

PARDO BAZÁN'S *CUARENTA DÍAS EN LA EXPOSICIÓN* (1901): READING THE WORLD FROM POST-1898 SPAIN

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Emilia Pardo Bazán published three book-length accounts of her visits to the Paris World's Fairs of 1889 and 1900. Her first two volumes of *Crónicas de la Exposición* (individually titled *Al pie de la Torre Eiffel* and *Por Francia y Alemania*) appeared in 1889, bringing together the extensive series of Fairground chronicles she had published earlier that year in the periodical press as correspondent for *La España Moderna*.¹ Ten years later in 1899, she reissued these books as a single volume (significantly revised, abridged, and with a new prologue) as volume 19 of her *Obras completas*.² Soon thereafter she set off again for Paris to draft a new series of World's Fair chronicles, this time as envoy to the 1900 Fair for *El Imparcial* (Freire 2005:23), and by 1901 she had collected these journalistic pieces into book form as well, appearing as volume 21 of her *Obras completas* under the title *Cuarenta días en la Exposición*.

These World's Fair narratives share a similar structure and narrative perspective. Each is inscribed as a travel narration (including chapters prepared during her travel to and from the Fair, as well as an account of her wanderings within the expansive Exposition site itself), and each likewise affects a personal and generally disarming first-person style that appears to aspire to little more than sharing the author's own impressions of the myriad pavilions, displays, and performances she had occasion to visit over the course of her Fairground explorations.³ Differences of style and content exist as well, some of which have already received critical attention (see, e.g., Freire 2005:23; Henn 420). With respect to the question of 1898, specifically, existing scholarship has already ably traced the many references to the Spanish-American War within *Cuarenta días en la Exposición*, especially with regard to the text's preoccupation with Spain's state of prostration and many biting critical asides about the United States and other nations perceived as its cultural or political allies.⁴ Some attention has, as well, been granted to the war's influence on the 1899 re-edition of the two earlier chronicles, in particular with reference to the newly added prologue where Pardo Bazán seeks to vindicate several initially controversial statements she had made regarding Spain's military readiness, which from the vantage point of 1899 she affirms to have effectively been proven correct (see, e.g., Henn 415). In the present study, I propose to continue this exploration of the historical and conceptual ramifications of 1898 within Pardo Bazán's Fairground writings, adopting a perspective that seeks to situate her description and evaluation of the individual national exhibits within a broader framework that considers as well her understanding, and manipulation within her own texts, of the mechanisms and meaning of display.

The abundant, insightful scholarship that today exists on the creation and consumption of display helps us to appreciate public exhibition as a relational and hierarchical process, effectuated through representation and encompassing both providers and consumers of the exhibited object.⁵ As I hope to illustrate below, Pardo Bazán makes able use of these principles in the construction of *Cuarenta días en la Exposición*. While her 1889 Fairground impressions often evince a more static and positivistic attitude toward the practice of exhibition, her 1900 text—though not entirely devoid of those elements—additionally incorporates a significant engagement with the practice and processes of cultural marketing, giving rise to a more relational and fluid sense of identity representation. While, on the one hand, Pardo Bazán praises the Exposition as a powerful force for the dissemination of human knowledge, this belief co-exists with her keen awareness that the Fair and everything in it also exist as products, where what was being sold to the world at large purported to be nothing less than ‘the World’ itself, and where both the production and consumption of this exhibitionary impulse is understood to vary in response to individual circumstance and the particular historical juncture in which it occurs.⁶ Pardo Bazán both acknowledges these principles and manipulates them herself to craft her text’s response to Spain’s 1898 crisis and to offer a clear (and at the time, undoubtedly rather controversial) recipe for regeneration.

That Pardo Bazán scrutinized the 1900 Fair through the lens of Spanish circumstance is everywhere in evidence. Moved by what she calls “el impulso natural que hacia la patria nos lleva” (1901:33), she seldom allows the question of Spain’s present-day predicament to slip far from the surface, no matter the contents or place of origin of a particular exhibit she has set out to describe. In addition to direct references to the Spanish-American War and its aftermath, her World’s Fair reflections quite obviously seek to convey a particular image of the Spanish nation itself, including evaluative comments on Spain’s history, societal circumstances, and present-day status within the conceptual hierarchy of nations, along with broader reflections on key cultural debates of the time, including modernization, europeanization, imperialism, war, and the like. Though her 1889 chronicle also features reference to many of these same issues, both the quantity and tone of such passages is markedly intensified in the 1900 account. In light of the text’s date of publication, this sustained spirit of self-scrutiny is in itself hardly surprising, particularly given the explicit face-to-face juxtaposition of world nationalities inherent in the World’s Fair context. It is, rather, Pardo Bazán’s decision to frame this discourse against the explicit backdrop of cultural marketing she recognizes within the World’s Fair context that makes the particular form of identity modeling practiced throughout her *Cuarenta días en la Exposición* most interesting and unusual.

