COMMON GROUND: NATURE, GENDER AND LABOR IN REPRESENTATIONS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES IN SPANISH LITERATURE, 1895-1920

BY

KRISTINA PITTMAN

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor L. Elena Delgado, Chair
Associate Professor Joyce Tolliver
Associate Professor Dara Goldman
Teaching Assistant Professor Pilar Martínez-Quiroga
ABSTRACT

This study spans a divisive period in Spanish history, 1895-1920, in which the 1898 Disaster and the uneven and lagging processes of modernization exacerbated differences between Spain and other European nations, differences between regions and classes within the country, and differences between the sexes. In their search for answers to the social question and ideas for national regeneration, the natural environment provided many artists and intellectuals with a subject that could potentially represent common ground among Spaniards in a tangible, relevant and seemingly authentic form. At the same time, the traditional identification of nature as female and its perceived subordination to culture since the Enlightenment complicate its role as the source of national regeneration during a time when Spain's place relative to other European colonial powers was in sharp decline and the nation was further disgraced by its failure to keep up with the processes of modernization that were boosting the power and influence of foreign countries. My analysis of the representation of commoning and its relationship with the natural environment in Jose María de Pereda's *Peñas arriba*, published in 1895, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's *Cañas y barro*, published in 1902, Pio Baroja's *El Mayorazgo de Labraz*, published in 1903, and Concha Espina's *El metal de los muertos*, published in 1920, explores what constitutes community practices, what sustains or impedes these practices and who they include or exclude. Through the lenses of ecocriticism and ecofeminism, I consider how representations of the natural environment during the *fin de siglo* period reflect social hierarchies and gender differences. I ask how the processes of modernization in Spain are represented as a challenge to the consolidation of the nation by alienating the rural population from the natural environment that provides the structure for social life while failing to offer an alternative for their endangered local communities. Finally, I consider what these texts by important canonical authors say about
the roles of literature and education in community practices in a country with high rates of illiteracy.
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INTRODUCTION

In *En torno al casticismo*, first published in 1895, Miguel de Unamuno famously describes the concept of "intra-historia," and in so doing, he illuminates a latent meaning within the idea of "common people":

Los periódicos nada dicen de la vida silenciosa de los millones de hombres sin historia que á todas horas del día y en todos los países del globo se levantan á una orden del sol y van á sus campos á proseguir la oscura y silenciosa labor cotidiana y eterna, esa labor que como la de las madréporas suboceánicas, echa las bases sobre que se alzan los islotes de la historia. Sobre el silencio augusto, decía, se apoya y vive el sonido; sobre la inmensa humanidad silenciosa se levantan los que meten bulla en la historia. Esa vida intra-histórica, silenciosa y continua como el fondo vivo del mar, es la sustancia del progreso, la verdadera tradición, la tradición eterna, no la tradición mentira que se suele ir á buscar al pasado enterrado en libros y papeles y monumentos y piedras. (27-28)

Interestingly, Unamuno compares the rural population to life on the ocean floor, a place that is largely imperceptible and is particularly resistant to colonization and privatization. It is endless and borderless, imagined here as part of humanity's commons. Unamuno's striking simile illustrates an association between communication and political action; silent, invisible laborers provide the foundation that elevates others to a place in which communication is possible, which is therefore a place where power is disputed and changes occur. In a subsequent chapter, it seems that Unamuno does not mean that the masses of rural laborers who provide the foundations for history are silent, but rather that the makers and recorders of history do not pay attention to them: “Se ignora el paisaje, y el paisanaje y la vida toda de nuestro pueblo. Se ignora hasta la existencia de una literatura plebeya, y nadie para su atención en las coplas de ciegos, en los pliegos de cordel y en los novelones de á cuartillo de real entrega, que sirven de pasto aun á los que no saben leer y los oyen” (204). Here, the countryside and its culture are conflated in their invisibility to the urban reading public, in spite of their importance as the source of authentic cultural tradition.
Nature itself also has a voice in Unamuno's work, but it is audible only to those who venture into the natural world and listen not only to nature but also to their own souls: “después de una excursión de campo volvemos á casa . . . llena el alma de voces de su naturaleza íntima, despierta al contacto de la Naturaleza su madre” (206). For his part, Unamuno was an enthusiastic excursionista who writes about his experiences traveling to both remote and populated places and supports improving the communication between isolated villages and the rest of the country, encouraging villagers to become aware of issues beyond their local environment in the hopes of promoting national cohesion (Martínez de Pisón 43, 61). With the concept of "intrahistoria" he insists on the importance, but also the homogeneity, of the rural population that, he says, should have more influence in guiding the nation than Spain's unique geography (30-31). This dissertation will examine how other popular Spanish writers around the turn of the century, José Maria de Pereda, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Pío Baroja and Concha Espina, represent community practices among the nation's rural population as intimately connected to the land that these populations inhabit. Their respective novels, Peñas arriba, Cañas y barro, El Mayorazgo de Labraz and El metal de los muertos, explore the relationship between the natural environment and community in a nation whose population was simultaneously faced with the loss of the nation's colonial territories and status abroad and is struggling to accept and realize the processes of modernization. The novels challenge the values of capitalism in their representations of commoning and all emphasize the importance of the health of the natural environment, but also reveal anxieties about the place of the uneducated majority of the population within the national community as the processes of modernization disturb, or threaten to disturb, traditional community structures. At the same time, their adoptions of or challenges to
dominant discourses about gender and class reveal how those discourses hinder the reproduction of community by reinforcing social hierarchy.

As Raymond Williams explains in his examination of the representations of Old England, "Old England, settlement, the rural virtues — all these, in fact, mean different things at different times, and quite different values are being brought to question. We shall need precise analysis of each kind of retrospect . . ." (12). While the present study is motivated in part by a desire to understand how the idea of community is invoked in the present, it focuses on the way that Pereda, Baroja, Blasco-Ibáñez and Espina represented it at a particular moment in the past. The "moment" that I examine is the period of economic modernization in Spain, which I understand using the following explanation by Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz:

“Modernization” includes both concepts, industrialization and the rise of capitalism, simultaneously; in addition, it refers to its related social transformations . . . Modernization tends to prompt the opposite concept of tradition, polarizing thought: new vs. old. It does clearly suggest, however, a process of change. (3)

This understanding of modernization is useful for the present study, which looks at works that address changes in social relations that are the result of Spain's delayed and slow, but nevertheless ongoing, process of economic modernization during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In their examination of the relationships between Spanish culture and modernity, which they define as "the condition of life subjectively experienced as a consequence of the changes wrought by modernization" (Graham and Labanyi 11), Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi discuss some of the problems generated by the use of "modernization," including the implication of a dichotomy between "old" and "new":

Use of the term "modernization" is made particularly problematic—beyond a frequent lack of precision in definition—by the unacceptable normative and determinist baggage loaded onto it. Those espousing models of modernization often employ a notion of "tradition" which oversimplifies pre-industrial and
ritualistic societies, inadequately appreciates the persistence of traditional elements in "modern" societies, and overlooks the mutual influence that old and new ways of life may exert on one another. (Graham and Labanyi 10)

I intend for the present study to reveal the nuanced understandings of authors who, though blind to many issues, are sensitive to the fact that there is no clean break between "new" and "old" ways of life, and who agonize over how to reconcile one with the other in their recognition that elements of both may be necessary for human and other forms of life to flourish.

According to Tortella, in 1900, "two of every three Spanish workers were farmers" ("Agriculture" 42), and "only 9% of the population lived in towns of more than 100,000," and by 1930, still only 15% of the population lived in large towns or cities (55-56). Though the Spanish economy underwent great changes during the first part of the twentieth century, these changes happened slowly: "still nearly one in every two Spanish workers was a farmer in 1935" (42). The fact that most of the population of the country was rural and working in agriculture from 1895 to 1920 supports the importance of the representation of these people in popular literature during a time when intellectuals and artists share a common "preocupación por la decadencia y la regeneración nacional, y por la continuidad y la renovación cultural surgida, en el contexto de la humillante derrota española a manos de EE.UU." (Kirkpatrick, Mujer 18), a country that was perceived as "the epitome of modernity" (Kirkpatrick, "Feminine Element" 146). Sebastian Balfour explains that the work of many Spanish writers and intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries reflects a desire for security "in an unchanging emotional landscape" to counter the social upheaval brought about by their encounters with the processes of modernization (End of the Spanish Empire 89):

the evocation of rural life in early twentieth-century Spanish writing is dominated by a typically Carlist theme, nostalgia for a way of life threatened by industrialization. For the most part, country life is seen in mythical terms, a rural Utopia without caciques, starvation or violence, like Costa's vision of the past. In
contrast, city and industry are portrayed as dehumanizing. (End of the Spanish Empire 90)

Regenerationism, "a nationalist call for change and progress" (Jacobson and Moreno Luzón 102), which can be understood to extend from the last third of the nineteenth century through the first third of the twentieth century (Casado de Otaola 12-13), gained newfound importance among a wide range of politicians and intellectuals after the disaster of 1898 (Balfour, "Riot" 411-13). Labanyi notes an "almost ecological concern" in novels "from around 1880 with the ways in which a modernity conceived in terms of the city was exhausting natural resources" (28), and Santos Casado de Otaola asserts that the regenerationists at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century often looked to the natural environment as a potential source of the change that is required to define and improve the nation: "Hay en el ambiente una mentalidad positivista que induce a formular en clave naturalista los problemas sociales. El sustrato natural no sólo se ve como la base de la nación en un sentido físico, también puede ser el punto de partida y la garantía de su resurgimiento en lo económico y en lo moral" (18). He continues:

La naturaleza, inocente de los pecados de los hombres, brinda su seno acogedor a quienes han sufrido el desengaño de ver defraudadas las esperanzas que un día depositaron en la posibilidad de trasformar la vida colectiva de la nación. . . . Quizá en la naturaleza, en el paisaje, algunos puedan al menos encontrar esa España auténtica y buena, libre de los vicios de una sociedad moralmente empobrecida y enferma. (19)

Nature, which Richard White describes as a "shifting historical construct" (876), is invoked at the end of the nineteenth century as a source of national identity, to define something that the people of the nation have in common and unique to them, providing a contrast with the more modernized world from which Spain was alienated by the events of 1898 (Balfour "Lion" 107).

Otaola identifies two advantages of using nature to support arguments "sobre lo social y
lo moral" since the modern era: first, nature is regarded as "previa, preexistente, fundamental, y es fácil coincidir en verla como depositaria de claves y valores profundos o esenciales," and second, because nature does not produce speech, "No podrá, por tanto, desmentir los significados que en ella queramos encontrar" (16). Around the turn of the century, intellectuals associated with the Generación del 98, "a loose-knit group of writers who represented a mood of revival, a call for the renewal of national energies and a patent disgust for the political 'truths' of late-nineteenth century thought" (Ucelay Da Cal 128), are less optimistic than the regenerationists about the essence of the countryside. Yet, they still believe that the landscape can be represented as the source of the national character (Del Molino, ch. 6 par. 54). Eduardo Martínez de Pisón reflects that for the writers of the Generación del 98, "El paisaje es, pues, una vía para adentrarse no sólo en lo geográfico, sino en el espíritu. Es una expresión concentrada de nuestra identidad colectiva –el paisaje como patria–, una concreción de una realidad más dilatada, un espejo acumulador cuyo reconocimiento permite ver lo real y comenzar un proceso de devolución de España a sí misma" (37). However, within the works of authors in that group, there is a wide range of representations of the relationships between people and the land they inhabit. Azorín, for example, idealizes the countryside as it appears in the present and maintains that it should remain intact while other writers idealize the past and criticize existing perceptions of the national territory: “En este movimiento intelectual y político (como en Mallada, Macías Picavea o Costa) se intenta la demolición de las leyendas blancas sobre nuestro territorio, su sustitución por una visión realista, aunque sea áspera, y la reparación activa de los inconvenientes físicos que se oponen al progreso” (27), but de Pisón concludes that in both cases, geography is considered to be the "'base del patriotismo'" (28). With the exception of Peñas arriba, which

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1 This dissertation includes citations that refer to paragraph numbers when no page numbers were available in digital sources.
provides an example of the "idealizations of community" that "operate as conservative critiques of changes in the given social hierarchy" (Joseph 6), the novels included here express doubt in the viability of a national community founded in relationships with the natural environment as citizens' practical relationships with the land are undergoing significant changes.

The process of disentailment, "the expropriation [with compensation]" and subsequent auction "of a large fraction of the lands and buildings belonging to the church, the municipalities, and the state" (Tortella, "Agriculture" 44), was implemented in Spain in the nineteenth century to reduce the national debt (Tortella, Development 54). Disentailment in Spain was carried out in a way that further impoverished peasants and small farmers who depended upon access to lands used in common (Tortella, Development 54, 58). José Alvarez Junco explains that disentailment also depleted the funds of local governments, which became much less effective after the considerable losses of their financial resources (Alvarez Junco, "Rural" 83). The combination of a "rural agrarian society, with all the fragmentation and local interests that entailed" and "a still feeble centralized and urban political organization striving to impose itself," encouraged the proliferation of caciques, "a new political élite," whose power derived from "their role as conduits between the local community and national politics" (84). Labanyi's explanation of the impact of caciquismo makes clear how it would impact community practice: "in making politics a matter of personal favours rather than of public issues, caciquismo depoliticized the rural electorate, preventing the development of a healthy, critical public sphere" (270). In this way, the rural population first faced the privatization of land and then faced what José Varela Ortega calls the "privatization of politics" (qtd. in Labanyi 269).

The novels included in this study demonstrate how direct access to natural resources, or the lack thereof, dramatically affects their characters' abilities to engage in practices that create
or maintain community. I consider how the processes of modernization in Spain are represented as a challenge to the consolidation of the nation by alienating the rural population from the natural environment that provides the structure for social life while failing to offer an alternative for their endangered local communities. Alvarez Junco asserts that Spain's relatively weak sense of national identity, which persists even into the late twentieth century, can be attributed, at least in part, to the resistance to nationalization on the part of the government in the mid-nineteenth century: "governments were linked to an oligarchic coalition of landed nobility and newly enriched bourgeoisie, and were utterly afraid of a nationalist idea which meant mass mobilisation and participation, and a new civic education which could detach individuals from tradition, from family, province and religion" ("Nation Building" 99). Balfour's explanation of the effects of the military defeat in 1898 further emphasizes the absence of any coherent national identity that was compatible with social realities of the time: "In the aftermath of the disaster, social unrest, military reaction and the movements for the regeneration of Spain interacted in such a way that no modernizing alternative to the established order emerged. Nothing changed, therefore, but nothing was the same either, and because of this the contradictions in Spanish society became more acute . . ." ("Riot" 423). The novels included in this study suggest a vacuum created by the disintegration of local community practices caused by the increasing influences of the processes of modernization along with the absence of a coherent national government, national identity or even the infrastructure that would provide a connection between the villages that are represented in the novels with a larger community.

