

# “Eveline” and “*Las medias rojas*”: Joyce, Emilia Pardo Bazán, and the Emigration Question

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## *Abstract*

The article compares Galician writer Emilia Pardo Bazán’s short story “Las medias rojas” (1914) with Joyce’s “Eveline” (1904). The author demonstrates that the similarities between both texts are to be understood in the concomitant circumstances of Galicia and Ireland at the turn of the century, that the writers were prone to expose and denounce, paying particular attention to the condition of women at the time.

**Keywords:** Emilia Pardo Bazán, James Joyce, Galicia, Ireland, emigration, women.

Readers of Joyce will recognize a plotline in which a young woman living under the thumb of her father, a violent widower, is seduced by the possibility of escaping from home in pursuit of a promising future in the Americas as that of his short story, “Eveline.” Yet this sequence of events also occurs in “*Las medias rojas*” [“The Red Stockings”], a short story written by Emilia Pardo Bazán, a Galician feminist writer from A Coruña. In her version of the narrative, Ildara, her protagonist, plans to board a boat to the Americas behind her

father's back in an effort to attain "*la suerte, lo desconocido de los lejanos países*" ["good fortune, the unknown of distant lands"].<sup>1</sup> Despite the threat of being forced into prostitution abroad implied by both authors, Ildara and Eveline pursue escape, hoping to arrive at independence and financial stability. On the day of departure, however, neither woman is aboard her respective ship. Both Eveline and Ildara, outside the framework of their narratives, sit at home that night.

The coexistence of two short stories as strikingly similar as Bazán's "*Las medias rojas*" and Joyce's "Eveline" admittedly raises the question of influence. It seems virtually impossible, however, that either author could have come into contact with the other's work. Though Joyce published "Eveline" in an Irish newspaper in 1904, its real debut was its publication in *Dubliners* in 1914—the same year Bazán published "*Las medias rojas*." No evidence pointing to correspondence between the two authors exists. In fact, the possibility of their even reading each other's work is remote, as "Eveline" was translated into Spanish for the first time in 1928, seven years after Bazán's death; a published English translation of "*Las medias rojas*" has yet to surface, despite its frequently being anthologized. Moreover, it does not seem that Joyce harbored much of an interest in Spanish literature, much less in the work of his contemporary, Bazán. While the striking similarities in plot evident in "Eveline" and "*Las medias rojas*" remain a matter of remarkable chance, the theme informing them is far from coincidence.

The issue of emigration looms large in any history of turn-of-the-century Ireland or Spain, especially Galicia. Indeed, between 1911 and 1913, 29.62% of people emigrating from Spain were from Galicia.<sup>2</sup> In his book *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* Jose C. Moya points out that Galicia, the "Ireland of Spain," provided close to four-tenths of the immigrants in Buenos Aires at the time.<sup>3</sup>

Considering the living conditions in Galicia and Ireland at the turn of the century, this emigration comes as no surprise. While other European countries ushered in the era of

Modernism, Ireland and Galicia languished as intellectually and commercially dormant communities. Much like the Irish countryside, the Galicia of 1900 existed as a chain of insulated, pre-industrial medieval towns. Sharif Gemie describes the Galician countryside as a “densely elaborate spider’s web, stretching from the house, through the hamlet, the village, the parish, to the market town.”<sup>4</sup> Galicia also entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century with no real available modes of modern communication or transportation. It was not until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that a railroad was established in the area.<sup>5</sup> Under these circumstances, it is no wonder that the Galician people failed to organize and improve its conditions.

Industrial development was no exception. Canning and cigar factories were the only evidence of industry in the Galician capital, A Coruña. Even these, however, were controlled by Catalán, British, and Basque investors.<sup>6</sup> In her book, *Dublin: the Deposed Capital*, Mary E. Daly describes Dublin as “the entrepot for British trade and commercial influence and presumably the main centre for the diffusion of British culture in Ireland.”<sup>7</sup> Dublin’s native industries simply did not develop, with the exception of brewery and biscuit factories.<sup>8</sup> As a result of Ireland’s failure to industrialize, most of its goods were imported from Britain. Thus, industry in both Galicia and Ireland yielded little profit and few jobs for their inhabitants.

