

5-2017

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An Embodiment of a True Woman in Emilia Pardo Bazán's
"Las medias rojas" and "El encaje roto"

By

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An Undergraduate Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Midway Honors Scholars Program
Honors College
15 April 2017

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to investigate Emilia Pardo Bazán's two short stories "Las medias rojas" and "El encaje roto" and how her works correlate with the "new woman" based upon the ideology "The Laugh of Medusa" by Hélène Cixous. I look at the two female characters and prove how Pardo Bazán created the "new woman." The thesis pursues to display how the author changes how female characters are presented in literature by placing independent, strong, and hopeful women within her works.

Introduction

Emilia Pardo Bazán was a nineteenth century author who explored many contentious topics through her short stories, articles, essays, and other pieces of literature. Even though Pardo Bazán is remembered for exploring the reality of society with her use of naturalism and depicting the truth of people's morals and situations, one of her most noted subjects of interest is the woman. In many of her works, Pardo Bazán displays the injustices women faced and the desire and desperate need of change. Similar to Pardo Bazán, Hélène Cixous is a writer who has a great focus on the condition of the woman and her role in the world. In the work, "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous creates a challenge for women writers that involves creating a "new woman" that will change the outlook of many people on the quality and worth of a woman. Although Pardo Bazán's is ahead of Cixous in time, the author personifies the challenge of creating the "new woman" in her two works "Las medias rojas" and "El encaje roto" with her feminist minded, innovative, and inspiring characters.

In Spain, Pardo Bazán was different from many women in her time. She was born in La Coruña, Spain in 1851 to a wealthy family who wanted their daughter to have many opportunities. She had a diverse background in education, traveled to numerous places, and was offered many more chances than the average woman because of her aptitude as a writer and knowledge in literature. Even though Pardo Bazán was a talented author, is considered one of the best writers of her time, and was well deserving of many opportunities because of her knowledge and talents, Pardo Bazán was denied many honors because of her status as a woman. Henriette Partzsch states about Pardo Bazán,

Nevertheless, even Pardo Bazán could not break through all the barriers that limited a woman writer's career in Spain at the turn of the century. Although she

was the first woman to receive a chair at a Spanish university (Contemporary Literature and Romance Languages at the Universidad Central in Madrid in 1916), she was thrice barred from becoming the first female member of the Real Academia Española (1).

Although she was able to do many things and hold certain, important positions because of her talents and ambition, Pardo Bazán was limited because she was a woman. Nonetheless, Pardo Bazán's career and life was restricted because she lived in a male dominated and ruling world. The author understood the disadvantages in the world that women faced from biases, customs, and unfortunate ways of thinking, and she knew that the world needed a change in order for women to be liberated.

Because of the inequitable society and numerous prejudices towards women, Pardo Bazán decided to represent women, bring the injustices to life, help others realize and understand the mistreatment for women, and demand changes for women throughout her literature. Pardo Bazán formed ideas about the role of women in the world and literature, and “[she] started an important literary controversy in which she championed a brand of naturalism that affirmed the free will of the individual” (Britannica 1). Her hope was that her works were used to show how people have the power and ability to make just decisions and critical changes in their lives, even if the action were in contrast with the society. Pardo Bazán began to explore a new movement, of early feminism, that would enable women to have more rights as an individual. Overall, Pardo Bazán was an active writer who knew many injustices of the world and who desired for a change.

Within her collection of diverse literature is a short story “Las medias rojas” that voices the story of a young Spanish woman named Ildara. She lives with her dominating father who

gives his daughter work at home. He controls everything within her life, from her appearance to her general lifestyle. However, Ildara dreams secretly to have a new life by immigrating to the “New World” in hope to find a better life full of “la suerte, hacia lo desconocido de los lejanos países” (Pardo Bazán 52). Within her plan, she would unfortunately face unknown risks, in order to change and gain a new life, but she is willing to make sacrifices to have power over herself and life. Nonetheless, her father uncovers her plan by finding the stockings that she had bought with her money she earned secretly without her father’s permission. He stops her by physically abusing her and disfiguring her face permanently. Without her beautiful and undamaged appearance, she would not be able to immigrate, nor be able to gain the life she desired. His actions destroyed her opportunity to travel with a new beginning; thus, she was trapped and unable to move forward.