Anthony Cohen defines community as a relational concept that depends on a boundary between one group of people that shares something in common and another such group (12), and he asserts that "the symbolic expression of community and its boundaries increases in
importance as the actual geo-social boundaries of the community are undermined, blurred or otherwise weakened" (50). During the period that is covered in this study, community boundaries in Spain were changing in significant ways. Impoverished rural communities lost inhabitants due to rural-urban migration and immigration abroad, the ongoing processes of modernization altered traditional ways of life but also brought the population together in new ways, the nation's political boundaries were threatened by the Cuban War of Independence and eventually shrank with the losses of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines in 1898, and domestic nationalisms gained popularity as a result. Balfour offers, "Spain's precarious unity among its different regions had been constructed around a common endeavour to extend its dominion and its religion to the Empire and to extract the wealth contained therein. With the loss of the last colonies, the already fragile ideological ties binding the regions to the centre from which that Empire had been run were put under even greater strain; . . ." He also argues that accelerated processes of modernization in Catalonia and the Basque region further distanced these regions from the center of the country, and "The crisis caused by the Disaster therefore flowed into a longer-term crisis generated by modernisation" (Balfour "Lion" 113). As Spanish writers and intellectuals consider their nation's position within the "process of colonial redistribution which drew the new contours of global power," they face its silencing within the European community (Balfour "Lion" 107). The vernacular landscapes of isolated rural communities that are the subjects of the novels in this study not only reflect concerns about how to incorporate the nation's rural population into a national community, but they also reflect concerns about the nation's place in or relation to a broader community of more modernized nations, whose power is increasing while that of Spain is waning.
The novels included here examine the tensions between the values, the natural environment and ways of life that are still prevalent in rural Spain and are perceived as integral to national identity, and the modern values that are associated with the rise of Spain's enemies and the destabilization of the existing social order. They provide extensive reflections on the practice of community, or what Massimo de Angelis calls "commoning." In *Omnia Sunt Communia*, de Angelis explains his use of "commons" as "not just resources held in common, or commonwealth, but social systems whose elements are commonwealth, a community of commoners, and the ongoing interactions, phases of decision making and communal labour process that together are called commoning" (11). De Angelis emphasizes active participation as the key to the existence of the commons; without the activity of commoning, there is no commons. Following Elinor Ostrom, he emphasizes that commons must be continuously managed by community members (144-145). The texts included in this dissertation are primarily concerned with representing what commoning, or its absence, looks like, and in so doing, each expresses uneasiness about the future of a nation whose citizens are becoming less frequently engaged in commoning with each other.

In the remote mountain village described in Pereda's *Peñas arriba*, the community practices that give meaning to social life are grounded in the collective harvesting of a common plot of land that provides basic sustenance for all residents and in a daily *tertulia* in which the town patriarch addresses the villagers' remaining needs. These practices and the surrounding natural environment define the villagers' way of life, whose disruption threatens to spread social disorder. In Blasco Ibáñez's *Cañas y barro*, the rise of the privatization of land forebodes the end of the *Comunidad de Pescadores*, whose members have peacefully managed a system of shared access to the waters of the Albufera for generations. The community's eldest fisherman
anticipates that the end of the Comunidad's system of resource management will bring about the end of the brotherhood among men in the area, and his own family is left in tatters as a consequence, both directly and indirectly, of the initial stages of the modernization of local agricultural practices. Baroja's *El Mayorazgo de Labraz* represents the absence of commoning as townspeople who have overexploited their surrounding natural environment for profits become increasingly selfish and alienated from each other and from the outside world as the local economy collapses. The foremost citizen of the village, and the namesake of the novel, eventually abandons Labraz to cultivate both land and a new life in a more fertile coastal region. In Espina's *El metal de los muertos*, the maximization of profits by foreign capitalists leads to the contamination and privatization of the resources that sustain life in the mining region of Huelva and hinders the practice of community among Spanish laborers there, eventually forcing their displacement. All of the novels coincide in their representations of the disintegration of community when modernization disrupts the relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings.

The texts concur in their skepticism about the potential social benefits of a process that precipitates the exploitation of nature as their protagonists/heroes refuse or resist these tendencies by defending alternatives to or practices outside of dominant capitalist relations. Their representations of the degradation of the natural environment provide nuanced critiques of the processes of modernization as they address issues of national identity, gender roles, aesthetics, social justice and human health through a subject that is presented as a common interest to both the rural and urban populations. At the same time, the novels raise the issue of the extent to which the health of the natural environment should determine human behavior; none of the novels advocate for an absolute return to nature in their explorations of the relationship between
human life and the natural environment on which that life depends. Maria Mies argues that because modern industrial society depends on the exploitation of nature, those living in such a society can experience only a "sentimental" rather than a "real" relationship with nature, which "necessarily depends not only on an — imagined — division between Man and Nature but also on the very destruction of nature. This means the disruption of the various symbioses or living connections which constitute life on this planet Earth" (144). Our unwillingness and inability to consider the interests of a natural world that is perceived as distant from and even inimical to social life in the modern world leads to its exclusion from the typical understanding of "community." Leopold objects to the division between "Man and Nature," and instead understands "community" as inclusive of the natural environment, which is explained in his reconceptualization of human ethics:

All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in the community, but his ethics prompt him also to cooperate (perhaps in order that there may be a place to compete for). The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, water, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.

He proposes, "a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such" (239- 240). In their definition of "the common," Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri state: "the common does not position humanity separate from nature, as either its exploiter or its custodian, but focuses rather on the practices of interaction, care, and cohabitation in a common world" (Preface, par. 2). For Mies and Shiva, interconnections, which in part manifest themselves in relationships of mutual care, are primary organizing relations in ecosystems, as opposed to economic self-interest or physical domination. They explain, "An ecofeminist perspective . . . recognizes that life in nature (which includes human beings) is
maintained by means of co-operation, and mutual care and love" (6). Joan Martínez Alier observes, "Even in the most capitalist society, the market economy is a small island surrounded by an ocean of unpaid caring and domestic work and free environmental services that are essential for true economic security" (43). These approaches discredit social models that are based on the presumption of the natural occurrence of hierarchy.

De Angelis proposes that commons are "value practices that are alternative to that of capital" (Omnia 10), while Hardt and Negri identify the common as an alternative to capital's pervasive "ordering" of "life according to the hierarchies of economic value" (Preface par. 5). Within theories of the commons, though, De Angelis and Federici both identify a lack of attention to the labor of reproduction of human life. De Angelis defends the primacy of the "commons of reproduction" of all life and asserts that strengthening them would "form the material basis of a new commons renaissance in many spheres, building its foundation on these reproduction commons" (Omnia 13). Federici insists that while the discourse related to the commons "is mostly concerned with the formal preconditions for the existence of commons and less with the material requirements for the construction of a commons-based economy" (Federici, "Feminism" par. 14), "the 'commoning' of the material means of reproduction" is "the first line of resistance to a life of enslavement and the condition for the construction of autonomous spaces undermining from within the hold that capitalism has on our lives" (par. 19).

This dissertation considers how the discourses on the commons that are furthered or challenged by these novels are related to the material reproduction of community.

According to Raymond Williams, the novel is particularly well suited to the representation of communities: "Most novels are in some sense knowable communities. It is part of a traditional method—an underlying stance and approach—that the novelist offers to show
people and their relationships in essentially knowable and communicable ways" (Country 165). Labanyi offers, "Alas, Galdós, and Pardo Bazán all argued repeatedly that the novel is the serious study of modern society. . . . If we now take it for granted that the nation is 'a society', allowing us to talk of 'Spanish society' in the singular despite obvious social differences, this is partly due to the realist novel's success in propagating the concept" (8). In his analysis of nineteenth century British novels in Culture and Imperialism, Edward Said stresses the political impact of novels due to their role in the dissemination of "perceptions and attitudes about England and the world" (75). His study provides an important reminder that novels reflect relationships between authors and authority, and the perceptions that they maintain and/or disseminate must be examined critically:

what I have been calling the novel's consolidation of authority is not simply connected to the functioning of social power and governance, but made to appear both normative and sovereign, that is, self-validating in the course of the narrative. This is paradoxical only if one forgets that the constitution of a narrative subject, however abnormal or unusual, is still a social act par excellence, and as such has behind or inside it the authority of history and society. There is first the authority of the author—someone writing out the processes of society in an acceptable institutionalized manner, observing connections, following patterns, and so forth. Then there is the authority of the narrator, whose discourse anchors the narrative in recognizable, and hence existentially referential, circumstances. Last there is what might be called the authority of the community, whose representative most often is the family but also is the nation, the specific locality, and the concrete historical moment. (77)

Stephen Miller's study of the evolution of the Naturalist novel in Spain suggests that the weakened "authority of the community" among fin de siglo Spanish authors contributes to the cultivation of psychological Naturalism, which responds to a "desolate social panorama" augmented by the events of 1898 (Miller 434). Miller describes "the inward turn of the Spanish novel" as writers "sought the reality of natural women and men, persons for whom historical and present national society is discredited, false, artificial, and, in sum, marginal to their lives" (435).
Noël Valis's analysis of the relationships between literary movements during the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries indicates that it is precisely an interest in the material world that connects them: "What both realism/naturalism and fin de siglo writings have in common . . . is a profound dissatisfaction with the material world of the historical present" (Reading 11). As this study examines authority in novels that represent community practices, it considers the representations of the voices that are included in or excluded from those practices during the processes of modernization and how this might be related to the material reproduction of community.

Speaking about the environmental consequences of "turbo-capitalism" in the neo-liberal era, Rob Nixon reflects on the violence that is done to poor people and nature when their struggles are not represented in the media: "Their unseen poverty is compounded by the invisibility of the slow violence that permeates so many of their lives" (Slow Violence 4). For Nixon, representation is a fundamental tool for restraining the processes of capital that weaken communities that are dependent upon their immediate natural environments. He defines "slow violence" as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as a violence at all" (Slow Violence 2). The natural environment and the poor are connected by their imperceptibility respective to "military, corporate, and media forces" (Nixon, Slow Violence 4): "To confront slow violence is to take up, in all its temporal complexity, the politics of the visible and the invisible. That requires that we think through the ways that environmental-justice movements strategize to shift the balance of visibility, pushing back against the forces of temporal inattention that exacerbate injustices of class, gender, race, and region" ("Slow Violence" par. 5). Nixon addresses the challenges of behaving "ethically toward human and
biotic communities that lie beyond our sensory ken" (*Slow Violence* 15) and contends that until violence is given a material presence through representation, it is difficult to act upon (16). This study will pose the additional questions of how these novels represent slow violence, and how they speak to the possibility of commoning among people who are not in contact with each other and do not directly share common resources.

The novels studied here indicate that modernization will likely weaken the already unstable social foundation of the nation in the long-term. They consider the nature of the bonds that will unite members of the national community if community practices lose support to individual interests, and when commoning loses its foundation in the natural world. Adriana Cavarero summarizes, "modernity erases the natural bond and thinks of individuals as autonomous, isolated, and competitive" (186). She focuses on the power that can be derived from the act of speaking and insists on the importance of the specificity, the (corporal) location of the voice: "Saying becomes the privileged realm of a reciprocal self-communication, which simultaneously expresses uniqueness and relation. Significantly, those who communicate themselves in this way are not individuals. They are unique beings in flesh and bone who, unlike the abstract and universal 'individual,' have a face, a name, and a life story" (193). Though she insists on the importance of bodily and hence vocal uniqueness from a "throat of flesh" (8), when she employs the concept of "the absolute local" to theorize how people will engage with one another across borders in the era of globalization, Cavarero seemingly discounts the role of geographic specificity: "The absolute local is there, and only there, where in any part of the globe, some human beings actively and reciprocally communicate their uniqueness and show this uniqueness as the material given that constitutes the contextuality of their relation" (205).

Interestingly, Nixon relies on a linguistic term to address the need to communicate precisely the
uniqueness of specific places in his writing about how to strengthen the social justice movement. His concepts of "vernacular" and "official" landscapes indicate some of the problems that arise when political practice is dislocated:

A vernacular landscape is shaped by the affective, historically textured maps that communities have devised over generations, maps replete with names and routes, maps alive to significant ecological and surface geological features. A vernacular landscape, although neither monolithic nor undisputed, is integral to the socioenvironmental dynamics of a community rather than being wholly externalized—treated as out there, as a separate nonrenewable resource. By contrast, an official landscape—whether governmental, NGO, corporate, or some combination of those—is typically oblivious to such earlier maps; instead, it writes the land in a bureaucratic, externalizing, and extraction-driven manner that is often pitilessly instrumental. (Nixon, Slow Violence 17)

The novels included in this study address the issue of social cohesion by exposing readers to rural communities through narrators from outside of those communities, who relate information about the communities' internal practices in Spanish from the perspective of educated outsiders. In this way, remote places are introduced to a broader community in a familiar form as fictionalized vernacular landscapes. In his 1903 review of Cañas y barro, Eduardo Gómez de Baquero describes how the novel allows readers to become familiar with “Tierras lejanas que nunca vimos, escenas que no presenciamos, tipos y caracteres cuyos modelos de carne y hueso nos son desconocidos . . .” ("Crónica" 172). Julio Pellicer comments, “Blasco Ibáñez robustece de continuo el monumento gallardo de nuestra literatura regional, muy necesaria é impuesta por la Naturaleza misma. Necesaria, porque ayuda á conocernos mejor, muestra los matices diversos del alma nacional . . ." (593). Pellicer's review reveals how diversity in nature can be used as an explanation for regional difference and for national coherence at the same time: "la tierra hace á sus hijos, porque guardan las ideas íntima relación con el terruño donde germinan, y nuestra península es un mosaico formado por regiones de costumbres varias y climas extremos; porque somos de caracteres y origen distintos, y los avasalladoras influencias
de la casta se amarran al espíritu y lo moldean imprimiéndole sus peculiaridades" (594).

Although the texts make the rural communities knowable to a distant audience and thereby might encourage their incorporation into the national community, their members are still marked as different, ignorant and incapable of generating meaningful change.

In *Colectivismo agrario*, which was originally published in 1898, the regenerationist intellectual and writer Joaquín Costa cites both Tudanca and El Palmar, the communities that are fictionalized in *Peñas arriba* and *Cañas y barro* respectively,\(^2\) as historical examples of the kind of collective resource management that provide models for a more equitable form of social organization. Costa summarizes the work of Henry George as he defines the “concepto del colectivismo agrario”:

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\text{todo hombre, por el hecho de nacer, trae á la vida un derecho natural é inalienable: el derecho de usar y disfrutar de la tierra, lo mismo que de respirar aire; privarle de ese derecho es robarle; y tal sucede cuando algunos acaparan un espacio cualquiera de terreno, excluyendo de él á los demás. La desigual é injusta distribución de la riqueza y el incesante aumento de la miseria con todo el séquito de males nacidos de ella, que son la maldición y la amenaza de la civilización moderna, tienen por origen el monopolio de la tierra.} \quad (5)
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Though by 1901, Costa was "the most influential regenerator of the time" (Balfour, "Riot" 412), he was unable to realize his political ambitions in part because, according to Balfour, the regenerationists were unable or unwilling to ally themselves with "the newly emerging forces of the working-class movement and regional nationalism", so instead "they took refuge in a vision of a pre-capitalist utopia of small farmers and artisans." Balfour submits that the regenerationists' ability to sway the masses was undermined by their own desire for the passive reception of their

\(^2\) Labanyi explains that the “Tablanca” of *Peñas arriba* is most likely based on the village Tudanca (Labanyi 305), which appears in Chapter IX of *Colectivismo agrario*, where Costa refers directly to Pereda’s *Peñas arriba*. The Concejo of El Palmar is the subject of the first part of Costa’s Chapter XVII.
doctrine and fear of aggression from the working class, and by the lack of an audience for their cultural production ("Riot" 414-15).

Who reads and writes, and what they read or write, is of utmost concern to the characters in the four novels that I analyze in this dissertation. Gabriel Tortella states that around the turn of the century, "nearly 50% of the adult population in Italy and Spain could not read (and, a fortiori, could not write)" (Development 12), while according to a UNESCO study, the rate of female illiteracy in Spain at the same time was close to 70% ("Progress" 134). This is undoubtedly related to Spanish writers' general "disillusionment" with the masses around the turn of the century, in comparison with French intellectuals, as described by Balfour: "Spanish writers lacked the same social base for their modernizing projects because of the small cultural market and the relative weakness of public opinion in Spain" (End of the Spanish Empire 85-86). Balfour identifies a change from the "idealization" of the rural poor in costumbrista works in the late nineteenth century, to the time closer to the turn of the century, when, "the 'people' ceased to be a mere aesthetic object for many writers and became a subject of history, an agent of change. The regenerators saw them as potential allies in the struggle to transform Spanish society. However, they were considered passive partners in the enterprise, for they too needed regenerating . . ." (86).

