ESTUDIOS SOBRE *LA MADRE NATURALEZA* DE EMILIA PARDO BAZÁN

MOTHER NATURE'S NATURE

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The novel as a genre coincides with that period in western history when the notion of the individual, as a consciousness unique and separate from the group, was also born. [1] From the very first, the novelistic hero has tended to conform to the role of the isolated, celibate male figure. Such a figure, as Edward Said so well describes him, seeks to forge, through adventures either external or internal, a reality distinct from that prescribed by the reigning cultural norms. [2]

The iconoclastic impulse of the novelistic hero—his effort to escape the patterns convention and tradition have imposed on him—is one with the novelist's rejection of previous literary forms. The thrust toward originality that reveals in the character his author's likeness is energized by an implied hostility toward established versions of text, culture, and identity. That hostility is recorded in the text in the hero's unhappy relation with the incarnation of authority who, if no longer represented in the father, surfaces in the guise of priest, government official, policeman, or any other representation of power and influence. Against such figures the hero has usually to resort to deceit and trickery to gain some semblance of autonomy, since his power is viewed as unequal to the task of taking on directly the forces he perceives as arrayed against him. [3]

The sense of estrangement between self and community is often imaged in the novel as the hero's orphanhood, which is why so many characters crucial to the formation of the genre, characters such as Calisto and Sempronio in *La Celestina,* Lázaro in *Lazarillo de Tormes,* Tomás in *El licenciado Vidriera,* and Don Quixote, to name only the most obvious, step into the work as if born directly out of the imagination of their creators, without carnal ties to a previous generation.

Walter Ong's description of male sexuality, like René Girard's numerous discussions of the amorous triangle, highlights the ritual of male rivalry, a ritual that both stimulates desire and delays its gratification. [4] Like the Oedipal situation Freud brought so forcefully to collective attention, the theater of desire in which our tragedies are often enacted is one in which power, far more than love, comes center stage. In that theater the demand for possession brings with it either unending conflict or a rigid structuring of relationships that parcels out privileges on the basis of hierarchies designed to impose order not only on Chaos but on her first-born son, Eros. [5] For Ong as well as for Girard and Freud, culture is the outcome of such struggles, an organized set of rules allowing community to exist. Culture, as Freud made clear, is the end product of desire suppressed.

Feminist critiques of Freud as well as of Girard have stressed each thinker's avoidance of the place and role of the feminine in their respective visions of culture. [6] Is the woman only desirable, as Girard would have it, because another male also desires her? Are both rivals actually enacting a hoax in which each is, unknowingly, imitating the other, the true object of desire being not the woman, but the spectral image of fulfillment and stability the lover projects on his rival? The ideal of homosexual love of which Plato writes is not far beneath the surface of the Girardian analysis of culture, for the ideal of a spiritualized eros is premised on a privileging of activity over passivity, a glorification of culture that seeks to rise above the body with all that the body is associated with: birth, death, demand, and animality. [7] Evelyn Fox Keller, who has analyzed ably the cost to nature, the body, and the feminine of the western apotheosis of reason, objectivity, and the scientific method, traces the origins of that rational bias back to Plato, whose erotic images emphasized the subordinate quality of feminine sexuality. Keller says: «In the vase paintings of classical Greece, only women and degraded men are depicted as experiencing positive sexual enjoyment in a passive role... Men may feel desire without compromising their masculinity, but only by assuming the active role. It is thus not desire as such that assimilates men to women, but the conjunction of desire with passivity—a conjunction seen not only permitting but inviting aggressive domination» (26).

In Plato, as in Girard and Freud, culture, based on hierarchy and authority, located in the city and crowned with spiritual ideals, is necessarily superior to nature, which is imaged, often in the form of the woman—whether as mother or as wife—as regressive, binding, suffocating, dangerous. Ong, on the other hand, has sought in his writings a reevaluation of the place of nature and the feminine in language learning and in culture. Through his studies of orality and oral cultures, he has offered a view of non-literate cultures and patterns of expression that dignifies them, even as it relates them to the crucial and earliest experiences of infancy, to the nurture and symbiosis, so essential to language as well as culture, that is the child's first experience with the mother. [8]