The task she sets for herself proves a complicated one. On the one hand, by unveiling the interplay of interest and artifice at work in the packaging of world cultures for exhibition at the Fair, she alerts her readers to important questions about the slippery relationship between identity and its representation. On the other hand, though, her chronicles can scarcely be seen as dismissing the notion of reliable identity modeling outright, inasmuch as a major component of her own narrative pose centers on providing her readers with authoritative assessment of those same world cultures. Though the resulting cultural evaluations are, on the whole, more nuanced than those in her 1889 Fair writings, her efforts in *Cuarenta días en la Exposición* to find common ground between appearance and essence inevitably leads down some precarious paths.⁷ These internal tensions, however, manage to co-exist, with each contributing in its way to the text's overarching project with respect to the re-mapping of the Fairground as metaphor and its rather clear-cut coding as cultural roadmap for Spain.

An important part of this re-mapping involves the identification and interpretation of the Fair's master narrative, as developed and placed on display by the host nation, France.⁸ Pardo Bazán makes clear to her readers that the Exposition's many enticements were not offered without guile, inasmuch as the French organizers—public protestations of universalism notwithstanding—were obviously eager to mould its message to the greater glory (and financial benefit) of their own home culture.⁹ At the 1889 Exposition, the particular contours of this national self-image had been cemented by two controversial strategies: the decision to market the Fair as centenary of the French Revolution and the erection of the Eiffel Tower to mark the occasion. Pardo Bazán's treatment of the controversy is telling, as it mirrors in many respects the evaluative pose she adopts throughout her 1889 Fair experience. On the one hand, she acknowledges the organizers' success in crafting metaphors for the sense of vigorous self-confidence that France wished to project to the world as it struggled to emerge from more than a decade of ignominious military and political disarray (see, e.g., 1899:77-78, 302-04). On the other hand, though, she makes little effort to hide her own personal discomfort with both strands of this master Fairground discourse, demonstrating a marked ambivalence toward the tower, which strikes her as a somehow sterile achievement lacking the resonance and spirit of true art (e.g., 1899:203, 206-07), as well as frank disapproval of the Revolutionary theme, which she finds not only in shockingly bad taste but also out of sync with what she views as Latin nations' deep-seated need for monarchy (1899:53, 57-58, 79). Her stance thus reveals a critical interest in isolating the Fair's dominant discourse and exploring the motivation and implications of the particular model of 'French modernity' it placed on public display, yet Pardo Bazán's own evaluation just as clearly resists this 'revolutionary' model in favor of a far more traditional and static cultural view. This stance persists through much of the 1889 chronicle, where the

evaluation of exhibits and related cultural reflections tend to evince a general acceptance of the notion of unchanging national character and limited inclination to embrace relativistic shift in the cultural sphere. As such, it is not surprising to discover that Pardo Bazán makes little use of the 1889 Fair's master marketing discourse within her own account, beyond the simple step of identifying its existence and recording her impressions of it. Her textual engagement with the 1900 Fair, however, will follow a substantially different path.

Perched at the close of the nineteenth century and dawn of the twentieth, that year's Exposition was widely marketed as representing not only the *Suma* of humanity's present (through exhibits touting the cultures and products of dozens of nationalities all across the globe), but also a retrospective of the history of human civilization, as well as a window onto its future. The nation able successfully to host such a momentous exhibition could thus not only look forward to a sizeable influx of tourists and cash, but even more importantly, would also hold the power to shape how the sprawling cultural and historical narrative of human endeavor was going to be read, not to mention the presumably crucial role their own home culture was to be understood as having played in those processes.¹⁰ From the French perspective, the fact that Prussia, whose 1870 victory in the Franco-Prussian War and subsequent partitioning of eastern France remained an unresolved humiliation, was widely known to have made an unsuccessful bid to secure the hosting duties for itself, vaulted the Fair into nothing less than symbol of France's restored national dignity and confirmation of its triumphal re-ascendance in the international arena.

As Pardo Bazán immediately recognized upon her arrival, this French master narrative could be traced out quite literally on the map of the Fairgrounds itself, whose layout and architecture had been meticulously designed to underscore both the glory of France's historical achievements and the political and cultural preeminence of its modern-day society.¹¹ As she remarks in "Golpe de vista," an installment devoted to interpreting the cultural symbolism for France of many of the Exhibition's most iconic constructions: "Enlazadas las ideas que representan estos monumentos, son estrofas de un mismo poema a la gloria de Francia y a su doble misión guerrera y civilizadora" (1901:37). Wandering around the Fairground site, Pardo Bazán finds this 'double mission' everywhere on display, with French military achievements honored through exhibits, resplendent constructions and sculptures dedicated to victories and heroes, and France's "civilizing" mission seemingly revealed, to Pardo Bazán's eyes, at virtually every step.