Without a doubt, Galicia at the turn of the century functioned as a colonial society. The poor suffered at the hands of the *caciquismo* system, by which the nobility of Galicia, or *hidalgúa*, maintained total political control of the region, manipulating and threatening villagers to vote in their favor.<sup>9</sup> While the rest of Spain extirpated the *caciquismo* system with relative success, Galicia continued to suffer. In a comparable manner, the native Irishman, a second-class citizen in his own country, suffered at the hands of the British upper classes, which held most high-ranking occupations while the rest of the country wallowed in unemployment. To be sure, Ireland and Galicia alike suffered the social issues universal to poverty:

unhealthy diets, dirty and crowded housing, disease, alcoholism, and prostitution. According to Joseph O. Brien, author of *Dear, Dirty Dublin*, starving, barefooted children roamed the streets of Dublin.<sup>10</sup>

Brenda Maddox's biography of Nora Barnacle begins with an account of her departure from Ireland amid a slough of hopeful emigrants, observing that for every Irish young person at the turn of the century, "the question of emigration is as inescapable as it has been since the Great Famine of the

1840s."<sup>11</sup> Certainly, Joyce's "Eveline" and Pardo Bazán's "*Las medias rojas*" bear testament to this notion. "Eveline," a story concerning emigration, contains mentions of migration independent of Eveline's own considerations: the Waters, who went back to England and her father's schoolmate, who moved to Melbourne (*D* 37). Pardo Bazán's narrative also takes care to reveal the centrality of the emigration question in impoverished Galicia. In "*Las medias rojas*" Ildara imagines her boat as having once contained many former inhabitants of her village and neighboring ones, who had since left Galicia in pursuit of foreign riches of fairy-tale status: "*la esperaba el barco, en cuyas entrañas tanto de su parroquia y de las parroquias circunvecinas se habían ido hacia la suerte... donde el oro reda por las calles y no hay sino bajarse para cogerlo.*"

["the boat awaited her, within whose bowels so many of her fellow parishioners and members of surrounding parishes had gone toward good fortune...(to) where gold is scattered through the streets and one need only bend down to pick it up"].<sup>12</sup> This statement is followed immediately by the assertion that Ildara's father, calloused by a life of hard work and indifferent to hope for a better life, categorically did not want to emigrate: "*El padre no quería emigrar, cansado de una vida de labor, indiferente a la esperanza tardía.*" ["The father did not want to emigrate, tired by a life of hard work, indifferent to late hope"].<sup>13</sup> Ildara, however, would escape "*sin falta,*" without hesitation.<sup>14</sup> After all, as Maddox remarks about

Nora's situation, "If not, why not?"<sup>15</sup>

Paralleling the overwhelming surge of emigration at the turn of the century was a gush of anti-emigration literature. In her groundbreaking essay, “‘Don’t Cry for me, Argentina’: ‘Eveline,’ White Slavery and the Seductions of Propaganda,” Katherine Mullin compiles extensive relevant research on the white slave trade panic in Ireland. Propaganda warning against the evils and dangers of emigration flooded Ireland at the turn of the century, tales of seduction and abandonment, “startlingly uniform melodramas of innocent country girls, villainous suitors from overseas, false promises of marriage, and, eventually, the chloroformed cloth, hypodermic syringe or drugged drink that led to certain ‘ruin’ in an overseas ‘house of shame.’”<sup>16</sup> Already by the 1860s, the Continental press, too was publishing its share of frightening tales. Spain was inundated with pamphlets titled, for example, *Hijos que se ausentan* [Sons (and Daughters) Who Depart], *La zafra de carne* [The Harvest of Flesh], *La peregrinación de los vencidos* [The Wandering of the Vanquished], and *Ébano blanco* [White Ebony].<sup>17</sup> Galicians in particular were warned against the promise of work as a maid or governess, as such professions were known to be merely a disguised road to the brothel.<sup>18</sup> The genre as a whole sought to discourage what it perceived to be a female penchant for romantic illusions, to provide, as Eveline’s father attempts to, a voice of “reason” to combat alleged sweet-talking philanderers.