Comparable to Ildara, Micaelita faces entrapment by her world, yet this character has different circumstances, outcomes, and opportunities. After three years of speculation from her family, neighbors, and friends, Micaelita, in “El encaje roto,” finally tells the story about her past, when she left her future husband, Bernado de Menses, at the altar. Micaelita told people in the past that she was overwhelmed and full of happiness that she did not want to disappear, but those excuses were opposite of the truth. At the beginning, Micaelita explains how both families were excited about the wedding and how joyful she was to be marrying her future husband. She thought he was a great man who would make her happy. On their wedding day, Micaelita wore a gown and veil made of lace given to her by Bernado. As she was walking down the aisle, her dress got caught on the door and ripped. Bernado was furious, and she saw that “en aquel instante fugaz se alzó un telón y detrás apareció desnuda un alma” (Pardo Bazán 1). She discovered that he would be angry, even abusive, if she was not perfect, and she decided to leave

him for her safety and herself. Her decision made her appear different and senseless to her family and friends; nonetheless, she takes a stand for person and her morals, and she defends her choice years later.

Comparable to Pardo Bazán, Cixous was a feminist author who predominantly wrote in the 1970s. She was well educated, and she understood the power of women. Her goal as a writer was to empower women to be independent and make an open-minded impact in the world. By gaining influence within the world, females will gain rights to a better living, equality in all aspects, and more power to accomplish greater things. In her work, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” Cixous calls for women to write and create a “new woman.” According to Cixous, a woman must write about women; likewise, the new woman thinks for herself, is not controlled by any man or woman, overcomes any guilt felt for wanting and earning independence, has power over her body, and most of all, loves herself and her life, in an environment that women are taught to hate many aspects about themselves by others (2040-41). Cixous demands that women write about the “new woman” who is independent and who believes in herself. The character has confidence and lives for herself, not any other person. When making a female personality, the creation needs to show independence and a desire for change within themselves, others, and their environment. Cixous forms the idea of the “new woman” to change how females are perceived in literature and to alter how society recognizes females and their roles, in the world.

Moreover, “The Laugh of Medusa” calls for a change within the way women think when they write or represent themselves. Cixous proclaims, “It is time to liberate the New Woman from the Old by coming to know her-by loving her for getting by, for getting beyond the old without delay by going out ahead of what the new woman will be, as an arrow quits the bow with a movement that gathers and separates the vibrations musically, in order to be more than herself”

(2042). Females need to discover a change from within, in order to better themselves and the world. They need to gain more knowledge of all subjects to be capable to create an improved self, surroundings, and interaction between people. In pursuance of releasing a woman, people must explore the idea of creating a new person. With Cixous's theory, authors must describe a realistic woman, who characterizes actual women who are different and who fight for their rights, needs, and wants. Female writers need to embrace the reality and break the chains and molds of the past submissive woman, and they need to find someone better than the person they are. The beginning of change for female's rights, ideas, and the individuality has to begin with women shifting the way females are embodied. Through the work, Cixous wants women to define a new empowering woman by putting themselves on paper.

The Nineteenth Century Female Reality

In order to create the “new woman,” Pardo Bazán displays the unjust realities that women had to face from the society that she represented. By using naturalism, she conveys how the society functioned, how all people lived, and how many people were imprisoned and restricted by the world in which they existed. The society she wrote about was a close reflection of the environment in which she existed. She told the stories and tragedies of the people around her and the effects that it had on many of them, including females. Many people comparable to the father of “Las medias rojas,” “quería emigrar, cansado de una vida de labor, indiferente a la esperanza tardía” (Pardo Bazán 52). The world was full of change, unknowns, and struggles stemming from economic and cultural development. Many people were afraid of this new growth, even if it was beneficial. This fear within people leads to entrapment to the self and even to others. The author wants to bring forth the society, the people’s fears and desires, and the unfortunate and beneficial outcomes.

Through Pardo Bazán’s work, “Las medias rojas,” she exposes the harsh life of a young woman, in Spain. Pardo Bazán writes about the tragedies women faced not only in a submissive life to men but also in a journey to find independence. Within “Las medias rojas,” Ildara works for her father, and she is supposed to do only what he commands and allows; however, she defies him, in order to better her life. From challenging her father, she faces consequences of “con el cerrado puño hirió primero la cabeza, luego el rostro, aparrando las medrosas manecitas, de forma no alterada aún por el trabajo, con se escudaba Ildara, trémula” (Pardo Bazán 52). For having something she wanted, she is punished and beaten. Pardo Bazán uses this to show how cruel the world was for many women. Through her literature, she is able to communicate the harsh reality of women, while also attempting to change the roles of females, and she “[t]rata de sensibilizar y

concienciar a sus coetáneos de la necesidad de cambiar, prácticamente, la vida de las mujeres, haciendo de ellas seres libres y no simples utensilios al servicio de sus maridos, hermanos o padres” (Cecovniuc 621). Pardo Bazán wanted life for women to be greater and more prosperous than being people who acted for men, worked for men, and basically lived for men. By displaying the tragedies of women, Pardo Bazán demonstrates the need for change and is able to create the “new woman.”

