pardo Bazán between 1884 and 1891 on the purpose and content of the novel tend to be much more consistent with her earlier views. Thus, in the “Carta magna”, she restates her position that “el objeto del arte no es defender ni ofender la moral, es realizar la belleza” (III, 658), while in *La revolución y la novela en Rusia* the contrast is made between “la balanza de oro de la belleza” and “la de plomo de la utilidad” (III, 873). The issue of balanced content is addressed in the prologue (dated September 1884) to *El Cisne de Vilamorta*, where Pardo Bazán reminds the reader of her conviction that art should reflect both the good and the bad in life (III, 670). In the same month, in the prologue to the collection of stories, *La dama joven*, she reaffirms her view that the artist must portray both body and mind: “Vida es la vida orgánica, y vida también la psíquica” (III, 669), and goes on to plead that “sea lícito pintar la materia, el espíritu, la tierra y el cielo” (III, 669). Such sentiments are echoed several years later in *La revolución y la novela en Rusia*: “hace tiempo que pienso y escribo que el realismo, para realizar cumplidamente su programa, ha de abarcar materia y espíritu, tierra y cielo, admitiendo lo humano y lo sobrenatural” (III, 875).

A crucial aspect of the novelist's art, first mentioned in the prologue to *La Tribuna* but not, somewhat surprisingly, accorded any treatment in *La cuestión palpitante*, is the issue of the use of realistic language. Certainly Pardo Bazán had come close to this topic in *La cuestión palpitante* when she commented on the way in which Zola presented his characters' thoughts. However, it was not until the prologue to *La dama joven* that Pardo Bazán addressed the subject at any length. Here, and briefly touching on the thought-word process, she states:

Juzgo imperdonable artificio en los escritores alterar o corregir las formas de la oración popular, entre las cuales y la idea que las dicta ha de existir sin remedio el nexo o vínculo misterioso que enlaza a todo pensamiento con su expresión hablada. Aun a costa de exponerme a que censores muy formales me imputen el estilo de mis héroes, insisto en no pulirlo ni arreglarlo, y en dejar a señoritos y curas de aldea, a mujeres del pueblo y amas de cría, que se produzcan como saben y pueden, cometiendo las faltas de lenguaje, barbarismos y provincialismos que gusten. (III, 666)

Yet while the extensive use of colloquial language might be possible, to what extent could dialect be successfully conveyed by the novelist or even be easily understood by the reader? Two years after these observations Pardo Bazán acknowledges the difficulties inherent here when she writes in the “Apuntes autobiográficos” (1886): “El campo me gusta tanto, que

mi aspiración sería escribir una novela donde sólo figurasen labriegos; pero tropiezo con la dificultad del diálogo, tan inmensa, que Zola, el novelista de los atrevimientos, no osa arrostrarla” (III, 728). She goes on to reject any kind of linguistic mongrel as a possible compromise solution to the problem: “un libro arlequín, mitad gallego y mitad castellano, sería feísimo engendro” (III, 728).

But while, on this particular issue, Pardo Bazán was opposed to the notion of hybridity she was, in broader artistic terms, anxious to avoid an approach to fiction which adhered exclusively to the precepts of any one school or method. In *La cuestión palpitante* Pardo Bazán had stated: “al llamar a la vida artística lo feo y lo bello indistintamente, al otorgar carta de naturaleza en los dominios de la poesía a todas las palabras, el romanticismo sirvió la causa de la realidad” (III, 588). Here she also claimed that contemporary Realism, and even Naturalism, derived from “principios proclamados por la escuela romántica” (III, 588). Subsequently, in the prologue to *El Cisne de Vilamorta*, Pardo Bazán acknowledges that, while the Romantic period has obviously passed, the legacy of Romanticism remains:

... como fenómeno aislado, como enfermedad, pasión o anhelo del espíritu, no pasará tal vez nunca. En una o en otra forma, habrá de presentarse cuando las circunstancias y lo que se conoce por *medio ambiente* faciliten su desarrollo, ayudando a desenvolver facultades ya existentes en el individuo. (III, 671)