Perhaps even more important for establishing the lines of this essay than Ong's rehabilitation of a place of importance for the mother and body in the human psyche is Carl Jung, whose break with Freud in 1912 threw him into a four-year period of encounter with the figures of the unconscious, as a result of which his writings began to engage seriously the issue of the feminine and of that dimension of psyche in which non-linear, non-rational realities have place. [9] Among the outcomes of Jung's efforts to envision psyche as the balance of opposing forces, the union of opposites, was his long engagement in alchemy, that effort to bring spirit into harmony with matter that last engaged fine intellects in the west in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. [10]

For Jung alchemy was important because it offset the imbalance of the orthodox masculine trinity with a quadrilinear system that included the female earth spirit. The ultimate expression of wholeness in alchemical symbolism was the androgyne, or the figure of the brother-sister pair. This emphasis on the heterosexual pair has found its way into literary and philo-

sophical expression again and again across the centuries but always as compensatory to the dominant post-Edenic theme of feminine subordination. The couple appears in literature most often through the pastoral. In theology it appears in agricultural, as opposed to nomadic or urban, settings. In the thirteenth century its apotheosis emerges in Gottfried's version of the Tristan story.[11] It resurfaces in the Renaissance in the writings of the alchemists, Paracelsus, the hermeticists, mystics, alumbrists, and in the cult of the pastoral. With a resurgence of the voice of the feminine in the twentieth century, there are echoes once again of that nostalgia for the couple as a symbol for the conjunction of opposites. Hélène Cixous, for example, writes: «To be aware of the couple, that it's the couple that makes it all work, is also to point to the fact that it's on the couple that we have to work if we are to deconstruct and transform culture. The couple as terrain, as space of cultural struggle, but also as terrain, as space demanding, insisting on, a complete transformation in the relation of the one to the other» (44). Suzanne Lilar also turns her attention to that neglected field of eros, a field apparently lost at the beginning of time: «In this ancestral patrimony common to humanity, there is an erotic sacred fable of origins, which radiates about the theme of the Androgyne... In all versions, the Androgyne belongs to the primordial, non-historical time. In all of them the history of humanity begins at the moment when the unity, represented by the Androgyne, gives place to duality, in the form of sexuality» (121-22).

By now it should be obvious to anyone who has read *La madre naturaleza* why I have gone into such a long excursus in prelude to coming to grips with the Pardo Bazán novel whose one hundredth birthday is upon us. For in that 1887 sequel to *Los pazos de Ulloa* we find ourselves face to face with orphans, cultural rejects, who, unlike their picaresque ancestors, are not concerned with struggling against abusive figures of authority for a place in a structure that has proved corrupt. They are content, instead, to turn from the dominant structure to another altogether, one in which they find the love, health, nurture, and protection the culture has denied them.

In Perucho and Manolita the figure of the androgyne—the male-female pair about which the alchemists, Paracelsians, hermeticists, and cabbalists of the sixteenth century so often wrote—has once more found its way into the realm of consciousness. Children not of culture but nature, the pair erupts as if by magic out of the ruins of a failed patriarchy, literally out of the graveyard that marks its ruin. Like the nature that is their mother, they image the space beyond culture where the opposites unite, where grief turns to laughter and death gives way to rebirth. At the end of *Los pazos de Ulloa,* Julián is sobbing at the tomb of his beloved Nucha when the pair makes its presence felt: «Oyó [Julián] risas, cuchicheos, jarana alegre... Se volvió y se incorporó, confuso. Tenía delante una pareja hechicera, iluminada por el sol ...» (291).

It is this couple who will reappear, a few years older, in the first chapter of *La madre naturaleza.* Pardo Bazán takes care to introduce them not as two individuals but as the single being evoked by the singular noun «pareja.» In

an effort to escape the rain, they are shown repairing to a cave whose description carries multiple signifiers of rebirth: «Siendo muy bajo el sitio, e impregnado del agua que recogía como una urna y del calor del sol que almacenaba en su recinto orientado al Mediodía, encerraba una vegetación de invernáculo, o más bien de época antidiluviana ...» (9).