Certainly, “Eveline” and “*Las medias rojas*” allude to the conventions of anti-emigration literature. Both feature young, motherless women. Eveline’s middleman, Frank is also her significant other, even promising a home waiting for the couple in Buenos Aires. Though Ildara is also not involved in a romantic relationship with the man arranging her voyage, the threat of white slavery rears its head clearly in the form of her red stockings, purchased by five *pesos* he himself lends her.

Joyce’s and Pardo Bazán’s most significant departure from the genre they engage in dialogue with, however, is the way they choose to end their stories. Eveline, frozen on the spot, watches her boat sail away, suddenly indifferent to her lover’s cries to

follow him; Joyce writes, “Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition” (*D* 41). Upon discovering the stockings, Ildara’s father Tío Clodio beats her, essentially, to a pulp. Pardo Bazán remarks that he would have rather killed her than allow her to leave him: “*El cachete más violento cayó sobre un ojo...Luego, el Labrador aporreó la nariz, los carrillos. Fue un instante de furor, en que sin escrúpulo la hubiese matado, antes que verla marchar, dejándole a él solo, viudo...*” [“The most violent blow was over her eye...Later, the worker struck her nose and cheeks. It was an instant of rage, in which, without scruples, he would have killed her before watching her depart, leaving him alone, a widower.”]<sup>19</sup>

Not only does she lose a tooth in the ensuing struggle, but, due to a “retinal detachment,” she also remains blind in one eye.

It is important, moreover, that Eveline and Ildara are portrayed as more than Madame Bovary figures dependent on romantic fictions. Though Joyce does not describe Eveline as particularly intelligent, as she is “pleasantly confused” by the song about the “lass that loves a sailor” (*D* 39), she weighs her options, analyzing her relationship with her father, her responsibilities at home, and what will be said about her once she is gone; she reflects upon the death of her mother, whether she ought to stay in Dublin to take her place or escape “that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness” (*D* 40). It is interesting to note that these do not sound like the speculations of the stereotypically ingenuous young woman, falling prey to the seductions of a smooth-talking sailor. A closer examination of Eveline’s character reveals that she is, in fact, preoccupied with practicalities. Love is not her primary concern—her predominant concern is *life*: “Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness” (*D* 40). As Norris observes, “the tropes point to safety, security, and freedom from abuse and abasement...”<sup>20</sup> In “*Las medias rojas*,” Pardo Bazán makes frequent mention of Ildara’s obsessive care for her appearance. Rather than point to vanity, as her father charges, Ildara’s interest in her exterior is

targeted at protecting her chances of escaping home: “*Y tanto más defendía su belleza, hoy que se acercaba el momento de fundar en ella un sueño de porvenir*” [“And so much more she defended her beauty, now that the moment drew near to establish within it a dream for the future”].<sup>21</sup> Indeed, her primary reaction to her father’s beating is to protect her face.

Her disfigurement thus renders her fate all the more tragic. As Pardo Bazán notes in the final line of the story: “*Los que allá vayan, han de ir sanos, válidos, y las mujeres, con sus ojos alumbrando y su dentadura completa...*” [“Those who go there ought to be healthy and strong, the women with shining eyes and a complete set of teeth”].<sup>22</sup> These endings lend little support to the notion that a life at home is preferable to whatever might lie in store abroad.