Indeed, bearing in mind these and some earlier comments it is not surprising to find that at precisely the same time she was making these last observations Pardo Bazán was also defending, in the prologue to *La dama joven*, the concept of artistic variety:

Presiento y adivino lo que de este libro dirán los críticos y lectores: que hay en él páginas acentuadamente naturalistas, al lado de otras saturadas de idealismo romántico. Yo sé que todas son *verdad*, con la diferencia de darse en la esfera práctica, que llamamos de los hechos, o en otra no menos real, la del alma. (III, 669)

The author then pleads for eclecticism, unity, and harmony in art: “Reclamo todo para el arte, pido que no se desmiembre su vasto reino, que no se mutile su cuerpo sagrado, que sea lícito pintar la materia, el espíritu, la tierra y el cielo” (III, 669). However, Pardo Bazán does hasten to add that this is not a proposal for an artistic unity in which anything is permissible: “esta teoría no es un eclecticismo de ancha manga, que admita y sancione y dé por buena toda cuanta literatura existe en el orbe” (III, 669).

Throughout the 1880's Pardo Bazán consistently avoided propounding any view on literature which could be described as restrictive, or which espoused the tenets of any one school or method. She was often unfairly accused of being a champion of Zola's Naturalism, and did occasionally refer to herself as a Naturalist.⁸ Yet the views that Pardo Bazán expresses provide ample evidence that she subscribed to a broad interpretation of

Realism which was, as far as she was concerned, much more inclusive and artistically valid than Zola's Naturalism. In 1891, in her study of the life and works of Alarcón, she made the celebrated statement: "Todo el que lea mis ensayos críticos comprenderá que ni soy idealista, ni realista, ni naturalista, sino ecléctica. Mi cerebro es *redondo*, y debo a Dios la suerte de poder recrearme con todo lo bueno y bello de todas épocas y estilos" (III, 1389). And while this pronouncement understates the author's affinity for a broad-based Realism as a literary creed it is still, nevertheless, a fair résumé of Pardo Bazán's stance of the previous dozen years. The details of this stance can be itemized as follows, beginning with what the author rejected:

- a. Pardo Bazán rejects the notion that the novel serves only to entertain.
- b. She rejects the Deterministic basis of Zola's Naturalism and also, for a long period, rejects his "experimental" method because of its Deterministic foundations. However, by 1891 Pardo Bazán no longer appears to oppose the method itself.
- c. She rejects what she sees as the emphasis in the Naturalist novel on the unpleasant aspects of life, and what she regards as Zola's excessively pessimistic portrayal of humanity.
- d. She rejects the descriptive prolixity and the description for description's sake which she believes to be a feature of the Naturalist novel. Yet Pardo Bazán does allow that Zola's descriptions are often much more than mere "inventory".
- e. She is opposed to the narrator indulging in "preaching", and rejects any other form of overt didacticism in the novel. Pardo Bazán also rejects the notion that a moral lesson may be implied by means of a just settling of accounts at the end of the narrative.

So what does Pardo Bazán propose that the novel should contain and be?

- a. The novel should be a social, psychological, or historical study.
- b. The novel should combine imagination, or invention, with observation and analysis.
- c. The author's imprint on the novel should only be suggested by his selection and presentation of the narrative material. Although Pardo Bazán endorses the technique of "impersonalidad" she suggests that it should not be carried to extremes.
- d. Any didacticism should be implicit, and is successfully achieved through the realization of "beauty".
- e. The novel should give a balanced view of life, showing the good as well as the bad.
- f. The novel should deal with both the "physical" and "spiritual". Stemming from the latter, Pardo Bazán stresses the importance of the psychological exploration of character.
- g. Descriptive material should be relevant to the plot and characters.
- h. Colloquial language should be used where appropriate. Pardo Bazán acknowledges, however, the impossibility of successfully capturing and conveying dialect, and rejects a coalition of dialect and standard speech as a possible compromise solution.
- i. Although Pardo Bazán made relatively few specific comments on style, she nevertheless praises the Goncourt brothers for their skill in conveying colours, sensations, and impressions, and extols what she sees as Flaubert's precise, clear, and correct style.
- j. Pardo Bazán believes that the concept of Realism is broad enough to include all but the excesses of Romanticism and Naturalism. Indeed, she spurns artistic sectarianism and pleads both for artistic variety and unity within the bounds of the Realist novel.