So close is the pair that they are described as if inextricable: «Aun cuando el escondrijo daba espacio bastante, la pareja no se desunió al acogerse allí, sino que, enlazada, se dirigió a lo más oscuro... Ni menos se desviaron sus rostros, tan cercanos, que él sentía el aletear de mariposa de los párpados de ella ...» (9). The harmony and beauty of the pair stand in marked contrast with the brutal and conflictive sexual relations of the society into which they were born. Their story suggests that Pardo Bazán, closely identified with the French naturalists, needs to be reevaluated both in the light of the sixteenth-century mystic and alumbrist traditions in Spain, to which her text, through Luis de León, explicitly refers, and in that of a specifically feminine novelistic vision.

Annis Pratt, who has done much to uncover the archetypal patterns of women writers, comments regarding love fiction:

> [Northrop] Frye has characterized romance as a genre in which ideal worlds are polarized against abhorrent ones and in which the hero battles for a vision of good against a countervision or antithetical world of evil. In women's love fiction, remarkably, the world of abhorrence is not so much the world of the seducer as society itself. Visions of hell are not needed here, nor even is very much of the gothic: the iron hand of patriarchy constitutes the evil force against which the heroes struggle in vain. (76-77)

In *La madre naturaleza* Pardo Bazán counterposes against the failed, explicitly post-Edenic world of *Los pazos* [12] a pastoral vision of utopia, one in which love is the reigning power and in which the couple, not the isolated male figure, takes the role of hero. If nature itself is the mother of that vision, its father is the Fray Luis of the *Cantar de los cantares.* And though that sixteenth-century Augustinian friar paid with nearly five years in jail for his translation of the *Cantar* and the nineteenth-century counterparts of the Esposo and Esposa fail to bring paradise down with them from the mountain, the vision remains unscathed as a memory, as a promise.

La madre naturaleza is one of the last in the series of six «naturalist» novels written by Pardo Bazán in the decade of the 1880s. By 1890 she seems past that phase of her work, her subsequent novels carrying mystical overtones that most critics have disparaged. Those overtones, however, are clearly present also in *La madre naturaleza* and may well signal the moment in Pardo Bazán's writing when her consciousness of the failures of culture and patriarchy has brought to her naturalism not a heightened state of depression and alienation but, as if spontaneously, a vision of transformation through association with the archetype of the Great Mother, whose primary symbol, so clearly elaborated in chapter 1 of *La madre naturaleza*, is the vessel. [13]

Before we engage in a close examination of the role and presence of such figures as the Great Mother and the Androgyne in Pardo Bazán's work, a further note must be added to the question of the author's relationship to

the naturalism with which she is generally associated. It appears that her effort to reconcile the opposites antedates by some years its imaginal representation in the pages of *La madre naturaleza.* As early as in *La cuestión palpitante* (1884) she can be heard to say: «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» (67-68; emphasis Pardo Bazán's). In a letter to Menéndez Pelayo her search for a unitary vision is also betrayed: «Lo que hay en el fondo de la cuestión es una idea admirable, con la cual soñé siempre: la unidad de método en la ciencia y el arte. ¡Ahí es nada! La división arbitraria ha desaparecido» (Bravo Villasante 91; both passages are cited in Pattison 6). Such biographical matters as her husband's rejection of her after the publication of *La cuestión palpitante* and her «pilgrimage» to Rome after the release of *La madre naturaleza* suggest that Pardo's search for a resolution to the conflict between inner and outer realities may have a personal as well as a professional source.

The transformative process in Pardo Bazán's novel is one which, however pure, does not go unchallenged. The mediating figure between the world of idyllic nature and the cultural decay that is its obverse is the intellectual Gabriel, a character who, himself in search of unity, nonetheless carries the function of awakening the primordial pair, Perucho and Manolita, to the knowledge of good and evil, thus causing them, like Adam and Eve before them, to suffer expulsion from paradise.

For most of the novel the two contrasting visions, the pastoral-unitary one of Perucho and Manolita and the urban-dual one of Gabriel, do not intersect. Seven chapters (1-4 and 19-22) are devoted exclusively to the couple's symbolic watery birth from the womb of Mother Nature, their growing awareness of their potential separation, and the process by which their souls reunite as their fraternal love takes on erotic overtones. The intermediary chapters deal with Gabriel's thoughts and desires—his history, his hopes. Only after Gabriel has had a symbolic experience of the spiritual eroticism of Fray Luis's work and Perucho and Manolita have expressed that union of opposites in the flesh do Gabriel and Perucho directly confront each other. In that confrontation, each unravels the other's dream of life in paradise.