Indeed, as Mullin’s research indicates, by the time Joyce (and Pardo Bazán) wrote their stories, skepticism about the white slave trade panic was already widespread. According to Donna J. Guy’s *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires*, anxieties about emigration were based on a modicum of true stories whose incidence was hugely exaggerated.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, those European women who did become prostitutes in Buenos Aires did so willingly, few fitting the image of the “middle-class virgin who had been seduced, drugged, or beaten into submission.”<sup>24</sup> Joyce’s treatment of the subject matter is patently ironic, since already by the turn of the century, social purity movements, like those responsible for publishing anti-emigration propaganda, were met with antipathy among Irish nationalists as “compromising that very self-sufficiency *The Irish Homestead* hoped to instill.”<sup>25</sup> The Spanish Government gives credence to this view in a statement voiced by the

Consejo Superior de Emigración: “the sex most chastised by the demoralization [of emigration] is the feminine one. Its characteristic weakness, inferior education, mental indigence, causes, in summary, of a physiological nature, combined with material ambition, give women an instinctual tendency to prostitute themselves...Emigration and prostitution: Both affairs appear intimately connected.”<sup>26</sup> Rather than provide

refuge from dangerous “immoral” influences, these movements did more to promote a stereotype of female helplessness and passivity. It was this misogynistic worldview that Pardo Bazán battled all her life, her struggle manifest throughout the abundance of work she published in her lifetime. In essays with such titles as “*La mujer española*” [“The Spanish Woman”]

(1890), “*La educación del hombre y de la mujer*” [“The Education of the Man and of the Woman”] (1892), “*La cuestión académica*” [“The Academic Question”] (1891), and “*Una opinión sobre la mujer*” [“An Opinion About Women”]

(1892), Bazán railed against double standards and domestic abuse, always pointing out the necessity for education for women. To this end, she founded “*Biblioteca de la mujer*” [“The Woman’s Library”], a book series that released seminal feminist works, such as John Stuart Mill’s *On the Subjection of Women* and August Bebel’s *Die Frau und der Sozialismus*, in translation.<sup>27</sup> Despite identifying herself as Catholic, Pardo

Bazán endlessly condemned the Church’s hypocritical attitude toward women. She writes: “It scarcely ever happens that the confessor advises a woman to protest, struggle, and emancipate herself, instead of submitting, yielding, and obeying.”<sup>28</sup>

Joyce’s mention of the priest’s “yellowed photograph” beside the promises of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque demonstrates the same idea. As Margot Norris points out, the image given to the reader of Eveline’s mother is not that of a woman experiencing any level of peace, comfort, or security.<sup>29</sup>

Joyce and Pardo Bazán, without question, highlight home as more dangerous than a journey to the Americas. By the ends of the stories, Eveline and Ildara are doomed to lives of dread and panic, subject at all times to the looming threat of domestic abuse (a threat carried to fruition in Ildara’s case).

Moreover, as R.B. Kershner writes of Eveline in his book, *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature*, “the scene is ripe for incest, with her mother dead, her father both threatening physical abuse just as she attains marriageable age and reacting violently to the threat of a suitor for her.”<sup>30</sup> This statement is, of course, applicable to Ildara’s predicament as well.



Beyond physical danger, though, the women are also sentenced to a lifetime of intellectual and emotional stagnation. Both stories open with their protagonists struggling under the suffocating burden of their respective home lives. Ildara enters the cottage she shares with her father weighed down by a bundle of kindling, then immediately proceeds to prepare a meal. All the while, her father ignores her, engrossed in the task of rolling a cigar. It is not until he notices her red stockings that he speaks a word to her. In the context of her home, it appears as though the question posed by “*Las medias rojas*” is not so much whether Ildara will remain at home or suffer a life of demeaning humiliation as a prostitute, but rather whether she would eventually exploit herself in some way or another abroad or in her own country, as her ability to live independently of her father is permanently jeopardized by the end of the story. As Pardo Bazán illustrates in much of her writing, this is the inevitable consequence of the upper classes ignoring the plight of the poor—this is the inescapable future of rural Spain. Ensnared in a cycle of male-dominance and female domination, Ildara has simply exchanged one form of despair for another. Whether in Buenos Aires or in Galicia, as a woman, Ildara would have been subject to the whims of men. Either way, she is irrevocably trapped—paralyzed, essentially.