While writers can assign meaning to the natural world to accommodate their political ideologies, the nation's rural population is not mute. As Sergio del Molino describes in his reflections on the work of Francisco Giner de los Ríos, many Spanish intellectuals at the end of the 19th century imagine that nature contains a purifying power, but when the students of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza ventured into the countryside, they discovered that their contact with nature "tiene unos riesgos de contacto humano que no calcularon" (ch. 5 par. 15). Del
Molino explains, "Los reformadores políticos, salvo los socialistas utópicos y los anarquistas del siglo XIX, siempre han visto el campo como molestia" due to its perceived barbarism (ch. 1 par. 18, par. 28). And likewise, he adds, the nationalism that flourishes among the rural population judges large cities as beyond the boundaries of community: "Su complejidad es incompatible con cualquier proyecto de homogeneización comunitaria" (ch. 1 par. 30). Although Benedict Anderson maintains that the nation is "an imagined political community," in which "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6), the works included in this study express concern about the character of the national community whose urban and rural populations are largely oblivious to one another.

Labanyi's study of the realist novel describes a fundamental contradiction in the process of modernization:

although these novels mostly illustrate the problems arising from modernity's homogenizing project, they nevertheless serve this same project by constructing the reading public as an "imagined community" united by common anxieties. Such an "imagined community" based on shared anxieties can cut across belief systems, incorporating different sectors of the population into a shared cultural system: a useful way of "representing difference as identity" that allows difference to stand. (6)

The idea of a community based on the communication of shared anxieties complements Esposito's explanation of communitas as "utterly incapable of producing effects of commonality, of association . . . and of communion. It doesn't keep us warm, and it doesn't protect us; on the contrary, it exposes us to the most extreme of risks: that of losing, along with our individuality, the borders that guarantee its inviolability with respect to the other; of suddenly falling into the nothing of the thing . . ." (140). While this understanding of community makes all community members equal in their vulnerability to the realization that their individual lives are meaningless
(149), it does not account for the inequalities that are sustained by communities in practice, particularly within capitalist processes. The "homogenizing project" of modernity supports a proliferation of voices but also discourages difference among them, and in so doing it enforces hierarchies. One obvious example of this phenomenon in the Spanish context appears in the language of publication of the texts included in this study, two of which are considered prime examples of regionalist literature, but all of which were published in Spanish, the country's dominant language. The medium of the novel also reaches a specific audience, and in this sense, the literature produced for a bourgeois urban readership might contribute to the consolidation of a common culture that stands in opposition to the rural culture described in the novels.

Silvia Federici maintains that the "social division of labor in capitalism," which distances consumers from producers, "occurs at the expense of the world's other commoners and commons" ("Feminism" sec. 5 par. 1, sec. 4 par. 6). She proposes instead an interconnected way of thinking about people and natural resources to avoid the invisibilities and silences that are produced by the processes of capitalism:

No common is possible unless we refuse to base our life and our reproduction on the suffering of others, unless we refuse to see ourselves as separate from them. Indeed, if commoning has any meaning, it must be the production of ourselves as a common subject. . . . But "community" has to be intended not as a gated reality, a grouping of people joined by exclusive interests separating them from others, as with communities formed on the basis of religion or ethnicity, but rather as a quality of relations, a principle of cooperation and of responsibility to each other and to the earth, the forests, the seas, the animals. ("Feminism" sec.5 par. 2)

While Federici uses the idea of seeing "ourselves as a common subject" to promote an ethical orientation toward all forms of life, Hannah Arendt posits that the acts of seeing and listening from multiple perspectives actually constitute the common world: "Being seen and being heard by others derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position. This is the meaning of public life. . . . Only where things can be seen by many in a
variety of aspects without changing their identity . . . can worldly reality truly and reliably appear" (57). Arendt suggests that the homogenization of perspectives would bring about the end of the common world (58), and in her study of Arendt's work, Linda Zerilli further emphasizes that plurality is both the condition of political freedom and what makes politics so challenging and unpredictable in practice: "worldly freedom is political: it requires not only an I-will but an I-can; it requires community." For "world-building" action to take place, it first requires communication among different people with different perspectives (Zerilli 16). Jean-Luc Nancy describes community as the sharing of ideas: "Neither an origin nor an end: something in common. Only speech, a writing — shared, sharing us" (Nancy 69).

According to these understandings, community exists only in practice, and it exists specifically in the practices of speaking and listening from a variety of perspectives, which may also take the form of writing and reading. Pereda, Baroja, Blasco Ibáñez and Espina engage with community at the national level through their publications, but the content of their works critically examines the voices that constitute local communities often at odds with the national community. My analysis of Peñas arriba, Cañas y barro, El Mayorazgo de Labraz and El metal de los muertos looks at the voices that are included in or excluded from the communities that the novels describe and addresses how the novels imagine that these voices might fare beyond the level of the local. The understanding of community as a practice that is realized through communication reveals the disadvantages of parties that have less access to and/or representation in education and the popular media, such as rural laborers, the natural environment, and women, whose responsibilities and interests are still perceived to be largely confined to the domestic sphere during the fin de siglo period (Kirkpatrick, Mujer 30-31).
Susan Kirkpatrick contends that "The question of women's place in modernity . . . was very much part of the discussions about Spain, its identity and its future, in 1898 and its aftermath" ("Feminine Element" 149). Kirkpatrick describes Emilia Pardo Bazán's argument that the "stasis in gender relations ultimately hinders progress in other areas and troubles Spain's uneven entry into modernity" (Kirkpatrick, "Feminine Element" 146). Kirkpatrick's interpretation of Gregorio/María Martinez Sierra's characterization of Spain in an essay in Motivos reveals an important reason why hesitations about modernity might be complicated to defend:3 "her feminisation of Spain also serves to express ambivalence toward a modernity that, no matter how much admired and desired, seems alien." Kirkpatrick observes that while Spain is represented "as intellectually naive and subject to direct emotion and sensual input, it is feminised, but with a positive valence; its woman-like lack of sophistication preserves something healthy and vital" (Kirkpatrick, "Feminine Element" 151). One of the concerns that manifests itself in the novels studied here is that community practices based on the management of common resources can be interpreted as feminine or impotent in comparison with capitalist processes, and each text addresses this concern in a different way. Modernity is understood as causing the feminization of men and corrupting the natural feminine qualities of women (147). Like the concerns about the increasingly blurred distinctions between social classes in "the crazed mobility of modern society" (Labanyi, Gender 104), concerns about blurred distinctions between genders also manifest themselves in the literature of the time.

Carolyn Merchant explains how, since the 17th century development of modern science and the spread of a more mechanized understanding of the world, "The metaphor of the earth as

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3 This quote refers to the essay "Rubén Darío" in Motivos, which was originally published in 1905 under the name "Gregorio Martinez Sierra"; as Kirkpatrick notes in Mujer, modernismo y vanguardia en España, "Gregorio Martinez Sierra" is a pseudonym for the partnership between Gregorio and María Martínez Sierra (150-151).
a nurturing mother was gradually to vanish as a dominant image as the Scientific Revolution proceeded to mechanize and to rationalize the world view. The metaphor of "earth mother" is increasingly replaced by that of nature as a "wild and uncontrollable" woman that must be dominated by men (Merchant 2). Federici explains the disadvantages that an increasingly mechanized world view presents, as it disregards fundamental human needs that are satisfied by communal natural resources and unpaid work that is frequently performed collectively by women ("Feminism" sec. 5 par. 5). This study examines how authors represent women as providers of essential reproductive labor and care that sustain communities but whose voices are disregarded within those communities during an era of perceived social turmoil brought about by modernization and Spain's loss of influence on a global scale:

Questions about women's roles in their communities are reflected in the close interactions between characters and the natural world in the novels included in this study, and an idea from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, that "superiority—or authority—'has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills'" (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 13), can be considered in the context of all of these representations of community. In a seemingly incongruous move, the novels in the present study critique the alienating and sterilizing effects of the processes of modernization, but when women fulfill roles as reproducers and nurturers of human life, they are compared to nature and are likewise alienated from social life by these processes. The tension created by the perceived contradiction between women's relationship to
nature, which is dominated and exploited by men, and women's simultaneous, essential contribution to human social life, manifests itself in the crises of inheritance in *Peñas arriba*, *Cañas y barro* and *El Mayorazgo de Labraz*. In *El metal de los muertos*, the same tension is expressed from a woman's perspective, in the narration of the character Aurora's identification with the natural world.

The novels in the present study reflect on how, although both roles are necessary for the practice of community, authority is accorded to the party that speaks/writes rather than the party that listens/reads. Chapter 1, "Pereda's Natural Order: Conserving Community to Save Patriarchy in *Peñas arriba*," explores Marcelo's transition from an urban reader/listener/consumer into an authoritarian, rurally-based speaker/writer whose text reflects his effort to control the reader's interpretation. Marcelo professes the benefits of contact with the natural world and women only when he can assume a position of complete dominance over them, thereby incorporating the feminine element necessary for the propagation of life into the community while maintaining exclusive control over it. In Chapter 2, "The Endangered Mother in Blasco Ibáñez's *Cañas y barro*," I will argue that, through its representation of the synthesis of the natural environment and the rural poor, the novel portrays the anxieties of men who are facing their own disempowerment, which is likened to feminization, by the processes of modernization during the transition from membership in a local community to membership in a national community dominated by distant officials who create laws that negatively impact the local community. The extreme consequences of the processes of modernization are embodied by the representation of Neleta as a man-killing, female monster, which serves to justify the continued oppression of women during that era. Chapter 3, "Nothing in Common: Pío Baroja's *El Mayorazgo de Labraz*," will explore how the author's narrative techniques encourage an open interpretation of the text.
and express an attempt to engage in commoning through communication, however, the novel's protagonist attempts to find peace and meaning in isolated study and reflection but eventually realizes that his inaction in the material world only strengthens the relationships of domination that he opposes. His volition is eventually awoken as he abandons Labraz in search of a different life that is marked in the text by his newfound physical strength, his authorial voice and the romantic conquest of a character that had been characterized as a daughter figure to him. Meanwhile, the female characters in the novel prove to be uncritical readers and thinkers whose absence from the public sphere is normalized, even when the values of that public sphere are harshly criticized. Chapter 4, "Between Rocks and Hard Places: Voices of Exploitation and Reproduction in Espina's El metal de los muertos," will consider the importance of the representation of labor and how the portrayal of the women involved in the labor movement in the mines of Huelva challenges the logic of the patriarchal order that excludes the voices of women and nature from the communities of both laborers and capitalists in the industrialized world. Furthermore, the novel's incorporation of the point of view of the earth, through the experiences of female characters, calls attention to the connections between the exploitation of women and the exploitation of the natural environment.

Peñas arriba, El Mayorazgo de Labraz, Cañas y barro and El metal de los muertos all rely on descriptions of the characters' immediate natural environments to represent both the material and immaterial commons, which helps make the complex values and practices of commoning comprehensible to urban readers. At the same time, the traditional identification of nature as female and the perceived dominance of culture over nature since the Enlightenment complicates the defense of the preeminence of nature, and therefore of commoning, over the processes of capital. The three novels that depict the degradation of nature, El Mayorazgo de
Labraz, Cañas y barro and El metal de los muertos, also represent social degradation through the suffering and untimely deaths of children. These victims become the most poignant symbols of the destruction of natural reproductive power by the processes and values associated with modernization. Peñas arriba, in which the effects of modernization are largely kept at bay to protect the local community, provides a clear manifestation of the subjugation of natural reproductive power by men with the celebration of Marcelo's participation in a gruesome bear hunt that is supposed to mark his entry into that community. The point of view expressed in Pereda's novel, that the educated man is still able to control the social and natural environment around him, will soon seem outdated in the Spanish context closer to the end of the century. The community that Pereda is trying to redeem in 1895 no longer provides an adequate solution to the nation's problems after the events of 1898.
CHAPTER 1. PEREDA'S NATURAL ORDER: CONSERVING PATRIARCHY IN

PEÑAS ARriba

1.1 Introduction

In Peñas arriba, José Maria de Pereda represents community as a rigid structure that perpetuates tradition rather than as a flexible, progressive form of social organization. The natural environment, which is exemplified most prominently by the mountains surrounding the Cantabrian village of Tablanca, plays a fundamental role in understanding the worldview presented in the novel. Labanyi explains that the novel responds to "the modern system of economic and parliamentary representation, based on fluctuating, abstract relationships" by portraying "an alternative system of representation based on stable, inherent value," in which nature serves as the source of legitimacy of all other entities in the novel (300). The form of social organization that prevails in the village of Tablanca is made to appear naturally occurring through several features in the text, such as the novel's emphasis on the villagers' adaptation to the harsh alpine environment, the correspondence between the topography and Tablanca's power structure,⁴ the harvesting of the village's commonly held field being represented as a "scene of genuine [political] representation inserted into a natural scenario" (Labanyi 333), and the assertion by el Señor de la Torre de Provedaño, a local landowner and scholar, that the local form of social organization has evolved naturally over time (Pereda 68). Furthermore, Labanyi notes that the appearance of a family of bears in the second half of the novel confirms the natural occurrence of family, which provides the model for the larger social structure (323). Along with the conservative thesis of the novel, which is identified by Toni Dorca as an effort to "reinstate

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⁴ Don Celso's house overlooks the rest of the village, and the villagers must climb a road to reach it, which indicates his superior social position. Also, that mountain peaks are represented as spaces of spiritual importance reinforces the natural appearance of the social hierarchy at work in the novel.
order in the rural community after the tumultuous postrevolutionary period" (358), the novel's form also reflects the author's intention to reinstate order through his writing.

In his reading of *Peñas arriba*, Michael Iarocci argues that Pereda uses metaphor as he "attempts to aesthetically efface the problematic class frictions that were becoming increasingly palpable by the 1890s" (251). He sums up the complicated and unpleasant realities that are disguised and made to seem natural by the fundamental metaphors at work in the text:

> behind the God of the mountain landscape is the political institution of the church; behind the familial affect of patriarchy are relations of power and domination; and behind the historical spirit of Cantabrian heroism are the xenophobia and violence that sustain that power. More importantly, and at a more fundamental level, behind the Christian ethos of "self as other" that suffuses *Peñas arriba*'s metaphorical system is an unspoken precondition: the political subordination of that other. (251)

My analysis will further consider how one of the novel's key metaphors, the community as body, reflects a desire for social order by means of the subjugation of the peasant class, women and nature. While Iarocci casts light upon the extent to which Pereda employs metaphor to represent an ideal community in Tablanca as the "aesthetic antidote to the social transformations wrought by history" (252), David Herzberger notes that Marcelo "makes every effort to conceal the fictive element in his narrative and explicitly certifies its authenticity . . ." (24).

Marcelo's desire for control and order makes his story impossible for practical application but ideally suited for the novel genre. The first-person narrative reconciles the public actor's loss of control that Hannah Arendt identifies as an unavoidable consequence of free action:

> men have always known . . . that he who acts never quite knows what he is doing, that he always becomes "guilty" of consequences he never intended or even foresaw, that no matter how disastrous and unexpected the consequences of his deed he can never undo it, that the process he starts is never consummated unequivocally in one single deed or event, and that its very meaning never discloses itself to the actor but only to the backward glance of the historian who himself does not act. All this is reason enough to turn away with despair from the realm of human affairs and to hold in contempt the human capacity for freedom,
which, by producing the web of human relationships, seems to entangle its producer to such an extent that he appears much more the victim and the sufferer than the author and doer of what he has done. (233-4)

In this sense, Marcelo's role as actor and author of his own actions (and their consequences) makes freedom and sovereignty compatible, enabling him to maintain absolute integrity and rectify "the conclusion that human existence is absurd," which Arendt offers as the natural interpretation of the conundrum posed by plurality (235). Though Pereda's text emphasizes the appearance of plurality by representing the village as a community in practice, at the same time, it erases plurality in practice by representing the villagers as a single organism dominated by its patriarch.