To pursue this further, Pardo Bazán’s “El encaje roto” presents again the society that verifies a world of inequality, and the injustice expresses the need for the “new woman.” In the work, Micaelita is faced with a life where marriage and a man define her entire being. Women were unable to function independently or solely because men and matrimony characterize a woman and the role that she has in her life. Rachel DuPlessis states about the role of females, “[Women are] not themselves [or] in control of the processes by which they are defined” and later she states women are “muted” (41). Society gave women no choice in their lives; they were to live powerlessly with no opinion. Women had no voice and little opportunity to better themselves and the conditions of their lives. Through out the work, the author criticizes the society and the lack of representation for women, in all aspects. Pardo Bazán displays how women were faced with unjust realities and were in a gender bias world that needed to be transformed.

Among others things, “Las medias rojas” presents how women were restricted by society and fixed roles for them. Ildara’s father controls her life, and he thus chooses her future. Nonetheless, she struggles and attempts to have control, but she fails because of her father and his male role of power. “Las medias rojas” exhibits the forced roles upon women, and “[i]t shows how women were manipulated and forced to continue to be part of a system from which

they desperately wanted to break free, whereby breaking free entailed nothing more than violation of an honor code or even worse, continued bondage within the system” (Gasior 753). Ildara denotes how women were very limited because of the way in which society was structured. Women had an inadequate number of choices, and they needed many more possibilities and an equal place to grow as individuals. Pardo Bazán uses “Las medias rojas” to display how society gives women certain roles that confine their abilities and life. Ildara’s life is a representation of many females who were very forcefully restrained from society and others. Inclusively, Pardo Bazán uses “Las medias rojas” as a medium to create the “new woman” because she defines the horrible, confined situation that many faced in the work because of their gender and placement in society.

Pardo Bazán’s “El encaje roto” indicates how women are limited and a need for more fulfilling options was demanded by women. Many females similar to Micaelita knew marriage would be one of the most restricted options that they would have, or it would be the only choice they had. Women had controlled opportunities since “[i]n literature and out, through all recorded history, women have lived by a script they did not write. Their destiny was to be married, circulated; to be given by one man, the father, to another, the husband; to become the mothers of men” (Heilbrun 108). Women are restrained because they only have one role. Men controlled their lives and ultimately their destinies. In “El encaje roto,” Pardo Bazán traces how females were faced with only limited opportunities, and they unfortunately had no freedom. The work shows that marriages were unequal because “[t]he nineteenth century wife has little power of freedom, little voice, within her own marriage. This dark side is not lost on Pardo Bazán. Being a wife, the epigraph reminds us, is a young’s lady’s ‘grave deber’ meant to be soberly undertaken with the utmost solemnity” (Hoffman 239). The most important thing for women at the time was

to be a good, obedient and faithful wife to their husband and to follow him. Their individuality and desires of more or different things, people, or ideas were not an important consideration or deliberated at all. Pardo Bazán relates through the rebellious bride that women had limits and that these boundaries not only took their freedom, but it also started a fire within women for drastic change.

To create the “new woman,” Pardo Bazán also confirms how much a change was needed for women because men dominated the society. In both works, Pardo Bazán displays that men were had all power of their lives and that they controlled the women that surrounded them. Through “Las medias rojas,” the father is in control of Ildara and dominates every aspect of her life. Pardo Bazán uses Ildara and her hopeless situation to engage readers “[to] ask ourselves if any reasonable explanation would have sufficed or if Ildara is doomed from the moment she initiates bargaining within a world exclusive to the business and negotiations of men” (Gasió 749). Pardo Bazán shows how in this society, women were intended to a lifeless, undesired future. In the male dominated world, women had numerous challenges to become a better individual, as Pardo Bazán confirms in “Las medias rojas.” They not only had to overcome the obstacles, but they also had to conquer the men and society. The world that Pardo Bazán represents controls all characteristics and lifestyle choices of women, demonstrating the need of the “new woman.”

Moreover, in “El encaje roto,” Pardo Bazán displays how males controlled or governed every aspect of society. When a woman was married, she was not starting her life as a wife; she was becoming her husband’s object. Pardo Bazán found that, “[e]l papel asignado a la mujer en la sociedad española, modificar, corregir o enmendar una situación, caracterizada por la falta de escolarización y subordinación al hombre” (Cecovniuc 621). The woman was submissive to her

husband, and she thus did not live for herself. She existed for others. In order for Pardo Bazán to create the “new woman,” she relates how society needed a great, progressive change from within because woman had no power or freedom from the men, in their lives.