Joyce’s story begins with a depiction of Eveline sitting at the window, literally “watching the evening invade the avenue,” inhaling the “odour of dusty cretonne” (*D* 36). Eveline, especially, exemplifies the “paralysis” that haunts all of the Dubliners in Joyce’s work, with no one to blame for her failure to depart Ireland but herself; she is trapped within a cycle of stagnation, from which any effort to escape is eventually revealed as delusional. Wanda Balzano writes, “It is with this initial image that Joyce intends to make his moral mission known: like the Irish people as Joyce perceived them, Eveline looks through a cloudy and partially veiled glass in a darkening atmosphere”<sup>31</sup> (Balzano 86). It is through this turbid lens that Eveline is expected to perceive and interact with the world before her, and indeed, will forever have to. “Eveline”

remains a story about paralysis, all kinds of factors coming together—the “protection” the Irish social purity activists presume to bestow on their young people, the ever-looming presence of the Catholic Church demanding chastity and purity at the expense of free expression, strict obedience to dogma, blind adherence to family values—to ultimately stifle the chance for anyone to break out of a life of stagnant repetition, a life without growth.

Joyce makes his case clear in his essay, “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages”:

The economic and intellectual conditions that prevail in [Ireland] do not permit the development of individuality. The soul of the country is weakened by centuries of useless struggle and broken treaties, and individual initiative is paralysed by the influence and admonitions of the church, while its body is manacled by the police, the tax office, and the garrison. No one who has any self-respect stays in Ireland, but flees afar as though from a country that has undergone the visitation of an angered Jove. (*CW* 171)

Following this assessment of his own nation, Joyce goes on to suggest the revival of the Celtic race, imagining the “economic effects of the appearance of a rival island near England...and the moral effects of the appearance in old Europe of the Irish artist and thinker” (*CW* 173). Though Galicia is not numbered among Joyce’s “five Celtic nations” (*CW* 173), the Galician predicament is relevant to his discussion, as the conditions that both prompt and desperately attempt to prevent emigration there mirror those in Ireland. It was to the Celtic myth, the Irish Revival, and to Joyce (despite his own ambivalence toward Irish nationalism) that the Galician movement, *Xeración Nós* of the 1920s referred when crafting its own nationalist movement.<sup>32</sup> Founders Vicente Risco and Ramón Otero

Pedrayo published various articles in the 1926 edition of their monthly review, *Nós*, about Joyce, including translations of the “Ithaca” and “Cyclops” episodes in *Ulysses* into the Galician language.<sup>33</sup> In reference to Irish theater, Plácido Castro suggests that Galicia “study the way in which a sister people of ours has managed to express its dreams, its woes, thus wakening our own latent sensitivity, somewhat drowsy due to so many centuries of intellectual domination by those who are alien to our character.”<sup>34</sup>

In the face of criticism at every turn, both Joyce and Pardo Bazán spent their lives in pursuit of illuminating the problems their generations inherited from their respective societies. In his book, *The Catholic Naturalism of Pardo Bazán*, Donald Brown writes:

Pardo Bazán thought there could never be anything wrong with saying the truth about things, however painful it was to hear; it was false patriotism to misrepresent; only through facing the truth could Spain pull herself out of the morass of ignorance, political corruption, and slothfulness into which she had fallen.<sup>35</sup>

Joyce expresses a similar sentiment in a letter to his publishers: “I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilization in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass” (*Letters I* 64). Yet another correlation brings the writers together—their unmitigated certainty that the tendency among their respective peoples to ignore the problems their nations faced was, perhaps, what most harmed them. Joyce and Pardo Bazán sought to remedy these issues by depicting their cultures as they saw and understood them, as unattractive as the resulting portrayal might be. Both situated their readers before their own reflections so that they might see and, ultimately, look away, changed. Without a doubt, the impact of

their work on their respective cultures bears testimony to the triumph of that intention.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Emilia Pardo Bazán, “*Las medias rojas*,” *Obras Completas. Vol. 11* (Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro, 1999) 534. Manuscript translation into English by Ramón G. Iglesias (2008).