Although Gabriel's own desire for his niece Manolita creates a rivalry between him and Perucho, the true struggle the work records is that between the isolated male character, the figure of the novel, and the androgynous pair, the figures of the mythic imagination. If Gabriel, because of his fantasized and intellectual love for his niece, represents a foil to Manolita's lifetime companion and soul mate Perucho, the middle-aged bachelor who impulsively appears in *La madre naturaleza* to claim his niece in marriage is also a creature of great complexity. Often referred to by the narrator as «the artilleryman,» Gabriel is as much culture's child as Perucho and Manolita are nature's. Appropriately solitary, male, and fancy-driven, Gabriel, like all his novelistic brothers, most especially like Don Quixote, is a lover of literature, philosophy, discussion, and arms. The lady of whom he dreams, as a long passage near the beginning of *La madre naturaleza* makes clear,

always eludes his grasp. His love for Manolita, like Don Quixote's for Dulcinea, emerges not from direct experience of her but out of the depths of his overheated imagination.

In a meditation not unlike the one in which Cervantes's jealous Extremaduran engaged upon considering marriage with a woman many years his junior, Gabriel confides in the doctor of the village near Los Pazos at whose house Gabriel is staying: «Yo me encuentro hoy libre, no muy viejo aún, sin compromisos ni lazos que me aten, con regular hacienda y deseoso del calor de una familia... Si no le repugno a mi sobrina y quiere ser mi mujer..., estoy determinado de casarme cuanto antes» (97). The evocation of Cervantes's several mad gentlemen becomes explicit a few pages later when Gabriel, eager for any information about the Manolita of his dreams, learns from the doctor that Perucho is the better looking of the pair: «¿Más lindo que mi sobrina? Mire usted que voy a defender, como el ingenioso hidalgo, sin haberla visto, que es la más hermosa mujer de la tierra» (103).

Over the course of the two novels that form the sequence *Los pazos / La madre,* a fairly complete picture of Gabriel's character emerges. What readers learn, as they dig out his portrait, is that the «artilleryman,» like his niece Manolita, was a motherless child. Both, having lost their mothers in infancy, were raised by siblings. A further link between uncle and niece is that the sibling who cared for Gabriel and whom Gabriel called «Mamita» was none other than Manolita's own mother Nucha. If, as we shall see, Perucho and Manolita are symbolically born of the same Mother Nature, Gabriel claims *his* bonding to his niece on the basis of having shared with her a mother in the figure of the frail yet loving Nucha. Gabriel's love for Manolita is in fact mediated by Nucha, just as Mother Nature will mediate the love between Perucho and Manolita.

When Gabriel, an adolescent away at military school, is sent word that his mother/sister is being married, he sends her a gold ring with a note saying, «A mi inolvidable hermana Marcelina [Nucha], su más amante hermano, Gabriel» (*Los pazos* 111).[14] As with Manolita and Perucho a generation later, Gabriel and Nucha suffered the separation the young man's schooling interposed between them.

Gabriel's subsequent life story is that of every novelistic hero: it is the story of deep desire for the sister/mother/spouse repressed, transformed into a grab bag of intellectual confusion, fantasy, military activity, solitude, and derailed erotic ambitions. The pieces of Gabriel's psychic history that Pardo Bazán scatters through the two novels, however, allow us a glimpse, under the surface of that unsettled gentleman, of the son whom culture, not nature, has raised.

Gabriel's repressed desire for Nucha, «civilized» in his apparently noble impulse to rescue, through marriage, his sister's orphaned daughter, also makes him emotionally accessible to the work of Luis de León, that sixteenth-century Spanish Augustinian whose own yearnings for a unity recoverable in a spiritualized eros were channeled through an intellect saturated, like Gabriel's, with the classics.[15] It is to *Los nombres de Cristo* and the *Cantar de los cantares* that Gabriel is drawn the night after his day of excursions into nature with Manolita. Tormented by insomnia and a thirst for which

there seems no relief, he is calmed and deeply moved by Fray Luis's translation and Commentary on the *Cantar*. He reads through the entire volume before falling into a deep sleep. In his dream he and Manolita become the enamored pastoral pair. A venerable and paternal shepherd in the form of Julián finally gives him drink from water that slakes his thirst.