Forming the “New Woman”

Initially, Pardo Bazán creates women characters that think for themselves. To break the traditional barriers for women, Pardo Bazán molds people who think for the furtherance of their lives, not for others. In the work, “Las medias rojas,” Ildara is a young woman who desires a life of her own. She considers her purchase of her red stockings a new future, “Y tanto más defendía su belleza, hoy que se acercaba el momento de fundar en ella un sueño de porvenir” (Pardo Bazán 52). Ildara thinks of an individual future full of hope, rather than the submissive role society has permitted to her. Pardo Bazán uses Ildara to show how women needed to find the inner strength to be independent minded. The “new woman” that Pardo Bazán found is full of ideas and plans for a better self and more fulfilling life. The author’s writing changes how women are perceived because “she did so to create independent-minded female protagonists who are able to thrive in a modernizing Spanish society rather than succumb to it” (Davis 155). Ildara wants her life to become better, no matter what she has to endure. She was ready to be different, even if it was not acceptable by society, and she wanted to break barriers and find her place in the world, apart from her father’s dictations and desires. Pardo Bazán uses Ildara to outline that women needed to think and consider themselves because society did not put a great importance on women’s wants and desires. With the individual, Pardo Bazán generates the “new woman” by producing a character that has independent, innovative thoughts that she puts into action to better her life.

In “El encaje roto,” Pardo Bazán again creates a female persona that reflects upon her person and future. Micaelita is excited about her marriage to her future spouse; however, this happiness is crushed in a moment, when her dress is accidentally torn. New thoughts enter Micaelita’s mind after her groom is disgusted with her and the occurrence over the dress, “Esta

convicción se apoderó de mí, y con ella vino otra: la de que no podía, la de que no quería entregarme a tal hombre, ni entonces, ni jamás” (Pardo Bazán 1). Micaelita is disgusted with the thought of marrying a selfish man that will eventually destroy her life and person. She thinks for herself in this moment, and her self-determining thoughts change her life. Pardo Bazán finds the “new woman” through Micaelita by giving her the courage and desire to consider herself, even if it is difficult, in contrast with family, or against the social norms. Pardo Bazán creates an individual female that wishes to better herself, and who does not need any other individual to make her own decisions. By seeing the horrible expression on her fiancé’s face, “[s]he alone realized that Bernardo had a strong but easy tendency toward violence, that he valued possessions over people, and that she did not want to spend her days as his wife” (Hoffman 242). Micaelita chooses to think of her own well being, instead of what society deemed correct. She looks for a life where she would be seen as equal, a person, and an individual, and from this desire, she decided to live for herself and be happy, rather than be abused. Overall, Micaelita is a creation of the “new woman” because she puts herself first and reflects upon her own desires to better her life and circumstances.

Pardo Bazán additionally makes the “new woman” by developing characters that are not controlled by any person. Around this time, women were often the objects of many men, and with this role, women lost the power to control their actions and lives. Through out Pardo Bazán’s works, she often creates women who take control of their life after being ordered by other individuals. In “Las medias rojas,” Pardo Bazán produces a young female character Ildara that is brave enough to defy her father and society, no matter what the risk. Ildara breaks society norms, “Cumplida la mayor edad, libre de la autoridad paterna, la esperaba el barco, en cuyas entrañas tantos de su parroquia y de las parroquias circunvecinas se habían ido hacia la suerte,

hacia lo desconocido de los lejanos países donde el oro rueda por las calles y no hay sino bajarse para cogerlo . . . Ella iría sin falta” (Pardo Bazán 52). Ildara wanted to be liberated and find a new individual life. She desired to have a life of her own, away from her family and apart from the life she has under her father. Pardo Bazán generates the “new woman” by making Ildara dream of freedom and performing dangerous actions in order to gain this independence. With the forbidden stockings, she chooses to find her own life. Pardo Bazán created the “new woman” by illustrating a female character that reasons for her person and considers herself initially. This protagonist does not let the opinions and standards of others influence the dreams and aspirations that she has developed for herself. Throughout the short story, Pardo Bazán designs the “new woman” by constructing a woman that is an independent minded young female that puts the thoughts of others to the side, in order to gain a more fulfilling life and the existence that she desires.