Marcelo's desire for order and wholeness is palpable throughout the text. At first, the capital city seems to be the paragon of order, with its calculated architectural and cultural constructions, and there Marcelo leads a life organized around only his own desires. His access to a substantial inheritance, his decision to remain a political observer and his inclination to avoid romantic entanglements enable him to maintain what he interprets as exclusive control over his circumstances. After he assumes the role of patriarch of Tablanca, Marcelo reflects on his cosmopolitan lifestyle and demonstrates that his understanding of freedom has changed from freedom as the sovereignty of an individual to freedom as action among others: "¿Para qué demonios sirven en el mundo los hombres que, como yo, se han pasado la vida como las bestias libres, sin otra ocupación que la de regalarse el cuerpo? ¿Quién los conoce, quién los estima, quién llorará mañana su muerte ni notará su falta en el montón, ni será capaz de descubrir la huella de su paso por la tierra?" (Pereda 162). Though, according to Marcelo's experiences, the urban space remains unchanged throughout the text, he comes to regard his former lifestyle as disorderly on account of its purposelessness and his transience, whereas his lifestyle in Tablanca
is regimented by the seasons, the demands of his estate and the needs of the villagers. He comes to regard permanence and community participation as the most important markers of civilization, rather than diversion and comfort.

Arendt's interpretation of freedom as public action helps explain how Marcelo can experience a greater sense of freedom after settling into a small, isolated community as opposed to that in his life as a consumer moving between Europe's capitals. Though the social order of Tablanca is fixed, nature and community practices provide male community members with a measure of freedom as they provide forums in which men can act. As the patriarch of the community, Marcelo will face the fewest obstacles to his actions; what is less clear is the extent to which other community members experience their own freedom. Marcelo first imagined that the villagers would be living like "las fieras entre riscos y breñales" (Pereda 5), but he learns that they live according to a strict hierarchical structure. Toward the end of the novel he compares his former self, a madrileño, to a beast: "¿Y para eso, para vivir y acabar como las bestias, soy hombre y libre y mozo y rico?" (162). While Marcelo's active approach transforms his perception of the village from a space characterized by "pequeñez asfixiadora" into a comfortable space with possibilities for action that extend even to the project of national regeneration (26), his own reflections acknowledge his position of privilege as a young, rich man.

For Marcelo, the mountains of Cantabria initially represent a diseased and disorderly wilderness in which a man's actions are limited by his subjugation to the whims of nature, but his perspective changes entirely upon assuming a position of dominance over the people and the natural environment in and around Tablanca. Marcelo professes that he has never been attracted to nature or women, and the association between the two, which is demonstrated, for example, when he says that nature "me parecía maderastra, carcelera cruel" (Pereda 28), indicates that he is
wary of both because they threaten his freedom. However, by the end of the novel, Marcelo perceives nature as an attractive, voluptuous woman who pleases him far more than the straight lines of the city: "tenía la vista a las curvas ondulantes y graciosas de la Naturaleza, al ordenado desorden de sus obras colosales . . ." (162). Over time Marcelo learns to "read" his new environment, and he finally evolves to the point of controlling and representing it in writing. As Marcelo's estimation of the natural environment, the villagers and the way of life in Tablanca increases, his sense of self-worth also increases to accommodate his position of escalating importance in relation to those around him, and this culminates in his role as author: "Marcelo appropriates the tales of others in order to tell them himself. In the strictest sense, of course, Marcelo relates the entire novel: he is the "I" who orders events and gives them meaning . . . Marcelo never permits the tale to escape the authority of his own voice . . ." (Herzberger 23). As the author of the community in the novel, Marcelo wields a supernatural power that he seems to recognize when, for example, he narrates how the would-be pillagers of his ancestral home are defeated by "el deus ex machina de la nieve" (Pereda 128).

While the novel was published in 1895, Dorca reasons that the action of Peñas arriba takes place in 1870 (365), and in his exploration of the possibility that the novel was written as a response to Pardo Bazán's Los pazos de Ulloa, Anthony Clarke offers, "it should be made clear that Peñas arriba is in many ways an anachronism. Despite the regenerational implications and the fin de siglo sense of doom, ending, completion, new beginnings, etc., the overall novelistic mode and tone are predominantly characteristic of an earlier age. The novel has the patina of the 1870s or early 1880s rather than of the mid-1890s" (120). This chronological location is

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5 Labanyi also places the action of the novel between 1870 and 1871 (308).
6 Clarke suggests that "Peñas arriba could have been written—to some extent at least—with the intention of refuting Pardo Bazán's contention and demonstration in Los pazos de Ulloa that '. . . la aldea . . . envilece, empobrece y embrutece . . .'" (118).
especially interesting in light of Akiko Tsuchiya's conclusions about the rhetoric circulating around the Spanish monarch during that time:

Isabel II, who was queen of Spain from 1843 until her overthrow by the Glorious Revolution of 1868, was, by the end of her reign, portrayed in political discourse as a disorderly, ignorant, and irrational monarch who brought dishonor and disgrace to the nation [White]. What was most noteworthy about the construction of the queen as a female political symbol of the nation, as historian Sarah White notes, was the conflation between the national body and the female body, that is, between "the public life of the nation" and "the private life of the queen" [235]. The private life to which White refers, of course, was the queen's deviant sexual life[;] . . . it is female disorder – of a sexual nature no less – that was blamed for the political, social, and economic woes that plagued the nation during the Isabelline period and beyond. . . . Disorder, therefore, became troped as feminine, with both liberals and monarchists holding the queen responsible for the political and social instability of the nation. (16)

The Tablanca community, with Marcelo's uncle, Don Celso, and then Marcelo as its "head," provides a clear contrast with this image of the nation. While Marcelo's description of his life in Madrid reveals that urban culture has succumbed to the dangerous influence of upper-class women, his experience in Tablanca demonstrates that the regional leadership of local patriarchs, along with the writer who offers the masculinizing influence of his novel to the urban reader, exert order over bodies, women and nature, and can provide the cure for ill social health.

1.2 The Construction of Community

The novel disguises or excuses the absence of the villagers' political freedom by insisting on the existence of community in Tablanca, and by insisting that the community is like a family. The entire region recognizes the social harmony and well-being that exists, exclusively, in the village. The sister of the local doctor remarks, "Daba gusto aquella hermandad de unos con otros, y aquel ayuntamiento sin deudas, y aquel vecindario sin hambre y bien vestido," but she also warns, "toda esta ventura acabaría con don Celso . . ." (Pereda 55). At various times, Marcelo
notes the similarities in the dress, housing, diet, language and habits of the villagers. The locals are bonded in their sharing of some common resources, which include the Prao-Concejo, a rich field to which all residents have equal rights, and the forests surrounding the village, which provide timber and game for all residents.7 Don Celso remarks that the differences among villagers can be compared to the differences among children who are from the same parents, and Mari Pepa jokes about how the villagers are closely related (47, 88). The sense of community, however, only extends as far as the boundaries that it defines, and not only do residents of surrounding villages fail to practice the values that they revere about Tablanca, but also at least one Tablanca resident, el Topero, slights a fellow Tablanca resident, Chisco, because he is not originally from the village (98).

Judith Gale notes that Tablanca's geographical situation is responsible for its cultural isolation: "los moradores de Tablanca permanecen más encerrados porque las grandes tormentas de nieve sobre un terreno tan irregular y elevado imposibilitan el movimiento humano y hacen peligroso el descenso hacia los pueblos vecinos" (119). As Marcelo discovers during his initial explorations of Tablanca, outside of Don Celso's home, there is not any flat place that could, for example, accommodate a large gathering of people. The physical isolation of the village and the villagers seems to reinforce a sense of community among them. Gale observes that Don Celso's nightly tertulia, along with the other local tertulias, helps satisfy a human need for socialization that would otherwise go unfulfilled in winters (122). Communication among villagers in their tertulias fosters the practice of community as the participants discuss matters of local importance, but the tertulia at first alienates Marcelo because he finds its language abhorrent and its subject matter irrelevant. Marcelo laments that each participant in the tertulia "me parecía

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7 Most men in the community hunt, and they also carve their shoes from wood collected in the forests (36).
más zafío y más insulto que los anteriores; no hallaba chiste en sus ‘humorismos’ expresados en un lenguaje mutilado y convencional . . . hastiábame la simplicidad de los asuntos que más les interesaban a ellos . . .” (Pereda 76). Labanyi explains that despite the appearance of the tertulia as a public forum, "in practice we see the members of this tertulia discussing only private matters" (314), and she explains the significance of this characteristic: "Although he rejects caciquismo, Pereda proposes a form of local autonomy based on the private; that is, on the family. . . . Pereda privatizes politics by making the family public: an abolition of privacy that asserts communal values while maintaining private property" (300). The image of community as a large family is the interpretation furthered by Marcelo during the period of transition from Don Celso's rule to his own. Iarocci asserts that by replacing the scientific understanding of the social "body" proposed by Neluco, who is a doctor and Marcelo's friend, with Marcelo's own understanding of the community as family, the protagonist is able to "reframe patriarchy in strictly moral terms, thereby opening the door to the traditional moral authority of religious dogma" (247). Marcelo stands to gain a great deal if his leadership is accepted as natural and absolute, and the idea of community as family permits a smooth transition between generations, unlike the idea of the patriarch as the head of a body. As his parents' only son, Marcelo has little reason to object to the patriarchal order of the family, but the case of his father, who stood to inherit little as a second son, illustrates how the traditional family structure does not treat even men equally.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that the family is a social structure that corrupts rather than nurtures the common:

The family is perhaps the primary institution in contemporary society for mobilizing the common. For many people, in fact, the family is the principal if not exclusive site of collective social experience, cooperative labor arrangements, caring, and intimacy. It stands on the foundation of the common but at the same
time corrupts it by imposing a series of hierarchies, restrictions, exclusions, and distortions. First, the family is a machine of gender normativity that constantly grinds down and crushes the common. (pt. 3.2, sec. 3, par. 3)

They also argue that the model of the family weakens the common by concealing other forms of the common that could be more equitable, by inciting "some of the most extreme forms of narcissism and individualism" (Hardt and Negri, pt. 3.2 sec. 3 par. 5), and by allowing for the transfer of property between generations, which they identify as one of the primary mechanisms that impedes the realization of the common over time. In a seemingly contradictory situation, at the time of disentailment in Spain, the preservation of the mayorazgo and other indissoluble land holdings protected resources held in common by peasants (Tortella, Development 58), as is reflected by the plot of the novel. This supports Pereda's move of reinforcing private property and communal values through the family structure, as Don Celso considers his wealth to belong to the entire community of Tablanca.

The extreme conditions and isolation of the village lead to a demonstration of community practice when a team quickly assembles to rescue a neighbor, Pepazos, during a snowstorm. A surplus of village men immediately volunteer to join the operation, even in life-threatening conditions. Facia, Don Celso's servant, tells Marcelo: "Al romper el alba habían salido del lugar, no todos los hombres que se brindaron a ello, porque hubieran sido demasiados, sino los que se escogieron por más a propósito por su robustez y por su experiencia . . ." (Pereda 105). This episode, which is not unique in the novel, illustrates how self-sacrifice is a way of life in the village. Iarocci identifies this value as the "good shepherd' motif," and he observes how it is present even in the character of the "village idiot," el Tarumbo (248), who lives out this value to an irresponsible extreme and thereby marks the limit of selflessness as the expense of one's private property. The character reminds readers that disregard for private property and the
(private) family, even when done in the name of the community, will put vulnerable community members at risk.

The Tablanca community is idealized especially during the harvest of the Prao-Concejo, when the villagers share both the labor and the product of their labor "sin una sola protesta, por no haber un solo perjudicado en la repartición" (Pereda 165), but the text also describes underlying instability in the social order that can surface in the absence of the patriarch. Without exception, the rural elite in the novel are represented as having the best interests of their respective villages and valleys at heart, and while they maintain their own estates, the narrator insists that they make many personal sacrifices for their communities. The absence of these father figures inevitably leads to conflict among villagers. Don Celso warns Marcelo of recent events in a nearby village, which had been ruled by his friend Ramón de Llosía: "cuanto vinieron estas políticas nuevas que hoy nos gobiernan, en un abrir y cerrar de ojos se le fueron de las manos, y de hombres agradecidos y cariñosos, se convirtieron en fieras enemigas . . ." (88). According to the sentiments of a range of characters in the novel, the mountain communities are on the verge of collapse as soon as their patriarchs begin to lose control; without the patriarchs to serve as models of the community ethic, the villagers soon lose all inclination toward the common good. Neluco's sister says of the downfall of the community in Robacío: "Allí no había unión ni paz entre unos y otros, por culpa de cuatro mangoneadores amparados por otros tantos 'cabayerus de ayá fuera', que no se acordaban del pueblo más que en las ocasiones de necesitar las espaldas de aquellos pobres melenos para encaramarse en el puesto que les convenía, y pipiar a gusto las uvas del racimo" (55). El hombre de la torre de Provedaño laments the effects of the

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8 Dorca gives an extensive explanation of the significance of the appearance of Don Ramón in the action of Peñas arriba in his article, "Pereda and the Closure of the Roman à Thèse: From Don Gonzalo González de la Gonzalera to Peñas arriba."
"mal común" to which local villages are losing control of land and against which his efforts have been largely futile. Even el Tarumbo expresses fears about what would happen to the village in the absence of Don Celso: "Y en feneciendo este último Ruiz de Bejos, y en cerrándose la casona o pasando a dueños desconocidos, ¿qué sería de Tablanca ni qué vivir el suyo, sin aquel arrimo, tan viejo en el valle como el mismo río que le atravesaba?" (37). The apparent fragility of the "bien común" indicates that it exists at a superficial level.

At the same time that the way of life in the mountain villages seems to be on the verge of extinction, Neluco argues at once that the nation's urban centers are gangrenous and must be rejuvenated by healthy mountain communities. According to his perspective, the mountain communities are healthier when more isolated: "'Pues estos miembros sanos' añadió el médico con viril entereza, 'son las aldehuelas montaraces como ésta. Y digo montaraces, porque si vamos a meter el escalpelo en las más despejadas de horizontes y más abiertas al comercio de las ideas y al tufillo de la industria, sabe Dios lo que hallaríamos en sus fibras . . .'" (Pereda 43).

While Neluco proposes that villagers should remain isolated, at the same time they require the guidance of men more learned and traveled than themselves. Pereda's idyllic Cantabrian village is not entirely devoid of external influences, but those external influences can be dangerous if not filtered into the community by educated people, like Marcelo and Neluco, who have locally-based interests. The novel illustrates the difference between the effects of outside influences on educated and uneducated villagers by comparing the reactions of the local peasant women when they are exposed to cheap trinkets and fashion accessories with the reaction of Lita, Marcelo's future romantic partner, when she is exposed to the fashions of stylish women through newspapers. The uneducated villagers, like Facia, who was orphaned at an early age, are defenseless against the charms of a peddler and his goods: "Como moscas acudían a su tenducho
reluciente los pobres papanatas de la feria, y como moscas caían en la miel. . . . Particularmente Facia, que era de suyo sencillota y noble, se despilfarró. Gastó en gargantillas de todos colores, en sortijas, espejucos y alfilerones de todas hechuras, un dineral . . ." (31). On the contrary, Lita has a basic education, she lives with her grandfather, and she has also grown up with a close relationship to the village doctor, but her increased level of sophistication in thought and dress as compared to other local women also seems to be innate. The narrator says that Lita is "mucho más que su madre y que la hermana de Neluco, con no haber visto mayor cantidad del mundo, ni bebido las ideas en mejores fuentes que ellas. Tenía unas afinaciones, unas delicadezas de sentido y un alcance de vista en las honduras de las cosas . . . que solamente las concebía yo en las inteligencias muy cultivadas" (93). Unlike her peers, Lita is able to critically evaluate the information about popular fashion that she receives from outside the village, and instead of blindly following urban trends, she adapts her choice of clothing to reflect local conditions and values. Upon seeing the extravagant dresses of madrileñas, she reasons: "cuánto dinero debían de gastar en esas galas y diversiones, y qué mal la sentarían a ella tantos lujos, avezada a las pobrezas de una aldeúca montés y qué avergonzada se vería en aquellos festivales tan resplandecientes, debajo de unos perifollos que no sabría manejar!" (93). Still, Marcelo admires her "delicadezas de tocado y de vestido" (47), and because she apparently has the best sense of style in the village, the other young women come to her for help in making their dresses (93). Through the anecdote about the reaction of the village women to the peddler, who becomes Facia's husband, the text defends their supervision by the more learned pillars of the community, such as Neluco, el Señor de la torre de Provedaño and Marcelo, and demonstrates how ignoring their guidance can prove disastrous. By acting as the exclusive channels through which information and ideas are carefully filtered from the capital into the isolated village, these men
work to secure their own positions of authority into the future. Also, by writing about his circumstances, Marcelo conducts information from the village back to an educated urban audience, where it will potentially contribute to the project of national regeneration and will also close the loop of information and resources that fortify his position as patriarch.