<sup>2</sup> Blanca Sanchez-Alonso, “Those Who Left and Those Who Stayed Behind: Explaining Emigration from the Regions of Spain, 1880-1914,” *The Journal of Economic History* 60 (2000): 741.

<sup>3</sup> José C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California P, 1998) 15.

<sup>4</sup> Sharif Gemie, *Galicia* (New York: University of Wales Press, 2006) 46.

<sup>5</sup> Ramón Villares, *Historia de Galicia* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1985) 140.

<sup>6</sup> Gemie 45.

<sup>7</sup> Mary E. Daly, *Dublin: the Deposed Capital, a Social and Economic History, 1860-1914* (Cork: Cork University P, 1985) 1.

<sup>8</sup> Daly 320.

<sup>9</sup> Villares 140.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph V. O’Brien, *Dear, Dirty Dublin: a City in Distress* (Los Angeles: University of California P, 1982) 175.

<sup>11</sup> Brenda Maddox, *Nora: A Biography of Nora Joyce* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989) 3.

<sup>12</sup> Pardo Bazán 534.

<sup>13</sup> Pardo Bazán 534.

<sup>14</sup> Pardo Bazán 534.

<sup>15</sup> Maddox 3.

<sup>16</sup> Katherine Mullin, “‘Don’t Cry for me, Argentina’: ‘Eveline,’ White Slavery and the Seductions of Propaganda,” *James Joyce, Sexuality, and Social Purity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 67.

<sup>17</sup> Moya 21.

<sup>18</sup> Moya 227.

<sup>19</sup> Pardo Bazán 535.

<sup>20</sup> Margot Norris, “The Perils of Eveline,” in *Suspicious Readings of Joyce’s Dubliners* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania P, 2003) 63.

<sup>21</sup> Pardo Bazán 534.

<sup>22</sup> Pardo Bazán 535.

<sup>23</sup> Donna J. Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska P, 1991) 7.

<sup>24</sup> Guy 7.

<sup>25</sup> Mullin 74.

<sup>26</sup> Madrid, Consejo Superior de Emigración, *La emigración española transoceánica, 1911-1915* (Madrid, 1916), 403, quoted in Moya, José C, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California P, 1998) 22.

<sup>27</sup> Emilia Pardo Bazán, *La mujer española y otros escritos*, ed. Guadalupe Gómez-Ferrer (Madrid: Cátedra, 1999).

<sup>28</sup> Emilia Pardo Bazán, "La mujer española," *La España Moderna* 2(1890b): 101-13, quoted in Tolliver, Joyce, *Cigar Smoke and Violet Water: Gendered Discourse in the Stories of Emilia Pardo Bazán* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1998) 16.

<sup>29</sup> Norris 58.

<sup>30</sup> R. B. Kershner, "'Eveline': Bourgeois Drama and Pornography," in *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina P, 1989) 69.

<sup>31</sup> Wanda Balzano, "'Eveline,' or the Veils of Cleaning," in *A New and Complex Sensation: Essays on Joyce's Dubliners*, ed. Oona Frawley (New York: Lilliput Press, 2005) 86.

<sup>32</sup> Antonio Raúl De Toro, "Literature and Ideology: The Penetration of Anglo-Irish Literature in Spain," in *Revista Alicantina De Estudios Ingleses* 8(1995): 231.

<sup>33</sup> Alberto Lázaro, "A Survey of the Spanish Critical Response to James Joyce," in *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe, Vol 2*, ed. Elinor Shaffer (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004) 425-426.

<sup>34</sup> Plácido Castro del Río, "El teatro gallego," in *El Pueblo Gallego* (1927): 1, quoted in De Toro, Antonio Raúl, "Literature and Ideology: The Penetration of Anglo-Irish Literature in Spain," in *Revista Alicantina De Estudios Ingleses* 8(1995): 235.

<sup>35</sup> Donald F. Brown, *The Catholic Naturalism of Pardo Bazán* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina P, 1957) 40.