The word "civilized" is, in fact, one of the most frequent qualifiers that she herself ascribes to modern French culture throughout her text. Examples abound in the installments specifically devoted to contemporary French achievements (the review of modern hygiene in chapter 23 for example, or chapter

20's praise for the civilizing mission of France's colonial expansion), but can also be found in Pardo Bazán's account of nearly any Fairground experience associable in some way with the culture of France. A good example appears in the installment "Vendimiario," describing "una visita a los pabellones del Champagne" (1901:71), in the course of which Pardo Bazán rhetorically transforms the "méthode champenoise" into a synecdoche for the excellences of French civilization itself. "Hay que considerar estos pabellones como la nota esencialmente francesa de la Exposición," she writes, "como el espíritu que la anima y corre por sus anchas venas infundiéndole ligereza y alegría, engendrando dorados sueños" (1901:71). Over the course of the installment, champagne is diversely described as the nectar of aristocrats, poets, and philosophers, whose sophisticated and aesthetically pleasing qualities enrich and accompany a life of prosperity, happiness, decorum, and beauty, thus effectively incarnating the "eminentes cualidades de buen gusto, de cultura, de elegancia" (1901:187) that Pardo Bazán ascribes throughout her chronicle to the nation of France.

In approaching the Fairgrounds map, Pardo Bazán also recognizes that its French designers, in addition to tending their nation's own self-image, had effectively imposed a clear hierarchy among the represented world cultures by virtue of the relative visibility and prestige of the space allotted to each national pavilion within the 350-acre Fairground site. The most prized location was, without doubt, the "Quai des Nations," a resplendent line of grand national pavilions arrayed along the Seine between the Invalides and Alma bridges. The world's fifteen "principal nations" had been awarded the privilege of joining this group, with the other participant nations clustered together at varying distances from the Quai in roughly inverse proportion to their level of perceived importance.¹² Pardo Bazán appears to find much in both the concept and specifics of this exercise in global categorization to be of representational relevance to her own arguments as well, not the least of which was France's generosity in allowing Spain, despite its recent military reverses and war failures, to locate its national pavilion "en lo más brillante y aristocrático del recinto" (1901:49), along the prestigious Quai des Nations, and the parallel allocation of the purportedly newly liberated island of Cuba to a site within the colonial exposition, thus spatially confirming what Pardo Bazán foresees are the United States's true pretensions toward its 1898 territorial gains (1901:220, 217).

Indeed, overall, and in notable contrast to her response to France's strategy for packaging the 1889 Fair, Pardo Bazán clearly finds the particular rhetoric of display traced out across the sprawling grounds of the 1900 Fairground site to suit her taste and textual purposes remarkably well. In consequence, and as will be discussed in more detail below, she not only remarks upon these

representational strategies at some length and with clear admiration in the course of her narrative, she also transforms them into an important underpinning of her own textual message for Spain.

The World's Fair did not, though, operate as a monologue. The design and contents of the national pavilions, for example, as well as of the individual displays in the grand exhibition halls devoted to human achievements, had been left to the exhibiting nations themselves, introducing multiple additional discourses onto the Fairground's spatial map. These elements are brought into Pardo Bazán's textual construction as well, as is her acknowledgement that individual Fairgoers (including herself) would inevitably interpret differently the various national publicity campaigns proffered to them, depending on their own country of origin, ideological orientation, and a host of other personal variables including social class, degree of education, and even the effects of hunger or fatigue.¹³ Taking into account as well the sheer physical immensity of the Fair itself (in Pardo Bazán's words, "La Exposición es demesurada, interminable. No me preguntéis los kilómetros que mide; lo que sé es que no se acaba nunca" [1901:30]), the task of encapsulating in narrative the Fair's cultural "lesson" and what it might conceivably mean for Spain was clearly no simple matter.¹⁴

In this regard, it is pertinent to recall that *Cuarenta días en la Exposición* is structured as a travel chronicle, such that the first three chapters are not actually about the Fair at all, but rather about the vicissitudes of Pardo Bazán's own journey by train from Galicia to León, then San Sebastián, and finally on to Paris. This decision to begin an account of the Paris World's Fair with three chapters wholly devoted to the description of Spain allows her to convey to her readers a very precise image of "real" Spanish society, history, and cultural values which she can then turn back to and evaluate in juxtaposition to those of the other nationalities she encounters during the course of her World's Fair experiences.¹⁵ The image of Spain she gives us in these pages is, by her own assessment, medieval (1901:8). From architecture, to customs, to the almost incomprehensible vagaries of the Spanish transportation system, her description evokes nothing so much as a cherished antique, a still-visible memento of the past whose form and function, while possessing undeniable nostalgic beauty, seem to lie wholly outside present-day reality. Pardo Bazán, on her journey, declares that she is looking for something else: "¡Voy en busca de algo que se parece tan poco a estas antiguallas hermosas!," she writes at the end of Chapter 1, "Voy hacia la vida moderna, hacia las últimas revelaciones de la industria, de la ciencia, de la realidad" (1901:10).