1.3 The Social Body and Spirit

Though in the text it is supposed to personify the idea of the "bien común," the metaphor of the community as a body proves to be hierarchical, sexist and individualistic, which also reflects the main points of Hardt and Negri's critique of the institution of the family. The model comes from the villages like Tablanca, where the patriarch, who must be educated and propertied, acts as the head of the community, and the villagers, who Don Celso regards as children (Pereda 88), are the limbs that carry out the work:

la casona de Tablanca, desde tiempo inmemorial, ha sido la unificación de miras y de voluntades de todos para el bien común. La casa y el pueblo han llegado a formar un solo cuerpo, sano, robusto y vigoroso, cuya cabeza es el señor de aquélla. Todos son para él, y él es para todos, como la cosa más natural y necesaria. Prescindir de la casona, equivale a decapitar el cuerpo; y así resulta que no se toman por favores los muchos y constantes servicios que se prestan entre la una y los otros, sino por actos funcionales de todo el organismo. (43)

Don Celso and Marcelo support the conceptualization of villagers as bodies who might be physically healthy but are not intellectually equipped to deal with the influences from the outside world. Several passages in the novel make clear that access to information, which is acquired by Marcelo and his contemporaries through education and travel, should be limited to the realm of the "head" only. Don Celso himself explains that the men in Tablanca are not especially thoughtful: "aunque buenos en lo principal, son rudos y de los que se rigen más por la boca que por el entendimiento . . ." (88). Neluco's description of the villagers' lack of education also
reveals his belief that they should remain uneducated to fulfill their place at the bottom of the social order:

"¿Qué tienen esos hombres que tachar?" preguntóme a su vez el médico. 
"Que son rústicos, que están ineducados."
"Como deben de ser y como deben de estar" me replicó inmediatamente, "para el destino que tienen en el cuadro." (42)

Marcelo likes and spends a great deal of time with Chisco and Pito, but he still believes "eran dos rudos montañeses con más corazón que entendimiento . . ." (96). He also suggests that the villagers are unable to reach the same level of spiritual understanding that he and other educated people are able to reach. While in the village, the local priest Don Sabas "hablaba desde el altar mayor bastante al caso y a la medida del entendimiento de sus rústicos feligreses," but when he is in the mountains with Marcelo, "no se parecía a sí propio" (34). The priest's words reach another level of eloquence when he is surrounding by nature and a more intellectual audience. Marcelo reflects that neither Pito nor Chisco can appreciate the more philosophical version of Don Sabas: "Nada de esto, que tan hermoso era y tan a la vista estaba, sabían leer ni estimar los dos mozones que tan profundo respeto tenían a don Sabas . . ." (34). Marcelo effectively orders religion according to the same hierarchy that favors himself by asserting his superior state of enlightenment over the rest of the villagers.

Marcelo's spiritual understanding evolves simultaneously with his sense of social responsibility. As he becomes less and less interested in reading newspapers from Madrid and feels less fulfilled by the consumption of novels, he learns to interpret the people and the natural environment surrounding him: "Jamás había visto yo porción tan grande de mundo a mis pies, ni me había hallado tan cerca de su Creador. . . . Hasta entonces había necesitado el contagio de los fervores de don Sabas para leer algo en el gran libro de la Naturaleza, y en aquella ocasión le leía yo solo, de corrido y muy a gusto" (Pereda 51-52). Marcelo admits that previously, among
Spanish authors, "Fuera de los escritores de Madrid, no conocía uno solo, ni de nombre" (66), but he learns to understand and appreciate other perspectives, not only among educated men such as el Señor de la Torre de Provedaño, but also in Don Celso's tertulia (76). Whereas Don Sabas, Don Celso and Neluco have been the translators who help Marcelo understand the language and social and spiritual life in Tablanca, Marcelo becomes the translator for his educated, urban audience by relating his experiences in Tablanca from the perspective and with the language of a madrileño. As he compares the natural world to the book of God, he aligns himself, as an author, to God, and he demonstrates his mastery over the subjects in the text by representing them.

When Neluco imagines the village as a body, he describes it as "un solo cuerpo, sano, robusto y vigoroso, cuya cabeza es el señor de aquélla" (Pereda 43), which is a decidedly masculine interpretation, especially given that the head of the body is invariably a man's head. Neluco praises the health of the villagers, saying "La raza es de lo más sano y hermoso que he conocido en España" (35), but Marcelo's first impressions of the villagers, while tainted by his lack of familiarity with the place and its contrast with the city, are quite different and quite dark. He recalls "tantas caras de seres desdichados y enfermizos, con la boca y los ojos muy abiertos, ávidos de aire y de luz que les iban faltando" (25). Although one of the main characters is the local doctor, there is, noticeably, no mention of any human birth in the novel, whereas illness, aging and death, and in particular, Don Celso's failing heart, are often discussed. Marcelo sees the villagers in a different light during the summer, but there remains a sense that the "body" of the village is aging. The crucial difference in Marcelo's reinterpretation of Neluco's metaphor of the village as a single body is that a single male body is incapable of reproduction, and therefore provides an imperfect social model, whereas Marcelo's version will be expanded to include a
female body. While Marcelo's actions acknowledge the importance of reproduction, he also takes actions to ensure that reproduction will be subject to his authority.

1.4 Reproduction in the Community

As I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, Pereda's representation of Tablanca plainly excludes women from important community practices, but there is also a prominent trend among the male characters in the novel to exclude women from life altogether, even though the novel espouses a plan for regeneration that would implement a social model based on the family. Labanyi's observation that "Pereda is perhaps not so much feminizing patriarchy as proposing a masculine model that usurps the female function, leaving women with nothing to do" can be taken quite literally (328), as the novel seems to remove women from their role even in the reproduction of community members. When Marcelo reflects that the tertulia in Don Celso's kitchen is like a family, he also observes that this family consists only of men, and primarily older men: "todos los tertulianos de la cocinona eran hombres muy maduros . . ." (Pereda 78). Furthermore, the men who are the staples of the tertulia are bachelors; Don Sabas is presumably celibate, and Neluco Celis admits that he is comfortable with the idea of never producing an heir: "ni me aburro en la soledad en que vegeto, ni me tientan, como a usted, las seducciones de 'allá afuera', ni conmigo ha de extinguirse mi apellido aunque yo muera solterón . . ." (155).9

Even Marcelo and Don Celso give their respective patrimonies little attention until the elder Ruiz de Bejos falls gravely ill. Don Celso's children had all perished early on and then his

9 The doctor has grown up in close contact with the most attractive young woman in the area and yet does not consider her as a potential partner. The excuse that his career will require his full attention for several years seems weak because he neither mentions any desire to improve his status in the medical field nor does he want to leave the Tablanca area. He also often has enough time, according to the novel, to take part in the tertulia in Don Celso's kitchen and for his personal artistic pursuits also.
wife had died in childbirth, and though he says that at the time of his wife's death "aún no era yo propiamente viejo y me sentía fuerte" (Pereda 1), during that stage of his life he does not make any attempt to remarry. Instead, the community provides Don Celso with a substitute for biological family. Labanyi notes, "Don Celso, presiding over the kitchen hearth, is a kind of masculine 'mother' to his 'children'' (324), but while he works to increase the value of his estate, he is unable to secure its future beyond his own lifetime. Marcelo recalls his father's claims that Don Celso is "más cuidadoso del cultivo y prosperidad de sus tierras y ganados, que del fomento de su cariño a la familia que le quedaba" (3). Marcelo's father would also be aware that his family's estate is at risk as long as Don Celso lacks a successor, but due to what Marcelo calls "las flaquezas más salientes de mi padre" (3), he only takes interest in regional history and the family's genealogy. The father's relationship with Tablanca is described as "meramente platónico" (4), as it has no practical implications. Though Marcelo's father had earned a fortune in mining, his strictly private wealth ultimately proves unproductive as his son and sole heir neither seems concerned with the legacy of his estate, which he happily squanders on travel and leisure, nor does Marcelo ever mention having children. Marcelo appears to have a realization in the final pages of the novel, when he determines to marry Lita and says: "Adelante, pues, con la dinastía de los Ruiz de Bejos" (167), but this is the closest that the text ever comes to the matter of Marcelo's reproduction; the afterword also fails to mention any details about the status of his family. The only evident product of his quest for regeneration, which is supposed to be launched through his marriage to Lita, is the text of the novel.

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10 This fact is an interesting detail, as mining involves environmental exploitation, and later it is the same industry that threatens to disrupt life in Tablanca. Here it is shown to have no useful, long-term consequence, as Marcelo squanders his father’s fortune.
The "Señor de la torre de Provedaño" is another important figure in the region who admires and tries to emulate Don Celso, and while he is still energetic, strong in body and sharp in mind at age 50, he has apparently dedicated his life to producing books rather than offspring. One of his works, which has been printed by the Real Academia Española, is a long history of Castillian surnames: *Ensayo histórico, etimológico y filológico sobre los apellidos castellanos desde el siglo X hasta nuestra edad* (Pereda 65), which guarantees that his own family name will survive, though only on paper, in his "libros inmortales" (69). Don Recaredo, to whom the reader is introduced just before Don Celso's funeral, is a regional leader with important political connections and is also a lifelong bachelor. Don Recaredo is described as: "hidalgo de rancio solar, célibe impenitente, afamado cazador de fieras, y de grande y merecido influjo en toda su comarca," who fills the voids in his personal life with his passion for carpentry (147). In addition to the examples from the rural elite, there is a notable example from the labor class of men's reluctance to marry and reproduce. Chisco, who Marcelo regards highly among the locals, decides to forgo his potential future with his love interest, Tanasia, because her father initially perceives Chisco's social status to be lower than her family's. Chisco is among the characters who lives in close contact with nature, but, like other previously mentioned characters, his virility does not encompass his sexuality: "Aquel hombre era la parsimonia y la imperturbabilidad en carne y hueso, y las mismas pulsaciones tenía delante del oso en su caverna, que al calorcillo de la novia" (121). Chisco's rival Pepazos, who loses face in the community after being rescued by a search party when he gets stuck in the mountains during a snowstorm (110), is left to marry the attractive Tanasia, while Chisco offers to remain forever a servant in the home of Don Celso. Because they are productive and in regular contact with the natural world, these bachelors are seemingly models for good health even though they do not
reproduce; their dedication to their respective communities seems to be an acceptable substitute for reproduction.

The notably reproductive males in the novel belong to a social class lower than that of Marcelo, they are less educated than Marcelo and they have an excessive corporality that suggests that reproduction is more characteristic of the "body" of the social body rather than the "head." The two especially prolific fathers coincide in their healthy appetites, which suggests a proclivity for indulgence, and both men also live in households that are dominated by verbose and unceasingly active women. Don Pedro Nolasco had two wives and ten children and has a voracious appetite, even in his advanced age. Marcelo describes "Marmitón" as exceptionally large and ugly (46).\textsuperscript{11} The text mentions that he does not hunt, in contrast with most men in the region, and by the end of the novel he is infantilized as he cannot bear to witness the demise of his friend Don Celso. Neluco's brother-in-law is the other prolific father; he has seven young children and is described as "bastante gordo" (57); aside from this fact, and that his wife testifies to his work ethic, there is little information given about him. Significantly, Marcelo visits the home of Neluco's brother-in-law, which actually belongs to Neluco's family, when it is open and only women and children are present. Later that day, Marcelo barely pauses and does not get down from his horse upon being introduced to the man of the house for the first time. Marcelo is consistently preoccupied with cleanliness, as demonstrated by his observations about everyone that he respects, including Neluco, Don Sabas, Lita and her mother, Mari Pepa. His descriptions of Marmitón and of Neluco's seven nieces and nephews in Robacio are punctuated by the indications of flaws in their appearances and behaviors and are reflective of Marcelo's distaste for disorder.

\textsuperscript{11} Don Pedro Nolasco's nickname also suggests that he does not receive the respect that other senior community members do.
Pito Salces is the only character who shows physical repercussions from his sexual desires. On several occasions the narrator notes Pito's response to Tona, for example: "Se le sentían los ímpetus de su amor corriéndole hasta por los brazos incommensurables" (78), and he is described as "un brasero que se consumía por Tona . . ." (79). Pito, according to Marcelo, is "muy bruto" and lacks common sense (33, 96), and he demonstrates this both in his behavior while hunting and in courtship. However, Pito's carnality seems to be acceptable given his status as a rustic, and Marcelo supports Pito's efforts to secure a union with Tona, who stands to inherit property from Don Celso.

With the exception of Pito Salces, there is a nearly complete dismissal of sexual desire among men in and around Tablanca. Though Don Celso, the most important local political figure, had married, el Tarumbo suggests that the marriage was the consequence of practical needs. El Tarumbo says that Don Celso "no era mujeriegu [sic]," but "la soledad y otras penas le habían obligado a casarse también" (37). Marcelo had also been content as a bachelor, which is explained in part by his general impassivity, but it is also because he regards urban women as indistinguishable from one another, and they are consequently unattractive to him:

Todas las mujeres que yo llevaba tratadas en el mundo, con más o menos intimidad, como formadas en un mismo plantel y educadas con unos mismos fines, salvas muy importantes diferencias plásticas, de esas que tocan más al cuerpo que al espíritu del observador, me habían dado en definitiva una suma de semejanzas morales que llegó a parecerse a la monotonía, según mi manera particular de ver esas cosas; y de aquí . . . la falta de verdadera curiosidad y, por consiguiente, de hondo interés hacia aquellas mujeres, a pesar de haber vivido con ellas en continuo trato. (92)
Though Marcelo states in several instances that he has extensive experience interacting with women,\(^{12}\) and he even hints at some moments that he may have encouraged a woman's affections, the text insists on the integrity of his heart, mind and body.

As Labanyi observes, the relationships among men, including many instances of physical closeness, are narrated extensively in the novel (322). As opposed to a life in the city "vivido con ellas en continuo trato" (Pereda 92, emphasis added), village life provides many opportunities for men to enjoy the exclusive company of other men. Labanyi contrasts this with the moment when Marcelo and Lita finally begin to reveal their affection for each other, and the narrator seems to apologize to the reader for it: "representábamos la escena sempiternamente cursi a los ojos de un espectador desapasionado y frío; pero yo, que había sido de éstos hasta entonces, la encontraba hasta sublime . . ." (Labanyi 322, Pereda 167). With this statement the narrator attempts to control the interpretation of his work by anticipating the reader's reaction and defending himself against it. He indicates his own superior understanding of the situation as he understands it both from the perspective of an actor and from the perspective of an audience member, and therein offers a frame for the interpretation of the entire text. His interactions with Lita and the process leading up to the climactic confession of his feelings provide the details to support his claim as both a rational observer and an authoritative actor in Tablanca, and his role as author/narrator extends his sphere of control to the urban audience as well.