Similarly, Pardo Bazán builds a female character that will not be controlled in “El encaje roto.” Micaelita is different from many other people before and during her time because she is not submissive; she lives for her happiness. Unlike many others, Micaelita questioned her future with her fiancé, and she acted upon her doubts and fears because she would not form to any man. Micaelita says, “Pero cuando me preguntaron, la verdad me saltó a los labios, impetuosa, terrible... Aquel «no» brotaba sin proponérmelo; me lo decía a mí propia.... ¿para que lo oyesen todos” (Pardo Bazán 1). Micaelita knows any person, especially a man or husband, would not control her, nor does she want anyone to control her. The character wants to be free, and she is able to live her life the way in which she chooses. With the courage displayed, one can see how Pardo Bazán’s character was a courageous, strong, and independent minded individual. This person has the ability to be different from many women at her time, and she defies the social

standards, in order to gain independence and freedom. Pardo Bazán uses “El encaje roto” to illustrate the “new woman” by showing that Micaelita is a young individual who will not be altered by any person, and she will determine the actions and decisions in her life. Micaelita’s situation and actions indicate that “[m]any women who are ignorant of their husband before marriage, yet Micaelita had knowledge of her violent partner. She chose to act upon this knowledge” (Arbaiza 448). Micaelita was fortunate enough to know what her future partner would be like, and she knew that her life would be full of disastrous, destroying events with him. She made the decision to not to be controlled by a man. Pardo Bazán’s Micaelita represents the “new woman” who selects her own path and who does not abide by the decisions and life choices of others.

Along with control of actions, the “new woman” has control of her body. Society placed restraints on how women dressed, demonstrated, and treated their bodies, while also dictating how females used their physique. When Ildara bought the red stockings, she chose to take a stand on the restrictions of her body, as well. Even though the situation of facing mysteries was not ideal or known and new challenges of being independent would follow, Ildara was using her body for herself. She began to dress better and attempt to make her appearance more attractive in day-to-day life. Ildara’s description of her appearance and physique detail how Ildara takes control of her body because “[t]he initial description of Ildara’s touching her hair is noteworthy as the verb ““atusarse,”” in addition to ““to smooth down,”” or ““to comb,”” can also mean ““to overdress,”” (“Atusarse”) ... Indeed, Ildara’s act of tidying her appearance contrasts with her father’s disregard for personal grooming and lack of hygiene” (Davis 54). The character decides to form ownership over her body by dressing and creating an image that she desires. Her body becomes her possession, and she takes leadership over not only her outward appearance, but she

also takes ownership of how it is used. Pardo Bazán arranges a female character that understands that all humans have rights to their person and body. Ildara embodies the recognition of possessing one's body, and she resolves to use her it in a different, unconventional way to benefit herself. Her choices of dress break the conventional mold of female entrapment by the society of her work, and her actions to use her body shape her new life. By dressing and making her body to her likes and using her it to fulfill her dreams, Ildara exemplifies the "new woman" who uses every ability and thing she can to further her life, in a positive, moving way.

While Ildara uses her body to gain new things and become who she desired to be, Micaelita uses her body to break the mold of the society's established female. As Micaelita diminishes the idea of marrying for only security and to gain favor within the society, she creates a statement with her body. Women at the time were known to be modest, soft, generous, giving, and dependent upon others, and after marriage, their bodies belonged to their husbands for the males' desires. Micaelita uses her body to represent a person who owns himself or herself, without having to give to any undeserving or unrighteous person or thing. The character is a "simultaneous fabrication and destruction of conventional images of femininity" (Tolliver 78). By walking away from an entrapping, abusive marriage, she declares the possession of her body. Micaelita abandons the womanly, dependent, and weak persona known by society to become an independent, in control individual. No person controls what she does with her body. With this rejection of the communal standards for a female's body, Pardo Bazán invents the "new woman" because the woman decides to not allow mistreatments and oppression to occur to her body. The "new woman" utilizes every part of her, including: thoughts, intellect, and body, to gain independence and control of her lives. Forming power and dominance over the body allows

Pardo Bazán to create the “new woman” through Micaelita who demands control of all aspects of her life.

Furthermore, guilt often overrides people’s life decisions, and the blame deters them from making certain choices that can affect their lives, in a dramatic way. Often, people feel guilt for choosing a life that is only designed with their own life in mind. Many times, women felt this same fault for defying society, around the time of Pardo Bazán. The society deemed such grave importance on the role of the submissive woman to the man, and numerous women had guiltiness for overcoming these standards. In Pardo Bazán’s works, she makes female characters that do not have guilt for choosing a life in which they want to take part. Through out “Las medias rojas,” readers are introduced to Ildara that goes for her own individual life, and she contains no guilt about her father. Ildara states, “Gasto medias, gasto medias-repitíó, sin amilanarse-. Y si las gasto, no se las debo a ninguen” (Pardo Bazán 52). The female character has no shame and fear that she bought the stocking to further her life. She feels no guilt for purchasing the stockings; her future is more important to her than pleasing others and obeying other’s ruling. Pardo Bazán uses Ildara’s desire for a brighter future and her lack of consideration to other’s opinions to create the “new woman” who has no guilt for wanting a better, more rewarding life. Pardo Bazán strives for a world of equality where “[w]omen enjoyed the freedoms long afforded to men” (Davis 155). Women were beginning to enjoy the ideas of independence, rather than feel remorse for having or desiring the new freedoms and privileges. The author utilizes the young girl’s attitude to display that women felt joy in the idea of independence, and they did not have guilt. Ildara is a construction of the “new woman” because Ildara embodies a female individual that has no shame in her desires and aspiring actions. The lack of guilt and abundance of ambition within the character visualize the “new woman.”