The three initial chapters of travel narration thus effectively set in motion an opposition, further elaborated throughout the rest of the text, between past and present and between current circumstances in Spain and France. The chapters serve a variety of other textual purposes as well, including establishing the tone of reassuring anecdotal transparency that works to downplay of any sense of artful construction

within the chronicle itself, conveying an image of Pardo Bazán faithfully reporting whatever happens to come into her field of experience, such that her text seems a product of simple observation with no particular agenda of its own. This is, of course, not the case. Throughout the thirty-six remaining installments, Pardo Bazán builds a sense of the World's Fair—her World's Fair—as a powerful signifying space. Though these Fairground impressions lack any obvious organizational logic (which can, in fact, be seen as additionally contributing to the air of casual transparency she affects throughout the text), there are, nevertheless, a handful of themes that recur so frequently they seem to elevate themselves as virtual leitmotifs. The following paragraphs will present three of these themes—fashion, architecture, and Spain's own national representation at the Fair—each of which contributes to making heard what Pardo Bazán wishes to communicate about Spain's post-98 condition via consideration of the value and meaning of display. While two of these themes—fashion and architecture—may seem at first glance to have little directly to do with the Spanish response to the defeats and problems of 1898, as deployed within Pardo Bazán's text, the connection becomes clear.

Cuarenta días en la Exposición devotes a full three chapters to the history of clothing fashions, underscoring their significance to the interpretation of human culture. “La moda no es algo arbitrario” (1901:104), Pardo Bazán declares at one point, insisting elsewhere that “es tan importante esta sección que podría dedicársele un libro” (1901:94).¹⁶ In part, this fascination with fashion seems to bespeak a more traditional view of display as expression of essence (the notion, for example, that the clothing worn by members of a particular society reveals some inherent quality of the ‘race’ or nationality they represent), and indeed comments consistent with this notion appear in her accounts of both Fairs (see, e.g., 1901:235; 1899:279). In *Cuarenta días en la Exposición*, though, Pardo Bazán's approach to fashion also takes on a more wide-ranging series of associations, which together paint a clear image of her turn-of-the-century diagnosis for success in the modern world.

Unlike the 1889 Fair, where Pardo Bazán's social recipes most often tend to build upon a foundation of stability and tradition, here we find that her prescription also embraces the notion of change, as well as a re-calibration of her understanding of the marketing potential of external appearance. Thus, for example, far from the simply passive role of transmitting essence, fashion is here shown as having the ability actually to create it, as can be seen, for example, in the exclamation with which Pardo Bazán concludes her exploration of women's clothing styles in France from the time of the Gauls to the present: “En estos diecinueve siglos ha sido creada la mujer” (1901:237).¹⁷ Her 1900 chronicle is also forthright in both acknowledging and embracing fashion's rapid changeability (“lo que ahora provoca alegría y burlona carcajada,” she remarks, “dentro de dos meses, algo difrazado, lo usarán las mismas a

quienes oigo reír” [1901:96]) and its deep association with commercial marketing forces that in her own day were increasingly quickening and manipulating that process. Indeed, fashion is seen as meriting designation as a principal symbol of modern society precisely for those reasons. As she notes in the chapter appropriately entitled “Adelante”: “Marchamos, nos precipitamos, volamos hacia estados mejores. [...] ¿Quién podrá negar que la vida se hace más grata, más fácil, gracias a este cambio continuo?” (1901:141-42). As evidence for this claim, she again lays hand to the cultural model of France, citing what she sees as the seamless complementarity of French fashion sense and French societal values, both of which are construed as incarnating the same array of ringing “civilizing” precepts (elegance, progress, freedom, prosperity, etc.) she repeatedly attributes to the modern *Zeitgeist* in other passages of her account (see, e.g., 1899:216; 1901:99-100). Casting a retrospective eye over the history of fashion as revealed in the World’s Fair displays, Pardo Bazán seems to discover serene confirmation of the ascendant path of history (see, e.g., 1899:214; 1901:237).

That another key textual focus is architecture is in some sense scarcely surprising given the signature (though at the time controversial) architectural achievements of both the 1889 and 1900 Fairs: the Eiffel Tower in the case of the former, and for the latter (in addition to the other eye-catching novelties of its carefully arrayed cityscape, including the first Ferris wheel, the first moving walkway, and the imposing array of Palaces along the Quai des Nations) the then much ridiculed claim to fame of having first brought to the attention of much of the world the fantastical artistic sensibility known as Art Nouveau. Pardo Bazán displays sustained interest in both Fairs’ architectural endeavors, though in both cases this appears to have had less to do with the buildings’ appearance (though she acknowledges that many did look quite extraordinary) than from what their look seemed to her to communicate about the self-image of the nation responsible for the design. As indicated above, for example, in the case of the Eiffel Tower her ambivalence toward the structure itself does not prevent her from recognizing it as a suitable synecdoche for the centrality of science, labor and industry in contemporary life. That said, it seems to be with an almost palpable sense of relief, as well as aesthetic exhilaration, that she encounters the Art Nouveau extravaganza of 1900. It is a style she finds more satisfyingly modern than Eiffel’s creation, as well as more aesthetically fulfilling. Modernity, after all, is in Pardo Bazán’s text not merely a function of technological savvy but also a particular state of Culture (with capital “C”). The very qualities of Art Nouveau that at the time were reviled by many as ugly and decadent appear to her as splendid artistic evocations of the achievements of the modern age, as epitomized throughout the chronicle via the Fairground’s own master narrative: “La puerta reúne los caracteres del novísimo estilo, próximo ya a invadir y transformar todo el arte,” she writes upon arrival, “En su cima fulguran los grandes focos