The unitary vision that gives Gabriel such comfort, that offers him a taste of the waters of life, is nothing other than a celebration, in a pastoral setting, of the fusion of two souls, once separated, now reunited. Pardo Bazán has privileged the reader to know, however, that it is Perucho who is destined to enact in the flesh the sacred betrothal for which Gabriel has secretly thirsted throughout his life.

Grounded in the Platonic union of the Androgyne, Fray Luis discourses on that love among souls that stems from the separation of what once was united. Apart, the souls anguish. Their inexorable aim is to come together, to be reunited in the flesh. In his Commentary Fray Luis says:

> Y así la propia medicina de esta afición, y lo que más en ella se pretende y desea es cobrar cada uno que ama su alma, que siente serle robada; la cual, porque parece tener su asiento en el aliento que se coge por la boca, de aquí es el desear tanto y deleitarse los que se aman en juntar las bocas y mezclar los alientos, como guiados por esta imaginación y deseo de restituirse en lo que les falta su corazón. (69)

Chapter 21 of *La madre naturaleza,* immediately prior to the one in which Gabriel reads the *Cantar,* ends with Perucho and Manolita together in the very heights of the mountains beyond the Pazos after they had spent the entire day escaping its confines and had feasted along the way on milk and wild honey. The scene ends with the couple lying together on the slope of an old tomb under the shade of a huge oak. Perucho has declared his conjugal love for Manolita, and she has promised to marry him. The final words of the chapter are as follows: «Al fin, sin saber cómo, sin estudio, sin premeditación, tan impensadamente como se encuentran las mariposas en la atmósfera primaveral, los rostros se unieron y los labios se juntaron con débil suspiro, mezclándose en los dos alientos el aroma fragante de las frambuesas y fresillas y residuos del sabor delicioso del panal de miel» (211).

Further exploration of the *Cantar* and commentary reveals that the entire story of Perucho and Manolita is a gloss of Fray Luis. Like the Esposa, Manolita appears less than beautiful in the eyes of the world. Her skin, so often exposed to the sun, is dark. As Gabriel's informant Máximo Juncal describes Gabriel's niece to him, she is «morena con tanto andar al sol...» «No digamos,» he adds, «que era una chica hermosísima, porque no tiene las *perfecciones* allá hechas a torno...» (97-98). In the background, because no one considers her truly beautiful, we hear the Esposa's plaint echoing from the pages of the *Cantar*: «No me desdeñes si soy morena, que miróme el sol» (76).

Perucho and Manolita, like their spiritual forebears in the *Cantar,* celebrate their love after having suffered the winters of their separation. Juncal tells Gabriel of Perucho's experience on being sent to Orense for schooling: «Y quién dice a usted que el primer año, cuando tocaron a separarse, los dos chiquillos cayeron malos, qué sé yo de qué..., de una cosa que aquí lla-

mamos *saudades...*» (109). When she confesses her love to Perucho, Manolita declares: «En el invierno, cuando te vas, parece que se me va lo mejor que tengo y me quedo sin sombra» (198), echoing without knowing it the words Gabriel has read only a few hours before in Fray Luis: «Ya ves, pasó el invierno, pasó la lluvia, fuese. Descubre flores la tierra; el tiempo del cantar es venido, vida es la voz de la tórtula en nuestros campos» (98). The commentary goes on: «Convida en este lugar a la Esposa al gozo de sus amores; y porque él anda en el campo, que es lugar para el amor mejor que otro, pídele que salga a él... En decir *levántate,* se entiende que estaba acostada y mal dispuesta; y así decíale que se esfuerce y se salga con él para su salud a gozar del fresco y hermosura del campo» (98).

It is truly startling to juxtapose the commentary of Fray Luis with chapters 19-21, in which Perucho and Manolita culminate their love. How else except by reference to Fray Luis are we to explain Manolita's resistant disposition, so uncharacteristic of her, in chapter 19? «Anda mujer, anda,» Perucho urges, as she lags behind. «Hombre, ya ando...; pero déjame tomar aliento» (180). «El mancebo,» the text continues, «subía por la recia cuesta... sosteniendo a Manuela por la cintura o, mejor dicho, empujándola para que anduviese más veloz» (181). The *Cantar* refers to the vineyards, whose «pequeñas uvas dan olor» (98), while Pardo Bazán has her couple in the mountains looking for «unas fresas chiquitas, purpúreas, fragantes, que se dan entre las viñas y son conocidas en el país por *amores*» (180-81).