Through “El encaje roto,” Pardo Bazán shows a life of a young girl that acts out of being for herself and who does not care about what others think or say. Micaelita lives for herself, and she has no guilt or concerns for her actions. The character knew that her life would be full of disappointment, no growth, and dependence with the marriage, and she concludes, “En mi interior algo crujía y se despedazaba, y el júbilo con que atravesé el umbral del salón se cambió en horror profundo” (Pardo Bazán 1). Micaelita recognizes the true person of the man she was about to marry, and she could not fathom living with a man who would treat her wrongly over an accident or abuse her. After contemplation of the situation, she has no problem with discussing that she left her husband, and she has no shame for making a decision that was for the benefit of her only. Pardo Bazán crafts the “new woman” because Micaelita embodies a woman protagonist that realizes and understands that life would be horrible, insensible, and hopeless without choosing to live for herself, and this character has no guilt over her decisions. She is a free character that “is the protagonist who stands out as the most independent. By leaving her suitor at the altar, she shows that she has a tremendous will to forge her own path, rather than following the one that society deems appropriate” (Walter 18). Pardo Bazán creates a woman who does not succumb to the ideas of her society, rather she establishes herself as her own individual. The “new woman” is exhibited because Micaelita has no shame in her decision, and she is able to tell people that she said no to a life with her future husband. With Micaelita, Pardo Bazán makes the “new woman” by giving her qualities of independence, courage, and ability to feel confident with her desire of living beyond the present.

With the “new woman,” the person not only loves others, but also more importantly, she understands that she has to, wants to, and needs to love herself. The “new woman” has an appreciation for herself, and the woman that she has become by overcoming the obstacles and

breaking the boundaries of the stagnant woman mold of the past. Within “Las medias rojas,” the young Ildara loves herself enough to stand up against her father, even when he hits her. Maria Ojea Fernández speaks of the never ending struggle between Ildara and her father and how she has no guilt for believing in herself, “Mientras, las protagonistas de Tío . . . [y Ildara] intentan luchar y no darse por vencidas, aunque de una manera u otra no lo consiguen” (165). Ildara valued herself as a progressive, independent minded person. She had made arrangements to immigrate and find the freedom in which she had always dreamed. Her love for her new life is intense enough for her to stand against an angry, abusive, and destructive individual, and she showed no fear. Pardo Bazán created the “new woman” by finding a woman who appreciates herself and who loves the person who she will become. With Ildara, the author displays the characteristics of the “new woman” by making Ildara an individual who would rather die attempting to gain her wanted life, than not love herself and not strive to become into the person she admires.

Similar to Ildara, Micaelita puts herself first because she loves the person that she has become. At the time, being a single woman was difficult because men held the majority of power and opportunities. Micaelita complains, “Maldecía yo mil veces la sujeción de la mujer soltera, para la cual es imposible seguir los pasos a su novio, ahondar en la realidad y obtener informes reales, sinceros hasta la crudeza” (Pardo Bazán 1). She understands the consequences of being a single female at the time and how life can be miserable for them. A woman’s focus supposedly needed to be upon a man and her future or current marriage. Nonetheless, Pardo Bazán chooses to defy the standards and create a female character that chooses herself over being comfortable and the society’s standards. She produces the “new woman” by shaping a person that not only is independent, but that also loves herself. Micaelita appreciates herself enough to have her

reputation ruined by the assumptions of her friends, family, and community. She accepts that her life will be more difficult in a financial or reputational sense, but she gains a more peaceful, rewarding life by being free. By Micaelita electing to admire her person over an easier option, Pardo Bazán shaped the “new woman” who chooses to make her life decisions based on her wishes and needs.

Furthermore, the “new woman” makes her place in history. The “new woman” does not have to be someone who is famous or world changing; they simply mark history by changing the normal and unprogressive ideas and moving forward from the past woman. In “Las medias rojas,” her purchase of the stockings, the effects of the purchase, and the stockings mark her place in her world, even if she failed to gain independence. Pardo Bazán uses the stockings to symbolize different things, and

While for the reader the red [stockings] signify beauty, womanhood, blood, menstruation, and a step toward sexuality, a healthy movement in a woman’s life that leads toward her desire to leave the village and enter the modern world, for the father the [stockings] stand for perversion, depravity, and abandonment of the morality of the countryside (Sherzer 199).