eléctricos, dirigiendo movibles rayos a alumbrar la proa del barco de Lutecia, que, con el gallo galo, blasona orgullosamente el frontón. Mágico ingreso, puerta sideral, constelación arrancada a los cielos para representar cómo la labor oscura y constante de la tierra se transforma en claridad refulgente” (1901:27-28). A few chapters later in “Un poco de arquitectura,” we find Art Nouveau further associated with many of the same cultural values (beauty, happiness, liberty, progress, civilization, life) she elsewhere associates with fashion, France, and the promises of the modern world. As she observes at one point, “no bastaría reunir construcciones más o menos ornamentales, si esas construcciones nada dijese” (37), and what the 1900 Fair’s architectural statement has to say to her is nothing short of the spirit of the age.

In Pardo Bazán’s treatment, the chronicle’s fashion and architecture leitmotifs are thus strongly conceptually linked, not only in comparison to each other (see 1901:104) but also with respect to the ever-growing list of life styles and values she associates throughout the text with the successful modern experience. Art Nouveau, like fashion, is quite explicitly handled as metaphor (Pardo Bazán, in her text, uses the word “símbolo” [e.g., 1901:37, 41]) of newness, change, and the sheer freedom inherent in the ability to choose one’s own destiny. In considering the charge that this fantastical burst of architectural exhibitionism represents a slip into decadence, her response is clear: “No se tome a mala parte la palabra *decadencia*. Prefiero una *decadencia* con carácter y con afán de buscar rumbos nuevos, a una estancación o una esterilidad como las que en arquitectura venimos sufriendo desde hace años” (1901:41, emphasis in original). With these words the march toward completing the line linking these various thematic threads of her Fairground odyssey with the question of Spain’s post-98 predicament becomes increasingly clear.

During her World’s Fair visit, Pardo Bazán does not, of course, limit her rhetorical efforts to the metaphorization of France. She likewise scrutinizes the design of the national pavilions presented by the several dozen other participating nations, declaring that “si interpretamos lo que esconde y lo que luce cada nación, leeremos en sus intenciones como en un libro” [169]. As this quotation suggests, Pardo Bazán has here stepped outside the positivistic straitjacket whereby a nation’s cultural products would be thought of as simple expressions of national character, in favor of a more relational sense of the exhibit as a conscious process of dissimulation and display (“lo que esconde y lo que luce cada nación”). This notion has far-reaching importance for Pardo Bazán’s line of argumentation with respect to Spain. She underscores this point explicitly, for example, in making what at the time would surely have been the surprising claim that her nation’s humiliating defeat of 1898 pales in importance to the design of its displays at the 1900 Fair: “*Esto*, bien mirado, es de más cuenta que *aquello*. *Aquello* fue una ocasión terrible, enfermedad aguda y breve; *esto* es lo de cada día, lo que a la larga constituye el vigor el la salud”

(1901:33, emphasis in original). The defeat of 1898, in other words, was something that happened *to* Spain, whereas the way Spain chooses to present itself to the world at the Fair shows how the nation imagines itself to be and thus what it is likely to become.

Unfortunately, Pardo Bazán finds the cultural message projected by the Spain's two pavilions—the Palacio Nacional in serene Renaissance style, and a Palacio de la Alimentación, rather whimsically done up as a replica of the Alhambra—to be profoundly disheartening. From the outside quite impressive, inside both are depressingly shabby and bare. The cavernous “Alhambra Alimenticia,” as Pardo Bazán mockingly terms it (1901:56), was at Spain's demand allotted twice the space given to any other nation, but inside turns out to be largely empty and singularly lacking in food (probably the most common single word in her chapter on “La alimentación española” is “ni,” appearing 26 times in the space of two paragraphs [1901:59-60]). The only appealing feature—a stall selling cookies—turns out to be run by an enterprising French baker who had leased some of the sprawling Alhambra's unused space.