\(^{12}\) For example, when he is sure that he has secured Lita's affections, Marcelo says: "o me engañaba mucho mi bien acreditada experiencia en esos lances, o podía tirar del hilo a mi antojo cuando me diera la gana" (159).
1.5 The Domination of Women and Nature

As noted by María Asunción Blanco de la Lama, the representation of Marcelo's love interest in the novel, Lita, is inseparable from the representation of nature.\(^{13}\) Marcelo falls in love with Lita and the natural environment simultaneously, and his understanding of women and nature changes as he explores both extensively and learns to control them.\(^{14}\) Labanyi notes that as the voice for regeneration in the novel, "Neluco . . . encourages him [Marcelo] to marry Lita: regeneration means becoming productive by husbanding the land and husbanding a wife, making both bear fruit" (326). If regeneration depends on both production and reproduction, then it is failing in the mountain villages in one critical area for which the text proposes a remedy in Marcelo's case. Marcelo admits that in the past, "en la afición más acentuada de todas las mías, la de los viajes, me seducía mucho más el artificio de los hombres que la obra de la Naturaleza" (Pereda 4), and the novel provides the contrast to this characteristic in Lita. Lita is a pure, domestic product who wants to remain in the village where she was raised.\(^{15}\) When Marcelo asks Neluco about her exposure to the outside world, Neluco communicates that she is "nacida y criada en Tablanca, [y] no había tenido más escuelas que la del maestro del lugar y la de su propia madre. . . El resto era obra del instinto . . ." (48).

The text painstakingly establishes the genuine nature of Marcelo's attraction to Lita. First, Lita herself is represented as a natural beauty with an innately attractive femininity. Marcelo's

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\(^{13}\) Blanco de la Lama says: "La interpretación correcta de este personaje debe hacerse desde el plano simbólico y poético. . . No se puede entender este personaje si no es dentro del marco de la Naturaleza. Si ésta tiene el poder de regenerar el individuo contaminado por la ciudad es gracias al personaje femenino principal. Marcelo regresa a Tablanca porque está enamorado de Lituca con la misma intensidad que lo está de la Naturaleza" (90).

\(^{14}\) Labanyi asserts that Marcelo's union with Lita is the model for "regeneration through the marriage of the city, represented by a man, to the country, represented by a woman" (Labanyi Gender 323). Lita's exceptionality among women in Tablanca suggests that she is a metaphor for the rural lifestyle, including the village and nature, rather than a model rural woman.

\(^{15}\) Labanyi observes that Lita's and Marcelo's respective heritages represent the union of north and south (of the nation), and their backgrounds represent the union of country and city (311).
initial impressions of her appearance are that she is "limpia como los oros, fresca y rozagante como una rosita de abril . . ." (Pereda 45). Later, he describes the experience of Lita's company in terms that demonstrate his recent rejection of artifice: "Buscando una comparación para este sentimiento, veníanseme a las mientes ejemplos muy raros: verbigracia, los lienzos recién lavados y secos, el heno de las praderas con su fragancia 'a salud,' y el agua de las fuentes rústicas con su pureza transparente" (92). Marcelo admires the genuine nature of Lita's words and actions, and he encounters her, by chance and then later intentionally, at work in her home, when her appearance is entirely plain. Marcelo's attraction to Lita also develops from their conversations, which are mostly concerned with their respective ways of life. Her role, as the representative of the countryside, is to cure the man of the ills of his urban lifestyle by making him productive and reproductive, while he is supposed to use his intellect and experience to protect the woman and the countryside from exploitation by self-interested parties and insulate them from potentially disruptive forces in the outside world. As Labanyi notices, the women in the novel are literally sheltered from external influences; "in Tudanca [Tablanca] the women are almost always indoors" (322), where they are constantly busy with domestic labor. They are therefore distanced from nature, yet, at the same time, the representation of Lita's character is inseparable from nature (Blanco de la Lama 90). Whereas the men of the village frequently exploit nature as they work, and they amuse themselves and reinforce their masculinity and community outdoors, the physical separation of women from nature is a manner of curbing their freedom. At the same time, the representation of women as "natural" distances them from the masculine domain of "culture," of which the city represents the pinnacle.

Marcelo's domination over women and nature is conveyed by his visual scrutiny of both. As Marcelo's "life of artifice has deadened his sensibility," his exposure to Lita and to the natural
environment must teach him how to embrace emotions (Labanyi 322). He says that in his experiences with Don Sabas he learns to "sentir el natural": "yo leía algo que jamás había leído en la Naturaleza cada vez que la contemplaba a la luz de las impresiones transmitidas por don Sabas encaramado en las cimas de los montes. Y era muy de agradecerse y hasta de admirarse por mí este milagro del pobre cura de Tablanca; milagro que nunca habían logrado hacer conmigo ni los cuadros, ni los libros, ni los discursos" (Pereda 34-35). Though Don Sabas teaches Marcelo to revere nature as the work of God, and Marcelo comes to regard nature as highly as he regards the finest cultural production, Labanyi states: "The tendency in Peñas arriba to view the landscape from a height has been noted [Clarke 1969: 133-4]: the viewers are always male, 'dominating' the implicitly female panorama spread before them" (323). Marcelo also makes a habit of studying Lita and definitively positions himself as the dominant party in their relationship. During their first meeting, Marcelo "no la quitaba ojo" (Pereda 47), and later as he becomes curious about her romantic inclinations, he unrelentingly interrogates her: "le eché cincuenta veces al campo de la conversación disfrazado de mil modos, con el piadoso fin de observar qué cara le ponía Lita . . ." (79). Once Marcelo considers the possibility of marrying Lita, his evaluation continues; he resolves first to evaluate whether or not Lita is actually as attractive as he imagines: "es de suma necesidad verlo, pesarlo y medirlo todo minuciosamente y a tiempo, para evitar ulteriores e irremediables desencantos." He implies possession of her by comparing his feelings for Lita to those of a boy who is fascinated with a new toy, but at the same time, this metaphor allows for the possibility that his feelings are ephemeral (157). Marcelo wants to study Lita without revealing his intentions so that he can have their relationship exclusively under his control. Referring to this situation, he says "yo necesitaba tener ese hilo
principal en la mano para tirar de él cuando me diera la gana, o para no tirar nunca si me convenía más" (158).

The metaphors that Marcelo uses to describe his relationship with Lita establish his feeling of dominance in their relationship and also make it possible to continue the comparison between Marcelo's relationship with Lita to his relationship with nature. Marcelo imagines Lita's best qualities as the earth from which he will mold a partner for himself: "Gran barro, indudablemente, para formar una compañera a su gusto un Adán como yo . . ." (Pereda 159). When he feels confident that Lita's feelings correspond with his own, Marcelo concludes "Estaba, pues, en las mejores condiciones imaginables para hacer un alto en mi empresa y examinar el terreno tranquilamente y a mi gusto" (159). At this moment, Marcelo also reinstitutes his excursions to the mountains and begins a survey of his newly acquired properties; "estudié con verdadero afán de penetrarle hasta el fondo, el organismo . . ." (160). While Marcelo distances himself from Lita so that he can calmly evaluate his situation, he feels encouraged by her increasingly demure body language. He describes her "docilidad tan hechicera" (159) and her "ojos acobardados" (161); her obedience can be contrasted with Facia's fateful assertion of independence when she chooses to marry against the advice of Don Celso.

Along with Lita, the villagers yield to Marcelo's authority after Don Celso's death: “También me acompañaban entonces Chisco y Pito Salces; pero más respetuosos y hasta más serviciales . . . que la otra vez, cuando yo no era amo y señor de la casona . . .” (Pereda 159-160). The natural environment also gives way to Marcelo's fortified presence: "hasta me parecían llanos y placenteros caminos y sendas por los cuales no andaba yo antes sino echando los pulmones por la boca" (159). At the same time that, according to Marcelo, he manipulates Lita's emotions to probe her docility and prepare her for marriage, he also takes control of the
languishing garden near his house and prepares it to become fruitful: "Se cavó, se removió toda su tierra; se pusieron en buen orden las plantas enfermizas que encerraba, y se trazó un regular pedazo de jardín, que se plantaría debidamente cuando fuera tiempo de ello . . ." (160). Though Lita's "tan equilibrado organismo" had been the source of Marcelo's rejuvenation (93), he proves that he will dominate and domesticate both her and nature alike by imposing order upon the natural world as he sees fit. When he returns from his trip to Madrid, he finds both Lita and nature attractive and complementing each other. He uses metaphors from nature to describe her appearance; she looks "risueña como una aurora de abril", and her clothes are "alegres como el plumaje de las tórtolas que la arrullaban desde su huerto florido." At the same time, he personifies nature, which is "vestida con la pompa de sus mejores galas . . ." (164). The inseparability of Lita from the natural environment is especially important in the interpretation of the bear hunting expedition, which stands out as an unexpectedly violent episode in a plot that otherwise contains few surprises.

The bear hunting expedition emerges as soon as Marcelo discovers and begins to explore his physical attraction to Lita, and it demonstrates his invigorated masculinity. Though Don Celso's will has already established Marcelo as the next patriarch of Tablanca, he is yet to feel fully incorporated into local life, and his dream before the night of the hunt, when he imagines himself on trial in front of a jury of bears, reflects this insecurity. If the hunt is the event that confirms Marcelo's acceptance among the men in Tablanca, it also constitutes an assault on natural reproduction and therefore suggests the violence inherent in the implementation of patriarchy. Labanyi argues "the hunt represents his [Marcelo's] initiation into masculinity as well as proposing a gentler [more genteel] form of masculinity as an improvement on the 'rude', 'brutish' virility of Pito and Chisco" (324), but this defining moment of Marcelo's masculinity
happens to be represented as an unprovoked attack on a mother bear who is at rest with her newborn cubs in their adopted shelter. Don Sabas is the most eloquent admirer of nature in the novel, and he cultivates in Marcelo a spiritual understanding of the natural world. The priest values animals as part of the work of God, for this reason it is particularly striking that Marcelo, who has become an admirer of Sabas, takes such an aggressive turn against nature. Labanyi notes that the incident with the bears supports the idea of the family, and by association, the community that is modeled on the family, as a natural phenomenon, but at the same time she observes: "That this should be Marcelo's last excursion before he himself founds a family with Lita introduces an uncomfortable note" (320). The incident demonstrates that Marcelo has and is cultivating some violent, destructive instincts.

It is no coincidence that Marcelo's bear hunting expedition arises the very day after he notes an increase in his affections toward Lita. Just before Chisco approaches Marcelo with the news about the bear, Marcelo spends an afternoon admiring Lita and asking her about various aspects of her life, which he compares to "las pedrezuelas que fui contando y estudiando en el fondo de aquella fuente cristalina y tentadora" (Pereda 94). He is especially interested in whatever might have influenced Lita from outside of Tablanca, but he finds few external factors contributing to her education. Marcelo pays especially close attention to the matter of literature when he asks for an account of the texts to which Lita has been exposed, which she dutifully and candidly reveals. She has read three novels, to which she has had predictable and moderate reactions, but she has the most regular exposure to the three religious texts of the house, including Saint Teresa's Cartas, with which she is most familiar, and, finally, she has read some

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16 The text includes a detail about the age of the cubs, which makes the attack appear even more grisly when considered from the perspective of a mother; the bear cubs "No contaban, por las trazas, más de una semana de nacidos" (102).
of *Don Quijote*, though she claims it is beyond her understanding (93). Based on Marcelo's positive evaluation of his subject, Lita's report of her short and sober reading list contains the narrator's recommendation of a healthy literary diet for women, which is limited in potentially dangerous exposure to material that could potentially stir her emotions and opinions while being heavy in Spanish influence and Christian doctrine.

When Lita exclaims that her friend Neluco has been the most important source of education in her life, Marcelo abruptly ends their conversation, and he recalls: "Sentí también remordimientos de conciencia, como si estuviera poniendo mis manos en el tesoro de un amigo" (94). This statement reveals a tendency to objectify women and gives a sense of Marcelo's physical attraction to Lita. Marcelo does not explicitly compare himself to Neluco in their respective relationships with Lita, but he assumes that the doctor has some advantages in the matter of a local courtship. Before shifting to Tablanca, Marcelo had bemoaned his own feminization: "o es uno hombre, o no lo es; . . . o sirve o no sirve para algo más útil y de mayor jugo y provecho que pisar alfombras de salones; engordar el riñón a fondistas judíos, sastres y zapateros de moda; concurrir a los espectáculos; . . . gastar, en fin, el tiempo y el dinero en futilidades de mujerzuela presumida y casquivana" (5). The bear hunt provides Marcelo with precisely the circumstances that he has imagined to test his masculinity, although, in practice, it is not only man's contact with nature that provides the key to the experience, but rather it is the communion with other men and their mutual suppression of nature that builds his confidence and facilitates his entrance into the Tablanca community.

The experience of the hunting expedition transforms Marcelo from an artificial "cazador de figurín" into a real hunter, substantiating his status in Tablanca, where nearly all men are capable hunters (Pereda 29). Marcelo proves that he has the power to determine the fate of a
living creature, he derives some pleasure from the experience of killing, and he predicts that he will kill again in the future: "sentí muy grande complacencia en ver que con un balín de mi revólver encajado en el oído de la osa, la había producido yo las últimas convulsiones de la muerte. Y algo era algo, y otra vez sería más" (101). Natural reproductive power, represented by the mother bear, is violently extinguished for the amusement of men, and then the bodies of the bears are mutilated so that Marcelo can take possession of them as trophies (103). When Marcelo uses the expedition to forward Pito's courtship of Tona, "canté alabanzas hiperbólicas a la bravura de Pito, para que Tona las oyera bien" (102), he is counting on Tona's high estimation of the characteristics that Pito had displayed during the hunt. Andrée Collard, who presents a harsh critique of hunting from an ecofeminist perspective, reminds her readers that hunting, generally understood to be an exclusively male activity, marks a history of female oppression: "The hunt accomplished what its rationalisers want to justify, and that is the dependence of women on men for food and protection – a crippling dependence which is defined and accepted as 'natural' in patriarchal culture" (Collard 37). Marcelo's attitude and actions in relation to Lita and the natural world demonstrate his desire to place reproductive power under his own control, thereby limiting the potential contribution of women to the community.

1.6 The Local Economy

Through the actions of the novel’s antagonist, who has no genealogical ties to Tablanca, capitalism is presented as a threat to the autonomy of the village, which still operates largely through a system of bartering. The antagonist, who is the estranged husband of Don Celso’s servant Facia, connects the idea of capitalism with the values of greed and dishonesty. He collaborates with Marcelo’s distant relatives, the ruined "hidalgos de Promisiones," who have
lost their father's estate to their drinking debts and whose immoral practices are a black spot on
the region. Don Celso had successfully driven the brothers away from the village once before
(Pereda 61), but they reemerge at a moment marked by vulnerability, when Don Celso is
bedridden and Marcelo has only recently arrived to Tablanka. One of the brothers describes their
accomplice, the estranged outsider, and his plot to get rich quickly:

"era un caballero perteneciente a una de las principales familias de Madrid, arruinado con los negocios de la Bolsa; había estudiado de joven para ingeniero de minas, y pasaba por muy entendido en ellas. Sabía, por informes adquiridos allá con otros inteligentes, que había una riquísima, de oro puro, en cierto sitio entre Tablanka y Promisiones. . . . En cuanto acabara ese estudio que le robaba hasta el sueño, se volvería a Madrid para dar cuenta de todo a los capitalistas que habían de emprender las labores bajo su dirección, asignándoselo a él, para remunerar su trabajo, la mitad de las ganancias. (61-62)"

Labanyi analyzes the novel's frequent references to "oro" in relation to the appearance of this
outsider and his two companions, who do not appreciate the inherent worth of Tablanka's
residents, their land or the goods that they produce. Labanyi observes that Don Celso and
Marcelo use gold coin to reward villagers, demonstrating a value system in which "exchange
value matches intrinsic value" (334), and therefore, a "pre-modern value system based on
inherent worth" still exists (336). In the latter part of the novel it is revealed that the "fraudulent
gold prospector" is in fact Facia's estranged husband, who had originally come to town years
prior peddling worthless trinkets to local women, claiming that his goods were made of valuable
materials from abroad (Pereda 31, Labanyi 334). When Facia exposes her husband's plan to sack
Don Celso's home with his comrades, this information reveals that the outsider's cover story of
"mining" conceals his plot to burglarize the local patriarch. The inability of the would-be
burglars to appreciate the real value of the quality of life available to them in Tablanka is
emphasized by what Don Celso tells Marcelo during Marcelo’s period of adjustment in
Tablanka: "Hay quien jalla la mina cavando en un rincón de su huerto, y hay quien no da con ella
revolviendo la tierra de media cristiandad" (Pereda 27). Don Celso's appreciation for intrinsic value and permanence are not compatible with a capitalist outlook.