Ildara represents a progressive step in history. The purchase of stockings portrays a young woman who takes her life into her own hands, knowing that horrible and dangerous consequences could possibly follow. Even though Ildara did not gain independence through her bold move, her brave actions of buying the stockings mark the place of a brave girl, who defied society for the betterment of herself and women in Spain. Although Ildara did not receive an improvement in her life, her journey displays progression, in history because she acts upon her desires for betterment.

Equally, Micaelita is a character that Pardo Bazán uses to influence all genders, in history. Not only does Micaelita make advancing strides in her decision to leave her angry fiancée at the altar, she becomes the narrator of her own story. This idea makes Micaelita different from many others. Her story is pure, and it truly marks the role of the “new woman.” The narrator changes how many stories express messages and influence the readers, and in the work, “[t]he framing narrator does so through her insistence that her knowledge is either secondhand [of her wedding day] or entirely fantastic [her envision of the wedding day] while [Micaelita] insists on the simultaneous truth and incredibility of her story” (Tolliver 71). With the first person point of view, readers are able to focus in on the horrible conditions of her situation. Pardo Bazán wanted readers to understand the role of Micaelita and her journey to liberation and individuality. Her voice, her ability to represent herself, and her journey place herself in the world. Micaelita is able to describe her experiences whether exciting or terrible of moving towards independence, and she gives readers an insight of the emotions and the struggles of going against society to become the person in which she wanted to become. Pardo Bazán creates the “new woman” with Micaelita because the young female strives for freedom as a woman, in a time where women were not given independence easily, yet she has the courage to tell her own story. Her life places her in history because she progressed into the new movement of making women’s rights important and more significant, equal. Pardo Bazán makes the “new woman” through Micaelita because she is a strong woman, who made great changes and displayed progressive thoughts.

Additionally, Pardo Bazán creates the “new woman” by putting herself and her beliefs in literature. Even though Pardo Bazán had a better, more opportunistic life than many women, she knew the injustices women faced, and she still tackled many issues through out her life. Pardo

Bazán's literature has great power and influence because she puts her emotions and experiences in her works. She reinforces the power of female involvement. Marta Bajo explains about the author's roles, "La participación de las mujeres fue muy notable, entre ellas la de Emilia Pardo Bazán, cuya Memoria se incluye en la Antología. En ella insiste en lo deficiente y erróneo de la educación femenina, que no es educación sino doma dirigida a crear un ser obediente, pasivo y sumiso" (1). Pardo Bazán believed that women, even herself, were not being educated to become independent better individuals. Women were being cultivated to become the submissive role that society wanted. Pardo Bazán puts herself in her literature by showing the injustices women encountered and by putting strong female characters, similar to her, who stand up for their wants and rights. The roles of Ildara and Micaelita have characteristics of Pardo Bazán's revolt against society, the expectations of women, and the ways in which women are treated because these females uniquely find ways to rebel against the patriarchy of their society. With the placement of her beliefs and person in these works, she creates the "new woman." Her character is a representation of herself and the many things that women met during her lifetime. Although Ildara essentially failed to gain liberation, she embodies the "new woman" who believes in herself enough to attempt to defy her family and society to gain a better, more fulfilling life. Conversely, Micaelita pictures the difficulties of gaining independence and the joy of being independent, and her character is the embodiment of the "new woman" because Pardo Bazán put her self-determining thoughts and person into Micaelita's personality and life. Throughout both short stories, Pardo Bazán found great ways to represent women and construct a new idea by inserting herself within her texts.

Likewise, Pardo Bazán recognized that women are called to take charge of their lives, if they want to see progress in society, people, and the world. With the injustices of the

surroundings and the unrealistic standards, Pardo Bazán understood that without change and belief in the power of women, nothing would change and no growth would be made, and she “also pointed out the responsibility of society and of the women themselves when it comes to overcoming situations of gender abuse” (Anderson 135). The author realized that new ideas would not be revealed and injustices would not change without women fighting for their own justice. Women, similar to herself, had to take charge and stand up for their beliefs and rights, whether it was in their daily lives, works of literature, or occupations. Pardo Bazán puts her position, opinions, and self into her works by establishing characters that attempt to take responsibility for their lives and to find justice. Ildara and Micaelita form the “new woman” because readers can see Pardo Bazán’s person and principles, and they are able to understand her ideas. Ildara bought the stockings knowing that she may be abused, yet she made the purchase to move forward with her life. Micaelita otherwise knew that her future husband was going to be an abusive partner, and instead of following the social standard of marriage, she chooses to be different and find a new, healthy life where she is able to be independent and not in harm. Both “Las Medias Rojas” and “El encaje roto” present Pardo Bazán’s influence in her world, and she displays that with her characters, she was a woman who believed in the power of females and the rights as human beings.