The foregoing survey and summary of the more pertinent statements made by Pardo Bazán on fiction during the period when she established herself both as a critic and novelist indicate that while she was never reluctant to denounce what she disagreed with in contemporary literary theory and practice she was also anxious to propose how the novel should be written and what it should aspire to. Nelly Clémessy asserts that "Es ... excesivo el hablar de teorías, pues doña Emilia nunca desarrolló un siste-

ma”.⁹ Yet this judgement is altogether harsh. For while it might be conceded that “system” is perhaps too grand a term, the fact remains that between 1879 and 1891 Pardo Bazán gave frequent, and largely consistent, indications of her position on a variety of matters relating to the substance and purpose of the contemporary novel.

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Notes

1. See, for example, Donald Fowler Brown, *The Catholic Naturalism of Pardo Bazán*, Univ. of North Carolina Studies in the Romance Langs. and Lits., No. 28 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1957), pp. 42-72; Robert E. Osborne, *Emilia Pardo Bazán: Su vida y sus obras* (México, D.F.: Andrea, 1964), pp. 31-44; Walter T. Pattison, *Emilia Pardo Bazán*, Twayne's World Authors Series, No. 134 (New York: Twayne, 1971), pp. 42-43, and Fernando J. Barroso, *El naturalismo en la Pardo Bazán* (Madrid: Playor, 1973), pp. 22-28 and pp. 35-36. In his important reassessment of Pardo Bazán's development as a novelist, *Emilia Pardo Bazán: The Making of a Novelist* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), Maurice Hemingway makes occasional reference to *La cuestión palpitante*, but believes that the influence of Zola on Pardo Bazán has been “overestimated” (p.15).

2. *Emilia Pardo Bazán como novelista: (De la teoría a la práctica)*, trans. Irene Gamba, 2 vols. (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1982), I, 73-95 and II, 729-826.

3. Emilia Pardo Bazán, *Obras completas*, Tomo III, *Cuentos/Crítica literaria*, ed. Harry L. Kirby, Jr. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1973), p. 1027. All further references to Pardo Bazán's work will be to this edition and to *Obras completas*, Tomo II, *Novelas/Cuentos/Teatro*, ed. Federico Carlos Sainz de Robles, 3rd ed. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1973). In each case the volume number will precede the page reference.

4. Emile Zola, *Oeuvres complètes*, Tome X, *Oeuvres critiques*, 1. ed. Henri Mitterand (Paris: Cercle du Livre Précieux, 1968), p. 154. All further references to Zola's work will be to this edition and to *Oeuvres complètes*, Tome I, *Premiers romans*, ed. Henri Mitterand (Paris: Cercle du Livre Précieux, 1962). In each case the volume number will precede the page reference.

5. F. W. J. Hemmings, “The Realist and Naturalist Movements in France,” in *The Age of Realism*, ed. F. W. J. Hemmings (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 160-61.

6. Robert E. Osborne, “The Aesthetic Ideas of Emilia Pardo Bazán,” *MLQ*, 11 (1950), p. 98.

7. Hemingway, p. 5 and p. 8.

8. See, for example, David Torres, “Veinte cartas inéditas de Emilia Pardo Bazán a José Yxart.” *BBMP*, 53 (1977), p. 393.

9. Clémessy, I, 211.