The *Cantar* has the beloved's words, «todas miel... tu lengua parece que anda bañada en miel y leche» (127), just as Pardo insists on letting the reader know that her couple have lingering on their breath the taste of milk and honey. They reach the summit of Los Castros, a decaying and ancient fortification, as if to fulfill Fray Luis's explanation: «Se entiende un edificio antiguo y caído, como suele haber por los campos, donde las palomas y otras aves acostumbraban hacer nido» (101). In the bed that nature provides them, the couple lies side by side. Then Perucho says: «Levanta un poco el cuerpo...; te pasaré el brazo así por debajo» (209), in apparent imitation of the *Cantar*: «su izquierda debajo de mi cabeza, y su diestra me abrazará» (187).

When they come down from what the author has referred to as the «desierto de la isla del Castro» (*La madre* 210), they are described, from Gabriel's point of view, as follows: «El bulto se acercó... Era doble: se componía de dos cuerpos tan pegados el uno al otro como la goma al árbol; no hablaban... El la sostenía por la cintura, y ella se recostaba en su hombro» (251). Once again in the background we hear the *Cantar*: «¿Quién es ésta que sube del desierto recostada en su amado?» (187). Fray Luis explains: «Este verso es paréntesis o sentencia entretejida en las hablas de los dos, Esposo y Esposa, y son palabras de las personas que veían cómo los dos amantes se iban juntos desde el campo a la ciudad, y la Esposa venía muy junta y pegada a su Esposo» (187).

Finally, of course, as Gabriel also ponders, there is the question of the lovers' intricate relationship, their mixed bonding in fraternal and erotic love. Gabriel exclaims, now close to the realization that Perucho and Manolita have been lovers: «Lo más tremendo es la manía de llamarla *hermana...*

"Robaste mi corazón, hermana mía, esposa, robaste mi corazón... Panal destila tus labios, esposa; miel y leche está en tu lengua... Huerto cerrado, hermana mía esposa..."» (240). Against all his rationalism, that mystic voice insists, overwhelming Gabriel and casting him into a maelstrom of fear and confusion. It is in this state that he, too, is opened to Mother Nature's mysteries, to that place outside of culture and rational consciousness, where death and life meet, where brothers and sisters embody love's highest perfection.

In his agitated state and in search of the couple, Gabriel finds himself, like Julián at the end of *Los pazos de Ulloa,* in the graveyard where Nucha is buried. Giving way to his poetic, imaginative side, Gabriel experiences the life that goes on in a kind of spiritual inspiration, discovering in the magic of Nucha's presence «el elemento sobrenatural que teme y anhela nuestro espíritu, ansioso de romper la pesada envoltura material y el insufrible encadenamiento lógico de las realidades» (247). And it is once again, as with Julián, in the presence of Nucha's aura in the graveyard that the couple appears. Gabriel looks up from his communion with the mysteries of life and death to see the entwined pair, Perucho and Manolita, returning from paradise.

Around the apparently tragic outcome of Perucho's love for Manolita there hangs a sense not only of its inevitability but of its appropriateness for the couple. Gabriel insists on revealing to Perucho that he is brother to his beloved. Perucho leaves Los Pazos for Madrid in despair. Manolita, unconsolable, resolves to enter a convent. Inexplicably, even brutally, from Gabriel's point of view, she refuses his apparently gallant offer to marry him. Yet in the ending there is an integrity also built into Fray Luis's version of the *Cantar,* which states: «Muchas aguas no pueden matar el amor, ni los ríos lo pueden anegar. Si diere el hombre todos los haberes de su casa por el amor, despreciando los despreciará» (183).