Spain's signal contribution to the Fair, its Palacio Nacional, turns out to suffer from many of the same failings. Though Pardo Bazán lauds the beauty of its Renaissance-inspired architectural style (“bello, sereno, fuerte, impecable en su estilo” [1901:46]), she reports the exhibits it holds to be so laughably scanty for the large gallery chambers that it becomes the butt of jokes among the Spanish visitors (“Han venido los carros de mudanza, oigo repetir a los españoles que vagan por aquí como almas en pena” [1901:48]). Even more disheartening, from Pardo Bazán's perspective, is the fact that the few exhibits which do exist, though in some cases quite beautiful, belong exclusively to the past, re-invoking again and again the glories of Spain's now vanished empire and thus revealing, in Pardo Bazán's view, the petrified and backward-looking spirit of a nation stubbornly clinging to a vision of itself that is not only out of fashion, but actually unfunctional, refusing to acknowledge that life, for nations as for individuals, belongs to the present “La vida, la vida real y presente, lo que no se traduce en recuerdo ni en epopeya, falta allí en absoluto.” she complains, “No cabe mayor intimidación con *lo que fue*, ni más total y desdenoso divorcio de *lo que es*” (1901:48, emphasis in original).

The linkage between these passages and the chronicle's opening chapters of Spanish travel description are clear. Precisely because of 1898, this immersion in the past—“enquistado,” “empatanado,” “inmóvil,” “estéril,” as it is termed at diverse points of the narrative—strikes Pardo Bazán as not only regrettable but destructive.¹⁸ Fortunately, she reports, the way out of this morass is also on display at the Fair, inscribed with majestic flourishes at every turn and available to any and all who take the time to read and interpret its lessons. “Aprender, informarnos, es lo prudente en los españoles cuando salimos de casa” (150), she writes, declaring that every exhibit and attraction—including even

those conceived as mere entertainment—have something to teach in this regard. Pardo Bazán, of course, identifies these lessons for her readers. In some cases, a particular Fair experience is directly associated with the 1898 debacle, as for example in Chapter 8's description of the Transvaal Pavilion, where her musings on Boers' stoic resistance to British invasion are clearly (if not somewhat problematically) coded to function as an allegory of Spain's role in the Spanish-American War. In other cases, the experience may serve as a lesson in societal best practices, as for example in her admiring account in Chapters 18-20 of various nations' enlightened approaches to education, or in Chapter 23's open letter to the mayor of Madrid recounting the many excellent solutions to contemporary urban problems already incorporated into the functioning of Paris's municipal plan. In still other cases, the lesson may be more a matter of perspective on life, as seen above in her interpretation of the Fair's exhibition of fashion and architecture.

By far, though, the most elaborate lesson in modernity that *Cuarenta días en la Exposición* holds out to its Spanish readership is the grand master narrative of the Fair itself, that is: the one scripted and enacted by the host nation, France. While Pardo Bazán openly acknowledges that contemporary French society is not devoid of problems, and that its silken-smooth self-representation at the Fair is the product of often rather high-handed manipulation where all manner of inconvenient blemishes have been airbrushed from view, she nonetheless essentially accepts the French rhetoric of display as valid on its face, undoubtedly in important part for the simple reason that it so very neatly suits her own rhetorical purpose.¹⁹ The elegant articulation of “civilisation française” she finds on exhibit at the 1900 World's Fair coincides, as she presents it, nearly point for point with the vision of a model modern society—cultured, active, prosperous, free—that her chronicle sketches out as possible for her own home nation, should the proper path toward regeneration be followed.

Pardo Bazán would certainly have known that her prescription of French-style modernization as an antidote for Spain's malaise was likely to prove difficult for many of her readers to accept. At the time, favoring modernization in any form was itself quite capable of raising alarm bells in some quarters, and the fact that this particular style of modernity was unabashedly labeled as French would scarcely have made the task any easier.²⁰ Indeed, her earlier 1889 World's Fair chronicle, with its decidedly conflicted and in some cases openly antagonistic portrayal of both the historical and present-day relationship between Spain and France (e.g., “siempre Francia ha sido la piedra en que tropezamos, la fosa en que caímos” [1899:34]), would clearly have struck a chord as much more in tune with typical nineteenth-century Spanish attitudes toward their neighbor to the North. Perhaps in recognition of these difficulties, Pardo Bazán employs several marketing strategies of her own when relaying the notion of

France's supreme suitability as model for Spain's national reconstruction to her readers, defining France in terms of two qualities that serve to cement the image of strong kinship with Spain. One of these is the reiterated portrayal of French culture as a shining pinnacle of Latinity (e.g., "si la decadencia latina avanza, no será por culpa de Francia, que no deserta de su puesto avanzado de honor" [1901:282]; "nuestra gran hermana latina [...] que en nosotros tanto influye, y que más debiera influir" [1901:277]); the other an oft-repeated reminder that this kindred culture had itself recently been forced to suffer through humiliating military defeat (in France's case the Franco-Prussian War), only to prove to the World, at that Fair, that it had come back even better and stronger than before. The inscribed lesson for Spain is again unmistakable.²¹