The acts of gold mining and robbery, which are confused by the novel's plot, would deprive the villagers of assets that should be used for the common good, according to the novel's logic. In contrast with the criminal's plan to divide profits from gold-mining between himself and capitalists from the city, the Prado-Concejo, which is described by Don Celso as the "gran riqueza del lugar" (Pereda 27), provides a model for the equal sharing of local resources. Social tensions are eased by the collective harvests during which all locals are recognized as equals in the distribution of a major source of life: hay. The period of cultivation becomes the most important local celebration of the year, and the fruits of that labor are witnessed throughout the year in the quality of the livestock that are fed with the fruits of the harvest (165). While "la verdadera fiesta del trabajo" is symbolically and practically important in the village, it is limited in its duration and scope. It lasts for only 8 days of the year, and the communal order that it exemplifies does not extend beyond a single plot of land. Otherwise, social life in the village follows a hierarchical order that the text implies can be compared to the mountains of Cantabria in its verticality and rigidity. Though Marcelo can form part of the community for the purposes of leisure activities or sport, like hunting, he does not participate in the work that is carried out by the villagers, such as the harvesting of the Prado-Concejo. While the field stands as a testament to men's collective efforts to dominate nature, Marcelo's observation of labor as opposed to participation in it marks the difference between social classes and calls into question the meaning of community in the text.

17 Due to the location and considerable slope of the field, Marcelo is shocked when his uncle explains that it is harvested by the villagers; it requires techniques that are unique to that terrain (Pereda 27).
In a definitive demonstration of his community ethic, Don Celso refers to his private fortune, of which he does not even know the total value, as "la puchera de los pobres de Tablanca" (Pereda 87). Don Celso only reveals this fortune to Marcelo, and he claims that any decrease in its total value depends on the needs of the villagers, implying that it is intended for use on their behalf. Given the appreciation for the Prado-Concejo, and even Don Celso's perception of his small fortune, the text presents a semblance of collective ownership that does not reflect the reality of Marcelo's situation. The focus of Marcelo's project of regeneration is the maintenance of his personal property: "visité una por una mis haciendas, mis prados, mis heredades, mis castañeras y robledales, mis casas, mis aparcerías de ganados" (160, emphasis added). While the villagers are concerned about the amount that Marcelo is spending on the renovations of his house, he feels that the work is "sencilla y no costosa, con relación a mi modo de ver y de vivir hasta allí" (166).

Rather than a potential boon for the local population, the discovery of a gold mine near Tablanca is understood as a danger to the relative peace and prosperity of the villagers due to the threat of exposure to modern economic forces. The mass exploitation of natural resources and the expropriation of local wealth to urban businessmen, among other factors, would adversely affect a population that has remained isolated from such practices. The passage that recounts Marcelo's dream during his time in Provedaño provides an opportunity to represent, with dramatic imagery, the struggle to maintain local governance and a traditional way of life. The narrator describes how, in the dream, el Señor de la torre de Provedaño and a force of Christians defend justice and the local environment from modern men from Madrid, who, along with Roman and Arab invaders, are characterized as a violent enemy invasion. Marcelo imagines the "mal nuevo" as a dark cloud moving over the region, "pasando sobre ello empujada por el soplo
de los hombres malos, arrasándolo todo, haciendo estériles los campos fecundos y trocando en odio y en guerras implacables y continuas, el amor y la paz que antes reinaban entre sus habitadores." In his dream, these "hombres malos", led by a popular figure from Madrid, threaten "la santa libertad de los pueblos y los fueros sagrados de la justicia" (Pereda 70-1). As an indication of the environmental destruction that can result from modern economic practices, here local autonomy corresponds with a fertile environment, whereas the "nubes negros" directed by the modern men of the capital and their self-interests leave the ground sterile (74).

As opposed to Marcelo, who has traveled extensively for pleasure, Tablanca natives seem only to travel for economic need, to trade goods with residents of other villages or cities or to look for seasonal employment. Locals, including Don Celso, Don Pedro Nolasco, and Mari Pepa express their distaste for travel and their contentedness with their home environment, but contrary to Neluco's position that villagers can remain isolated and the nation can still function as a whole, healthy body, Tortella explains how the absence of "common ground" between rural and urban citizens during the period of modernization impeded not only political change but also political stability in Spain:

Political stagnation, historical repetition, revisiting of the same old problems in circumstances hardly different from before – all these constitute an exact parallel to what was happening in the economy. Since the economic structure had changed very little, there was little change to be observed in the social structure. . . . This population, mostly rural and preponderantly uneducated and illiterate, constituted only the most flimsy basis of support for any stable, responsible, progressive political life. This great mass of humanity, indifferent and at times hostile to the subtleties of modern politics, was manipulated by local elites. . . . Day-to-day politics, thus deprived of any substantial common ground, was reduced to a constant round of struggles between elites and different urban strata. (Development 31)

According to Marcelo, social stagnation, which is exemplified by Lita's desire for the continuity of her lifestyle, Chisco's decision to remain a servant in Don Celso's home despite inheriting a
considerable amount, and perhaps even el Tarumbo's commitment to helping others despite his own poverty, demonstrates that his uncle has found the solution to the “problema social” that causes conflicts between the rich and poor in other places (Pereda 160). Tortella's work indicates that the kind of isolation that Pereda's novel proposes for Tablanca's general population poses an obstacle to national economic and political modernization, while educating the rural population would have been the most likely way to expedite the processes of modernization. Marcelo advocates for the ruralization of educated urban men, which would leave the majority of the population still disconnected from national politics and without any common ground to connect them to the nation's urban population.

The representation of Tablanca's integrity and self-sufficiency is somewhat misleading. When he is divulging the content of his safe to Marcelo, Don Celso reveals that his financial solvency depends on earnings from outside the village: "Las fuentes que lo han ido manando, no están, como puedes comprender, en las pobres tierrucas y en los ganados de Tablanca: otras hay muy lejos de aquí, y viejas en la familia, de mejores manantiales" (Pereda 87). The laborers that work the land to which Don Celso is referring are invisible in the novel, but the profit that Don Celso derives from their labor is visible in the contents of his fortune. The benefit from distant properties and the labor taking place on them sustains the village of Tablanca. This detail of distancing the most lucrative site of production in the novel from the site of the action mitigates the appearance of social inequality in the text and makes the issue of private land ownership less controversial from the perspective of the residents of Tablanca. As Williams suggests in his analysis of the representations of the country and the city in English literature (96), Pereda's representation of Tablanca points to disentailment and urbanization rather than capitalist exploitation as the source of social deterioration. On the one hand, the novel appears to posit a
return to nature and cooperative community practices as the keys to national regeneration, but on the other hand, it proposes the domination of nature, women and the labor class to the same end.

1.7 Community Renovation

The novel suggests that villagers will promote national progress by remaining not only geographically isolated in Tablanca but also isolated from the information that is circulating in the outside world. Williams imagines community in a way similar to Arendt, with a focus on action, as he warns against relegating communities to our imagined notions of the past. He reasons:

In many villages, community only became a reality when economic and political rights were fought for . . . in the possibility of entry into new representative and democratic institutions. In many thousands of cases, there is more community in the modern village, as a result of this process of new legal and democratic rights. . . . That is active community, and it must be distinguished from another version, which is sometimes the mutuality of the oppressed, at other times the mutuality of people living at the edges or in the margins of a generally oppressive system. This comes out in many ways, overlapping with the community of struggle or persisting as local and traditional habit. One way of considering the survival of this traditional mutuality would be according to the distance of a village from its principal landowner. (104)

Williams goes on to discuss how rural residents who could see a large landowner's home from their own homes were more likely to participate in "traditional mutuality" due to their proximity to a potential source of repression. Though Pereda's representation of Tablanca includes some features of community practice, it also justifies the continued domination by the landowning class and encourages the existence of a politically passive labor class. The two spaces that are cited as the primary sites of community practice, Don Celso's kitchen and the Prado-Concejo, are close to the local center of power; in the case of the latter, the most important space for "open" community dialogue is entirely encased within the village's strong patriarchal tradition.
Labanyi states: "In rejecting bachelorhood for marriage, Marcelo is abandoning egoism for collective responsibility" (329), and his commitment to Lita and to her community are simultaneously marked by the renovations he is executing of his home. Marcelo has moved from a private flat in the city, to which he exclusively controls access, to a large home in Tablanca that he shares, to a certain extent, with servants, villagers, and his future wife. Whereas Marcelo's lifestyle in Madrid keeps him "in a state of displacement" (George 140), his house in Tablanca permanently attaches him to family tradition, a community, and a nation. David R. George explains that the patriarch's home comes to represent both the identity of the protagonist and the nation, the homeland: "The image of the rural Peninsular lar or hogar is the site where the reterritorialization of the Peninsular subject takes place and where national identity is to be re-centered. . . . It clearly defines who and what belongs in the controlled interior . . ." (George 140). In this sense, the space of the house perhaps provides the best model for the regenerated nation. Its foundation is constructed of materials from the countryside while it is adorned with the work of artists and craftsmen from the city, it will house a couple that unites the country and the city in their respective backgrounds, and it is open to local people who go there to discuss matters of local importance.

Despite the fact that she has had limited exposure to the outside world, remarkably, Lita's appearance, habits and personality perfectly suit Marcelo's taste; the house that he has inherited from don Celso, on the other hand, requires substantial changes before he can happily settle in it. The reforms to the house represent Marcelo's ability to modernize the village and initiate useful work; Labanyi says, "The final rebuilding of the house . . . is an image of practical activity" (326). At the same time, the work is largely being done to make Marcelo's private spaces more comfortable, which is a remnant of his lifestyle in Madrid and should not be underestimated in
its potential impact on Tablanca. When he returns for a final visit to his "casita" in the city, he is immediately seduced by its comforts: "No me veía harto de pisar el suelo alfombrado, de arrellanarme en los blandos sillones, de contemplarme en los espejos de los armarios, de recrear la vista en los cuadros de las paredes y en los bronces y porcelanas que coronaban los muebles . . . ni de tender mis huesos en la mullida y voluptuosa cama a esperar el sueño, que no tardaba en llegar" (Pereda 162). Though he has returned after a long time to the city where his friends reside and which offers a wide variety of diversions, the furnishings of Marcelo's private space easily lull him into a state of idleness. Although "The rural periphery represents the nation's regeneration because, in a reversal of the capital, it has no place for consumption (other than of essential items) but is devoted entirely to production" (Labanyi 327), Marcelo's "modernization" of the village includes the introduction of goods that represent recreational consumption. The objective of the renovations is not to make the Tablanca house more productive or efficient, but rather, to "hacerla más llamativa y pegajosa . . ." (Pereda 163). The material that he brings back to the village from the city is, tellingly, not the material that is essential to construction: "encargué a Neluco lo que debía adquirirse por allá para lo fundamental de las obras; adquirí yo en Madrid lo puramente accesorio y decorativo que me faltaba . . ." (164). This confirms the divide between a productive countryside and a consumptive city, but it also introduces the lure of consumption to the people of the village through the same space that represents both the dominion of the patriarch and the cornerstone of local representation. Mari Pepa reacts to the renovations exclaiming: "—¡Ay, mi señor don Marcelo, qué a oscuras ha vivido una en estos andurriales, sin saber pizca de las pompas con que se regalan en el mundo las gentes poderosas! ¡Mire que tienen demontres estas hermosuras tan relumbrantes que nunca se soñaron aquí! . . . ¿Onde se ponen esas cosas tan majas? A ver, a ver si nos entera, que es bueno saber de todo"
(166). As Mari Pepa's reaction demonstrates, the comforts and adornments of Marcelo's renovated home are undoubtedly attractive to the local population, and one of their own, their future "reina indígena" (167), will soon incorporate them into her lifestyle. Given the reaction of villagers in the past when they have been exposed to the lure of consumption, Marcelo's renovations might induce desires for comforts among other village inhabitants. At the very least, the renovations are making the villagers more aware of the distance between themselves and the "gentes poderosas." The novel supports the exploitation of peripheral labor to maintain luxury in the center, and it endorses action only by the landed class to protect this system. However, as Labanyi points out, at the end of the novel the one space and practice that Marcelo does not modify is Don Celso’s kitchen, the center of community participation (314).

In a significant display of his commitment to the communication between his home and the village, Marcelo initiates improvements of the road that connects the two spaces during the first phase of his regenerative efforts. Though he has never been fond of the expansive, dark kitchen of his newly inherited home, and he has the ability to renovate it by the end of the novel, Marcelo elects not to make changes to the kitchen because it belongs, in practice, to the community. One way of interpreting the preservation of the kitchen is that the villagers will be left in the darkness of the past while Marcelo enjoys modern comforts elsewhere in his home. The novel affirms Marcelo's position of authority by describing the villagers' fear that the renovations to Don Celso's home will also bring about their exclusion from community practices (Pereda 164). He confirms that his position is like that of a king when he describes his predecessor Don Celso as the "rey indiscutido e indiscutible de todo el valle" and his future wife as the queen of Tablanca (Pereda 141, 167). The unreformed kitchen serves as a symbolic access to power for the villagers, but action must still be sanctioned by the patriarch. According to this
interpretation, the novel confirms that both the liberal reforms opposed by the proponents of
regionalism and the patriarchal system sustained by Marcelo secure the complicity of the labor
class by providing an illusion of representation and equality that do not exist in practice.