Through Gabriel, as through Julián in *Los pazos de Ulloa,* Pardo Bazán allows a glimpse of consolation of the spirit that the mystical vision provides. It is a consolation that appears to arise out of the anguish of orphanhood. The novelistic hero, therefore, is the figure not only of culture's failure but the precursor of the visionary, as Girard suggests in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel.* The isolated, wandering, alienated male hero described at the beginning of this essay as the archetypal novelistic main character represents consciousness, both for that character and for its author, in transition between the loss and the recovery of the Great Mother—between, as with Don Quixote, birth and death. Like her seventeenth-century counterpart Cervantes, Pardo Bazán appears to have been on a journey experienced through the writing of her novels—a journey that insists finally on the pastoral, with its vision of a unification of spirit and matter—even as it evokes the conflictive and dualistic world of culture. What Pardo Bazán shows, once again, is the enduring, archetypal nature of that dream of the one in the two, a dream beautifully bodied forth in the juxtaposition of Gabriel's and Perucho's mutual, and ultimately conflicting, claims for Manolita. What distinguishes Pardo Bazán's work, however, from that of Cervantes, is that Manolita is imaged as anything but a passive object in that conflict of claims. Pardo

Bazán makes clear that Manolita is wedded in her soul to Perucho, and that bonding is both acknowledged and honored from beginning to end. In this Manolita is clearly Mother Nature's child, just as Gabriel, who has not been able to acknowledge his soul binding to his sister, considers himself the stepchild of nature.

When Gabriel exclaims at the end of the book: «Naturaleza, te llaman madre... Deberían llamarte madrastra» (320), he strikes at the very heart of his own problem and that of the culture in which he is immersed. Perucho and Manolita have shown him what the child of Mother Nature looks like. Through them he sees how little, for his part, he can expect of her bounty. And we as readers are left to wonder whose tragedy is more compelling: that of Perucho, driven into a culture he does not want, or that of Gabriel, forever locked out of the arms of Mother Nature for whose solace he continues to yearn.

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NOTES

[1] The idea of Renaissance «individuality» has become, in fact, something of a commonplace in discussions of sixteenth-century literature and culture. For one clear study of this phenomenon, see Greenblatt.

[2] Said writes: «the novel is a literary form of secondariness; ...the novel makes, procreates, a certain secondary and alternative life possible for heroes who are otherwise lost in society» (93).

[3] Combet's psycho-structural analysis of Cervantes's works suggests a consistent pattern of masculine failure: a pattern that sets the hero in a position of inferiority vis-à-vis a stronger or socially superior adversary. That apparent incapacity of the hero to assume a position of authority, to, in Freudian terms, resolve the Oedipal conflict, may be characteristic of the novel as a whole, as Said elaborates convincingly in *Beginnings*. Greenblatt also generalizes the question of the construction of the self in the novel, stating that «self-fashioning occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien. ...What is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack, and hence... any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss» (9). What needs to be considered is how that struggle with authority works in the fiction of a woman.

[4] For Ong's studies of male sexuality, see *Fighting for Life*. Girard's contemplations on the love triangle, developed in *Deceit*, become centered, in works after *Violence*, on the phenomenon of rivalry and the double. Girard, in *Violence*, «*To Double Business Bound*,» and elsewhere, makes of the so-called object of desire a spectral third in a drama of conflict and imitation that centers in fact less on that object than on the two rivals, for each of whom the other's desire serves as model for his own.

[5] This result—the structuring of society into hierarchies based on difference—is, for Girard, the fruit of the tragedy of undifferentiated conflict. As Joan Englesman puts it, thinking now less of Girard than of Freud: «Freudian analysis explains why patriarchal religion is so fearful and hostile toward the mother—lust for her was the cause of the primordial murder» (37). What patriarchal structures—whether political or theological—are therefore designed to achieve is to disguise, through the imposition of order and ritual, not so much the primordial father's murder, as Girard would have it, but the desire for the mother that motivated it. It is surely for that reason that the Orphic mythographers saw Eros, desire, as the child of Chaos.

[6] See, for example, Moi, Kofman, Nelson, El Saffar, and Kahn.

[7] Freud, who also saw no way out of the sublimation process, in part because of the way he imaged the unconscious, says in *Moses and Monotheism*: «The world of the senses becomes gradually mastered by spirituality, and... man feels proud and uplifted by each step in progress—one does not know, however, why this should be so» (151).

[8] Ong says, for example: «Oral verbalization, unlike writing, is thus natural. The word comes to each of us first orally in our 'mother' tongue. Its association with mother and

early nature and nurture is why speech is so closely involved with our personal identity and with cultural identity, and why manipulation of the word entails various kinds of alienation» («Transformations» 22).