As can be deduced from the above, Pardo Bazán engages in a serious degree of air-brushing of her own. Whereas her 1889 account had lingered at length on then-roiling French scandals such as the Boulanger Affair, the 1900 chronicle almost entirely sidesteps the even more explosive Dreyfus Affair, with Pardo Bazán's vague reference to the existence of social dissension beyond the Fairground walls couched in terms that effectively spin that circumstance into a positive light: "Casi envidia para España esos problemas [...] Son oxígeno vital. [...] Lo único triste y feo y sin horizonte, el marasmo, la indiferencia, la parálisis" (1901:282). She likewise refrains from exploring the more debatable aspects of the rhetoric of exhibitionary display (though such views had been expressed for at least a century), and perhaps most obviously, at least from today's vantage point, she carefully elides virtually any reference to the seamy underside of many of the attributes she unproblematically ascribes to the modern condition.²²

It is interesting in this vein to note that the chronicle's opening account of her train ride to France provided an optimal opportunity to exploit such issues, had she wished to do so. Following her almost comically slow progress from Marineda to San Sebastián (requiring four changes of train: one of them unscheduled, one with a fifteen hour layover, one requiring an overnight stay), she boards with much anticipation the French Sud-Express, which is to whisk her all the way to Paris in a scant twelve hours, without a single layover and provisioned with all the "múltiples refinamientos de la civilización actual" (1901:17).²³ Though she fully expects to experience "un viaje delicioso" (1901:18), the reality is quite different. After first learning that the train lacks a "reservado de señoras," which strikes her as improper, she soon discovers that the "extraordinaria velocidad" (1901:19) that had initially seemed so enticing brings along with it noteworthy discomforts: words like "peligro," "mareo del mar," "sacudida violenta," "brutal," "tumbos," "angustia" fill the remainder of the chapter (and in fact readers learn later that another Sud-Express on the same route derailed with tragic results [1901:278]). Modernity, it seems, has its costs. Pardo Bazán at the end of this journey confesses a wave of great nostalgia for Spain, whose

stability of life and tenacious grip on tradition are now warmly construed in her mental image of venerable trains slowly chugging their way across the Spanish countryside with an air of “majestuosa calma” (1901:23). Nevertheless, and despite appearing to have laid an elaborate groundwork for presenting the darker side of the modern experience, once she encounters the awe-inspiring “golpe de vista” (1901:29) of the Fairgrounds’s grand portal, this narrative line is essentially abandoned, having no role to play within the text’s subsequent full-bore regenerationist mapping of the World’s Fair site.²⁴

Over the course of her chronicle, Pardo Bazán compares the World’s Fair to many things: a University, a Museum, but perhaps most insistently a Book. “¿Por dónde empezar la lectura del voluminoso infolio?” she asks herself at one point, then quickly answers her own question: “No se pregunta. ¡Claro es que por Española!” (33). And this is indeed precisely where her cultural scrutiny begins, and ends. *Cuarenta días en la Exposición* is a book about the World’s Fair, but it is also a proposal for charting a new course for post-1898 Spain. She could but hope those who read it would glean the same lessons from the pages of her display.

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Notes

¹ Although Pardo Bazán herself indicates that she wrote the 1889 chronicles for “un público americano” (1899:13), González Herrán reports that scholars have been unable to trace the texts to a Latin American journal (see his note 16). Freire provides the reference to *La España Moderna* (2005:23).

² According to González Herrán, a total of 13 installments of the original series were eliminated in the 1899 version, with “notables cambios” to the remaining text (see 91, and his note 17).

³ As Pardo Bazán herself put it, “Tienen estas crónicas que parecerse más a conversación chispeante [...] que a demostración didáctica” (1899:12).

⁴ See, especially, David Henn’s “Reflections of the War of 1898 in Pardo Bazán’s Fiction and Travel Chronicles” and Ronald Hilton’s “Emilia Pardo-Bazan and the Americas.” Those interested in consulting a detailed accounting of Pardo Bazán’s references to the Spanish-American War (both in her World’s Fair chronicles and other turn-of-the-century texts) are recommended to consult these exhaustive and coherent studies.

⁵ Kate Hill’s succinct review of display analysis with respect to museums is useful here: “One of the most important of the ways in which museums have been interpreted has been as a means by which power is exercised, or as a creator of power relations. Such analyses unsurprisingly tend to take Foucault’s ideas about power as a starting point, and think about how the museum as an institution, and as a producer of knowledge, and as a public building shaping space, constitutes power relationships and exercises power. This includes the use it makes of theoretical disciplines, architecture and the deployment of internal space, and of people and things within that space” (4-5). Though the organizational principles and cultural connotations of museum display are not entirely subsumable to the World’s Fair context, a number of points of intersection exist with respect to the dynamic of display in both venues. In addition to the now-canonical treatment by Foucault (see, e.g., *Power/Knowledge*), for other illuminating studies of museum culture see, e.g., Bohrer, Hooper-Greenhill, Lavine, Schwartz and Przyblyski, Sherman. For more specific discussion of these processes within the Exposition context see, e.g., Rydell, Wallis.