Even though Pardo Bazán wrote many works that were influential, powerful, and beautiful, she was not always awarded positions and honors. Many believe gender played a role in her lack of rewards for her work. From the injustices she faced, she knew how gender influenced the growth of a human in all aspects of their lives. Pardo Bazán understands the inequalities women had, and she expresses in her works that

La mujer es lo que el hombre ha querido que sea, y esta dependencia atenúa, en buena medida, su responsabilidad. Víctima de una precaria educación y sometida a continuas limitaciones, lejos de marchar acorde con el progreso, la mujer ha sufrido una involución, especialmente a partir del siglo XVIII, que le ha hecho perder sus ideales, sin poder reemplazarlos por otros nuevos, patrimonio exclusivo del hombre, que con cada conquista en el terreno de las libertades no ha hecho sino ensanchar aún más el abismo existente entre él y la mujer (Núñez 309).

Society repressed females in the age of Pardo Bazán, and she felt the many consequences of the limitations upon women. Women were forced by society's ideas and the superiority of men that they were unequal and unworthy of many honors and rights, and this repression forced women into thinking less of themselves. The discriminations and cruelties women had to endure left them dependent, which was intended and desired by the society. Pardo Bazán recognized this agony that women confronted, and she addresses these discriminations herself. Therefore, she attempted to find ways to fight against these tragedies.

With her works, "Las medias rojas," and "El encaje roto," she creates women characters that receive injustices. Ildara not only opposed her abusive and controlling father, but she also underwent the lack of opportunities for young women. In order to become free, she was going to bear prostitution, and this was the only way to escape into better opportunity. Pardo Bazán proves through Ildara that women had to take drastic measures in order to gain independence from the male ruling. She positions herself and beliefs in the literature by showing a young woman who experiences the injustices. Micaelita also sees ideas of injustices. She is faced with an abusive fiancé that will one day beat her, if she is not the perfect, beautiful, and loving wife.

Pardo Bazán uses this character to display once again the injustices many women suffered.

Micaelita was going to have a life of anguish and pain, in her home, and Pardo Bazán wanted this injustice known. With these females, she made the “new woman” by placing her passions and her own battles of gender discrimination and inequalities within her two works. Overall, the author places herself within her literature to make the “new woman,” and this creation verifies the many injustices women encountered and how strong women overcame the obstacles.

Conclusions

Both Pardo Bazán's works "Las medias rojas" and "El encaje roto" stimulate new ideas about society, marriage, and people in nineteenth century Spain. Her short stories challenge readers to reflect upon their own lives to reconsider and change the injustices that surround them. Even though these two works deal with many other issues, the representation, value, and lives of women are Pardo Bazán's largest focus. Through Ildara and Micaelita, the author breaks barriers for females and the way in which women are perceived in literature. Both characters are different individuals who embody the "new woman" created by Cixous through their beliefs, actions, and standards.

In "Las medias rojas," Pardo Bazán gives readers an idea of the harsh reality that many young women faced. She delineates the real situations of women where abuse and restriction are the standards. Within the short story, Ildara attempts to transform her life from these customs to further her life. Her role embodies Cixous's "new woman" by being an individual who thinks, acts, speaks, and loves herself. Ildara is confident and believes in her abilities, intelligence, and dreams. The actions of the young girl not only influenced how readers perceived young females and their abilities, but the activities and character reflect upon the author. Through out the work, Ildara exemplifies the "new woman" and how readers think about females, their power, and roles.

Resembling Ildara, Micaelita is a new type of female character, in nineteenth century literature. She takes charge of her life by living for her beliefs and ideas. By making the decision to not marry an abusive man, she chooses to be independent and different from the normal woman, at the time. No person made her choices; she makes her life by being self-assured and not being preoccupied with guilt or shame. Through Micaelita, Pardo Bazán changes how

females are represented in literature, which reflects upon the female of the world. Her character is a reflection of the woman of Spain, while depicting the author herself. The “new woman” replicated by Micaelita not only signifies a strong female identity, but the woman also changes how people think of females.

Looking upon Pardo Bazán’s two short stories, the two prime female characters are progressive individuals who shape their lives by understanding their situations and fighting for a better future. The protagonists revolutionize female exemplification and the overall quality of women. By forming the “new woman” through these personas, Pardo Bazán influenced the way women are presented in literature, and the females helped revolutionize equality among all individuals. Pardo Bazán creates the “new woman” by forming two strong females that reflect the philosophies of an independent woman.

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