[9] The key work produced after the break with Freud was *Symbols of Transformation*, in which Jung explores, in dreams and mythological systems, the meaning and the transformational purpose of the desire to return to the womb, the incest wish so frequently rejected as exclusively regressive. Taking a truly heretical position, from the standpoint of Freudian psychology, Jung wrote that «the basis of 'incestuous' desire is not co-habitation but, as every sun myth shows, the strange idea of becoming a child again... of entering into the mother in order to be reborn through her...» (223-24). He also noted that «the incest prohibition acts as an obstacle and makes creative fantasy inventive... In this way the Libido becomes imperceptibly spiritualized» (224).

[10] So thoroughly has the Cartesian world view eclipsed our awareness of alternate visions of the relation of consciousness to the world that it comes as a surprise to most people that through the middle of the seventeenth century Paracelsus was the leading rival figure to Descartes. Brian Easlea writes: «In the closing decades of the 16th century the publication of Paracelsus' works reached a peak and by 1605 collected editions of his work were available. The growing Paracelsian movement was challenging not only established medical practice, but also theology and our established framework of society» (103). The Paracelsian world view that was so unsettling was based not on what Keller has called «aggressive domination» but on copulation—on the couple. Keller says, speaking of Francis Bacon and the development of the modern scientific worldview: «If the root image for Bacon was a 'chaste and lawful marriage between mind and nature' that will 'bind [Nature] to [man's] service and make her [his] slave,' the emphasis was on constraint, on the disjunction between mind and nature, and ultimately on dominion. By contrast, the root image of the alchemists was coitus, the conjunction of mind and matter, the merging of male and female. As Bacon's metaphoric ideal was the virile superman, the alchemist's ideal was the hermaphrodite. Whereas Bacon sought domination, the alchemists asserted the necessity of allegorical, if not actual, cooperation between male and female. Power for them was to be achieved through 'cohabitating with the elements.'» (The last quoted words are from Cornelius Agrippa as cited in Yates 136.) Not until Jung, in this century, has systematic effort been made to understand the psychological importance of the alchemical world view. See his *Mysterium*.

[11] Esther Quinn has pointed out that «[Gottfried's] Tristan represents the most serious and systematic use, not only of Christian forms, but of Christian mysticism to exalt the physical love of man and woman» (180).

[12] Apart from the regular descriptions of fallen and corrupted human nature, there stands out the reference to the threshing mill, a furnace in which men exert incredible effort to extract grain. Of that sweat and work that the production of grain exacts, the text reads: «Y en el desmayo general de la naturaleza, que desfallece y expira de calor, ¡sólo el hombre reconoce su condición servil y cumple el precepto de Génesis, azotando las mies que le ha de dar sustento!» (*Madre* 226).

[13] Of the transformative symbols of the Great Mother, «The primary symbol of the elemental mother is the vessel. It represents her own body, and depending on whether the personification is positive or negative, can appear as cave, or coffin, grail or cauldron» (21). Englesman continues: «These principles of transformation are identifiable with the feminine because her body is the source of incarnation, birth, and rebirth. Therefore 'whenever we encounter the symbol of rebirth we have to do with a matriarchal transformation mystery... [a] transformation... possible only when what is to be transformed enters wholly into the Feminine principle; that is to say, dies in returning to the Mother Vessel, whether this be earth, water, underworld, urn, coffin, cave, mountain, ship, or magic cauldron'» (the quoted passage in this citation comes from Neumann 291-92).

[14] Gabriel's desire for his mother/sister Nucha, furthermore, is not one-sided. Julián, who tells of the love between them in *Los pozos*, adds: «La novia lloró bastante con el obsequio de su 'niño', púsolo [the ring] en el dedo meñique de la mano izquierda, y allí se le reunió el otro anillo que en la iglesia le ciñeron» (111).

[15] Alain Guy notes Fray Luis's curious amalgam of intellectual preparation and spiritual passion: «Es significante que el eminente agustiniano haya consagrado la flor de su talento filológico y de su genio filosófico-teológico a traducir y explicar el inolvidable libro bíblico, que encierra en ocho sucintos capítulos el más célebre de los cantos de amor» (274-75). For an excellent study of the parallels between *The Song of Songs* and the chapters in *La madre naturaleza* devoted to Perucho and Gabriel's respective desires for Manolita's love, see Kirby.

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