⁶ Bohrer summarizes these vying interests of display, noting that “the mute, passive object lies under the active, controlling gaze of the viewer, and under the ideological protocols of the institution arranging the viewing. Moreover, both displayer and viewer are themselves [...] tied to specific constituencies and function within them” (198).

⁷ The 1889 text often adopts a tone of clear racial hierarchy, as seen in the chapter entitled “Digresiones—Gente rara,” which presents a largely disparaging account of the cultures and peoples of various African and Asian

regions whose exhibits she had attended. Regarding Pardo Bazán's racial attitudes, see Brian Dendle's "The Racial Theories of Emilia Pardo Bazán."

⁸ On the self-marketing dimensions of World Expositions, see, e.g., Vallejo's "Writing the World" (esp. 113-14), which additionally references other relevant scholarship, including Valis [2000-01].

⁹ As Mandell mentions, Alfred Picard, Commissioner General of the 1900 Exposition, sought to present his design as a celebration of the progress of all human civilization (35).

¹⁰ Total attendance is estimated to have been an astonishing 51 million patrons, leading Richard Mandell to term it "the largest and most ambitious international gathering for any purpose ever" (xi).

¹¹ See Vallejo: "Exhibitions are organized as an artificial space that immerses the public in a world of representations; by their very nature they create a visual discipline that reconstructs external reality as an image, a map or a photograph" (113).

¹² See Mandell's description (55). As he further notes, this system of locational hierarchy not surprisingly led to an extraordinary degree of jockeying for position among the various participant nations. The attendant diplomatic pressure ultimately led to the re-assignment of some pavilions, though never precisely on the terms the petitioning nation requested (55).

¹³ See, e.g., the account of her own arrival at the Fair, where only a few lines after announcing she intends to view the exhibits "sin prevenciones de ninguna clase," Pardo Bazán reveals that she does, in fact, bring with her a clearly defined ideological agenda, defined here as "la fe en el progreso" and an overarching concern for "las desdichas de mi patria" (1901:23).

¹⁴ Pardo Bazán's reaction to the size of the Fairground locale is typical of eye-witness reports from the time. See, e.g., Patrick Geddes's report in the November 1900 edition of *The Contemporary Review*: "No man has been able actually to see, much less is any able to show, this vast, indeed too vast, labyrinth of labyrinths, this enormous multitude of collections, this museum of museums" (655).

¹⁵ Though the 1889 chronicle also features a travel frame, these installments are largely devoted to observations and conjectures about France, with little travel description *per se*.

¹⁶ In the 1889 chronicle, she had likewise devoted several chapters to the topic, though with more restrained elaboration of its societal implications.

¹⁷ This history of clothing exhibition was presented in the then-new style of diorama, which offered another interesting case study of this shift in presumptions regarding the nature of display, by which re-creations of objects and circumstances begin to enhance or even replace the exhibition of original objects, such that fabrication came to be accepted as a legitimate form of communicating the 'real' (Aoulay 92).

¹⁸ As Henn has discussed at some length, Pardo Bazán evaluates Spain's cultural predicament in similar terms in various other turn-of-the-century writings, including "La España de ayer y la de hoy" and *El niño de Guzmán*. See Henn (esp. 422-24)

¹⁹ As Brian Wallis notes, this kind of de-problematized and artificially unified sense of national cultural heritage remains a staple of national self-representation at international exhibitions to this day (277-78).

²⁰ As Noël Valis summarizes, "the dilemma for those with more forward-looking views became entangled in and apparently unresolvable either/or proposition: to be modern seemed to mean *not* to be Spanish" (2002:8).

²¹ Pardo Bazán was certainly not alone in seeing the French recovery following its 1870 humiliation at Médan as a model for Spain's possible regeneration. See, e.g., Duque (47) and Cacho Viu (77).

²² Regarding early critiques of museum display practices, see Sherman's "Quatremère/Benjamin/Marx: Art Museums, Aura, and Commodity Fetishism."

²³ Gómez Mendoza, in his study of "La modernización del transporte en España," suggests that the common *topos* of inadequate Spanish train service during this period was often exaggerated ("el diagnóstico pesimista establecido por los escritores regeneracionistas era poco respetuoso con la realidad" [123]). Though there is no indication that this is the case here, it is clear that Pardo Bazán intended the description of her Spanish journey to stand in direct juxtaposition to the "modernity" of her high speed and layover-free journey on the Sud-Express.

²⁴ The 1889 Fairground chronicle does give vent to the concerns that the 1900 account so carefully elides: "La que llamamos civilización, ¿es más que una batalla sin tregua, para ganar un pan amargo, para cubrir necesidades ficticias y para vivir roído de cuidados y en ahogo perpetuo? Y cuando decimos que hemos llevado la luz, la ciencia y el progreso a una región salvaje, ¿no podríamos añadir que llevamos la inquietud, el desasosiego y las penas del alma?" (1899: 197-98).