1.8 Conclusion

Labanyi identifies Peñas arriba as "a link between the realist novel and the
regenerationist literature of the turn of the century" (299) on account of both its subject matter
and style. She explains Pereda’s position in relation to the central concerns of the two literary
movements:

while arguing for modernization (of a kind) through the maintenance of
traditional rural structures, he (mostly) rejects urban modernity and the central
State. His repudiation of the modern system of economic and parliamentary
representation, based on fluctuating, abstract relationships, leads him to propose
an alternative system of representation based on stable, inherent value. But, as we
shall see, the result occasionally borders on impressionism in its juxtaposition of
elements linked not to each other but to a common source: nature, and beyond
that, God. It is worth noting that the 1898 writers also attempt to turn nature —
but not God — into a legitimizing source. (299-300)

The novel provides a neat, if unrealistic, formula that at once allows for modernization to begin
to have a more significant impact on rural Spain while appearing to maintain the integrity of
nature by locating sites of production, which imply larger scale exploitation of the natural
environment, outside of the model community. Most importantly, Marcelo's model for national
regeneration maintains and perhaps even increases the power of male landowners and
intellectuals over the natural environment, women and the rural labor class while purportedly
reinforcing community values. The celibacy of the protagonist and his intellectual peers provides
evidence of their disregard for the conditions of reproduction of the common through their
disregard for the reproduction of the population. Additionally, the text reinforces its own
authority through the role of the author-character, whose individual perspective shapes the narrative of every character in the novel and whose audience consists of other educated, landed men like himself. Iarocci explains that Pereda's text resonated with a large audience at the time of its publication because it addressed widespread uncertainty about the changes brought about by the country's ongoing process of modernization: "Judging by the initial success of the novel, it is clear that the reading public of 1895 continued to anxiously seek such transcendent, stable meaning in the progressively defamiliarized, alienating modernity wrought by the bourgeois cultural revolution" (Iarocci 254). Valis's analysis concurs with Iarocci's about why the Spanish audience was attracted to the novel at the time of its publication: "It is the exemplary pattern of Don Celso's life and death which will provide the future direction of Marcelo's conduct. And perhaps this comforting and predictable vision of man's destiny, one which persists far longer in Hispanic literature than elsewhere, explains, in part, the popularity of Penas arriba" (Valis, "Pereda's" 308). The events lived by three generations of Albufera fishermen in Blasco Ibáñez's Cañas y barro describe the transition from a stable destiny to an uncertain future. As we will see, behind the tragic end of the Paloma family line and the ominous adulteration of nature is a woman who defies both nature and men to assert her rights to an independent fortune.
2.1 Introduction

If Peñas arriba is a reflection of the urban, reading public's desire for an ordered universe through the preservation of patriarchy, this chapter will explore how Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's novel Cañas y barro (1902) will confront the reader with the inevitability of change. Without proposing any perfect solution to the "problema social," the novel represents changing understandings of community and orientations toward the natural environment during the period of modernization. In the novel, the Albufera is the source of life, both biological and social, for its surrounding community, and my analysis will suggest that it also represents what Pardo Bazán calls the "abismo moral" between women and men that existed in Spanish society at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, which was both a factor in and product of the sluggish process of national modernization (Kirkpatrick, Mujer 7). Kirkpatrick explains that a general resistance to modernization in Spain sometimes manifested itself in a resistance to changes to traditional gender roles:

Ambivalence toward a modernity in which Spain participated only partially and at a disadvantage was often expressed in terms of the relationship between women and modern society. Whether figured as a loss of virility that feminised men, or the disappearance of femininity in the New Woman' [sic], the erasure of gender difference was considered an inevitable consequence of advancing industrialization. . . . Such a departure from what was regarded as the essence of womanhood became in the discourse of the period the sign of modernity's radical threat to nature itself[1] . . . resistance to the New Woman functioned as a

18 Gabriel Tortella gives an example of how reducing the gender gap corresponds with economic growth in his citation of Núñez, who finds "a high correlation between literacy and per capital income in nineteenth-and early twentieth century Spain" which "improves considerably when a second variable is included, the so-called gender gap. This means that, other things being equal, the narrower the gap between male and female literacy rates, the stronger the positive impact of literacy on economic growth" (Development 15).
justification for rejecting certain forms of modernity. Or, to put it another way, Spain's preservation of traditional gender hierarchy, so incisively noted by Pardo Bazán, was symptomatic of widespread ambivalence toward the modernisation of principal institutions. ("Feminine Element" 147-8)

Through its representation of community practice, the text recognizes the benefits of and need for modernization but also questions the processes by which modernization is occurring and the values driving those processes in Spain. The text suggests that the environmental degradation that is a consequence of modernization leads to social degeneration, which creates a conflict for a nation in need of economic development during a time that is described as a national identity crisis (Harrison 5). While the social system being sustained by the Comunidad de Pescadores is unviable, the replacement of a system of shared natural resources with private agriculture is represented as a threat to natural life and the "natural" social order.

The novel reflects changes that were occurring in Spain in the late 19th century during its slow process of modernization, and the Albufera can be read as a microcosm of the country as a whole during that time. Tortella insists "In Spain, geography and culture reinforced each other as obstacles to modernization from the seventeenth to the mid-twentieth century" (Development 8). Cañas y barro describes both geographical and cultural obstacles to modernization and concludes with an outlook of slow, uneven modernization at the expense of natural resources, the labor of women and the liberties of landless rural laborers. The Albufera's resources, as they are represented in the novel, are barely sufficient to sustain a small population and are clearly insufficient to sustain a growing population. The people with a pre-modern mindset, who are represented by el tío Paloma, struggle to survive using the minimum output of energy, which also minimizes their needs and capacity as consumers.¹⁹ This, in turn, hinders economic and

¹⁹ Tortella discusses the economic impact of the poorly performing agricultural sector on all other sectors in Spain: "low agricultural productivity kept the diet of the average Spaniard at about the subsistence level with little improvement until well into the twentieth century." He continues: “The stagnating agricultural sector also failed
population growth. El tío Paloma's son, tío Tono, represents the forces of modernization and struggles to increase productivity and his potential for consumption, but his efforts entail an increase in the quantity and difficulty of his labor in addition to the privatization of resources that had previously been uncultivated and held in common. El tío Paloma, and much of the novel that often adopts his perspective, is primarily concerned with the loss of freedom that will result from curbed access to natural resources. Meanwhile, the characters Neleta and la Borda reveal the undervalued role of women during the processes of modernization. In her analysis of the representations of women's labor in realist novels, Jo Labanyi explains:

The logic of the Spencerian view of society as a fixed-energy system threatened with breakdown by the excessive strain on its resources requires that salvation — if it exists — must come from an infusion of new energies into the system. But how are energies to be transferred from 'outside' the system to 'inside', and where does one find an "outside"? The answer to this problem is provided by woman, who being outside and inside society represents untapped energies already within the system at its disposal. (137)

El tío Tono labors tirelessly for years to improve his family's lifestyle, and he eventually begins to make some progress, but the narrator reveals that la Borda, while a largely muted figure, is an indispensable factor in the progress that is made on Tono's plot of land. Meanwhile, Neleta works tirelessly and becomes an able manager of her husband's businesses, and she stands to become the wealthiest resident of el Palmar. While the representation of most women in the novel is marked by their anonymity, of the two most prominent female characters, one is largely responsible for the tragic events of the novel's climax, and the role of the other is emphasized by the novel's conclusion, which details the fleeting emergence of her latent emotions and will. The representations of these two women become more meaningful when considered along with the changing understandings of community and the environment that are described in the novel.

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Dismally as a market for industrial products and as a source of capital for modernization. This is very clear in the Spanish case” (Development 8).
2.2 El tío Paloma's Pre-Modern Community

The differences between the generations of men in the Paloma family illustrate changing understandings of the relationships between freedom, labor, nature, and community. For el tío Paloma, the Comunidad de Pescadores protects a state of freedom for the fisherman as it preserves a balance among men and between men and nature, so that each man can, ideally, satisfy his needs while only performing as much labor as he wants. Christopher Anderson argues that el tío Paloma "espouses and defends universal and timeless ideals," and through his character, "Blasco Ibáñez makes a statement about modernization's dehumanizing effects on humanity . . ." (C. Anderson 54). According to el tío Paloma, fishing is the most noble kind of work while wage labor is equivalent to slavery, and even cultivating land for harvest goes against the laws of God and nature: "Los hijos del lago estaban libres de tal esclavitud. Por algo les había puesto Dios junto a aquella agua que era una bendición. En su fondo estaba la comida, y era un disparate, una vergüenza, trabajar todo el día . . . para coger unas espigas que, finalmente, no eran para ellos" (Blasco Ibáñez 37). Furthermore, the exploitation of nature is not taken lightly. When el tío Paloma identifies the Albufera as his "mother" and the trees of the Dehesa as grandfathers, he expresses his belief that the natural environment is part of single family that includes the fishermen. While the fishermen recognize that the Albufera technically belongs to some vague entity to whom they owe taxes, first nobles and later "el Estado," this enigmatic entity has historically been almost entirely absent from local life. The narrator assumes the perspective of el tío Paloma and reflects on a bygone era when: "ya no existian duques de la Albufera, sino bailíos, que la gobernaban en nombre del rey su amo; excelentes señores de la ciudad que nunca venían al lago, dejando á los pescadores merodear en la Dehesa y cazar con
entera libertad los pájaros que se criaban en los carrizales" (29). With oversight of the local community only occurring at a great distance and in a relatively indifferent manner, local fishermen organize themselves as equally powerful members of the Comunidad, whose annual meeting and annual collective harvest seem to provide the maximum expression of the common good.

Tío Paloma lives in close proximity with nature; he identifies himself as an "hombre de agua" whose boat feels like part of his body and provides the only shelter that he requires: "por su gusto hubiese comido y dormido dentro de la barca, que era para él lo que el caparazón de un animal acuático." As a young man he prefers to "vivir como un pez del lago o un pájaro de los carrizales, haciendo su nido hoy en una isleta mañana en un cañar" until his father forces him to marry, settle in the family home, and have children in order to preserve what has so far been established in the name of the Paloma family. El tío Paloma "se vio forzado a vivir en sociedad con sus semejantes, a dormir bajo una techumbre de paja, a pagar su parte para el mantenimiento del cura y a obedecer al alcaldillo pedáneo de la isla" (Blasco Ibáñez 31-32); to become a member of the Comunidad, he must establish a permanent residence, pay dues and obey local laws. The Comunidad supports a system of private ownership of goods and homes, but not of the waters that are the source of the local livelihood. El tío Paloma's initial reluctance to leave his solitary existence and enter the Comunidad reflects Roberto Esposito's understanding of communitas as "the totality of persons united not by a 'property' but precisely by an obligation or a debt; not by an 'addition' . . . but by a 'subtraction' . . . : by a lack, a limit that is configured as an onus . . ." (Esposito 6). The Comunidad de Pescadores exists for the practice of sharing a water body to which no individual member can hold claim, and as the narration of el tío Paloma's experiences indicate, membership in the Comunidad is determined by the payment of an actual
debt, the "medio arroba de plata," which is paid quarterly to the state (Blasco Ibáñez 112). El tío Paloma is at the center of the debate about whether or not those fishermen who cannot pay their debts should be allowed to participate in the defining act of the Comunidad, the redolín, and he successfully argues that every community member is obligated to pay according to his capacity: "todos eran iguales: el que no pagaba ahora ya pagarla más adelante; y los que tuvieran más que supbiesen las faltas de los que nada tenían . . ." (121). In this case, each member shares "the burden of scarcity" that is the condition of their existence on the Albufera along with the debt that is required by the community.\(^{20}\) The community is represented as having evolved naturally as a way of keeping the residents of el Palmar from engaging in opportunistic behavior at the expense of other fishermen. Therefore, the community at once acknowledges men's desire to behave opportunistically and denies it. The Comunidad de Pescadores of el Palmar is represented as a manner of social organization that provides maximum freedom for its members, but as Elinor Ostrom finds in her study of models of "self-governed common-property arrangement[s]" (20), the success of this arrangement depends precisely upon the ability of the community to self-regulate the exploitation of local resources (24), and this ability is imperiled by the state's intervention in local life.

When the narrator adopts the perspective of el tío Paloma, the Comunidad is portrayed as the apex of civilization for its just treatment of all men. A group of public figures, including the mayor, a representative from the state and the local doctor, presides over the annual meeting for the raffle of the redolín, but these "invitados" are not allowed to interfere in the forum in which the fishermen discuss matters that are internal to the Comunidad. Inside the meeting all members

\(^{20}\) Ostrom uses the phrase "sharing the burden of scarcity" to describe what happens in Philippine zanjera irrigation communities during years when there is less rainfall than required (83); I apply it to the Comunidad de Pescadores because during the novel's present, many fishermen are not able to satisfy their families' basic needs by fishing; there is a shortage of resources available.
are given the opportunity to publicly express themselves, and each has an equal vote in whatever decisions need to be made. At the same time, the Comunidad forms part of a larger Albufera community from which it must differentiate itself to limit the exploitation of the lagoon's resources, therein challenging the idea of its integration with its surrounding environment. Furthermore, while the Albufera is a bastion of freedom and social equality for el tío Paloma and the annual meeting of the Comunidad seems like an ideal space for open debate and participatory democracy, readers also learn that the doors are protected by armed guards who keep women and children from entering and potentially disrupting the meeting. The Comunidad is fiercely exclusive; it includes only the men from el Palmar's full-time fishing families, as demonstrated by the rejection of Sangonera for his hereditary laziness, and the permanent ban of residents of Catarroja.

By marking the differences between the poor locals who are completely dependent upon nature, and who even resemble the animals with whom they share their habitat, and the outsiders who have moved beyond the satisfaction of their basic needs, the novel seems at first to present a dichotomy between wilderness and civilization, with the residents of the Albufera being dominated by the former. The city and the Albufera are presented as two different worlds; the narrator recounts how local children admire the captain of the barca-correo: "Les infundía respeto el hombre que cruzaba la Albufera cuatro veces al día, llevándose a Valencia la mejor pesca del lago y trayendo de allá los mil objetos de una ciudad misteriosa y fantástica para aquellos chiquitines criados en una isla de cañas y barro" (Blasco Ibáñez 7). Local people are indistinguishable from the local wildlife when their smells blend together on the deck of the barca-correo: "Un hedor insoportable se esparcía en torno de la barca. Sus tablas se habían impregnado del tufo de los cestos de anguilas y de la suciedad de centenares de pasajeros: una
mezcla nauseabunda de pieles gelatinosas, escamas de pez criado en el barro, pies sucios y ropas mugrientas . . ." (8). The Albufera men are repeatedly compared to toads, which insinuates their incomplete, stalled evolution as creatures that live between land and water. As described in the first chapter's narration of the journey from el Palmar on the barca-correo, the difference between locals and outsiders in the novel is consistently marked by diet. The hunting parties that arrive to the Albufera from Valencia are distinguished by their rich foodstuffs, which are unmatched in quantity, variety and quality in the Albufera. In Cuba, Tonet is in awe of the giant Americans "que comían mucha carne" and whose trousers fit him like a sail (96).

While these details have led some critics, such as Eduard Gramberg, to identity Cañas y barro as a "caso extremado de la técnica naturalista," in which men and nature exist in opposition with nature as the dominant party (319), el tío Paloma's community can be interpreted as evidence of the interconnections between human beings and their natural environment. Gramberg asserts that every character's "existencia entera queda acondicionada por la Albufera, tanto en lo físico como en lo moral" (317) and that with the exception of el tío Paloma, who allies himself with nature, the role of the Albufera in the novel extends far beyond that of a setting to become "la verdadera protagonista, una fuerza terrible que sólo se contenta con la total sumisión de sus víctimas" (318). Anderson also supports the idea that nature is the dominant force in the novel; referring to el tío Tono and Tonet he says: "father and son lose in their confrontations with nature: the former succumbs after having altered the Albufera and turned to outsiders for monetary help to carry out his assault, while the latter pays dearly for having broken out of the region's spatial isolation and abused nature upon his return. Meanwhile, the family patriarch Tío Paloma lives on in harmony with his primitive homeland . . ." (C. Anderson 71). However, Stephen Miller interprets the events of the novel as evidence of Spanish authors'
rejection of the determinism that is present in "radical Naturalism": "Blasco portrayed how the three generations of one family reacted differently to their similar situations and led different lives as a result" (424). The novel can undoubtedly be understood as Naturalist in its representation of the bleak material conditions of existence of the rural poor, but it also represents the process of man's increasing dominance over nature, rather than the opposite. For example, in the first chapter, not only is the journey across the lagoon marked by encounters with the local personalities and by the recounting of stories that create layers of meaning on the Albufera, but in subsequent chapters readers also learn how the entire body of water has been divided among fisherman and exploited for generations. It is understood that locals such as el tío Paloma have penetrated every corner of the lagoon and its surrounding area, but rather than struggling to dominate their environment and alter its natural life cycles, they participate in a community through which they manage the exploitation of natural resources to preserve a way of life that is comfortable and familiar to them and which depends on the flourishing of native wildlife. Even the fates of el tío Paloma's son and grandson do not prove the dominance of nature; the greatest threat to the men of the Comunidad de Pescadores does not originate from nature but from the way that men have begun to exploit the environment, bypassing the structure of the Comunidad and imposing a different system on the Albufera to increase their capital. The introduction of new technologies is making the local environment inhospitable to the current population of animals, plants and humans by replacing a complex system of life with a single crop: rice. El tío Paloma's desire to see his son fail at farming seems contrary to human nature in its disavowal of the kinship bond, but the father believes that his knowledge of and advocacy for the local environment will help preserve it for future generations of his family and of his community. Despite his strong convictions, and whatever merit the reader may attribute to those
convictions, the harvesting of rice and the wealth of those who own land continue to increase throughout the novel. According to my interpretation, the descriptions of nature and of local customs in the novel, rather than proving the dominance of nature over men, raises the question of how men like the those in the Paloma family will be able to raise themselves out of the mud and muck, both literal and metaphorical, into which they were born.

2.3 The Modern Community: Evolution or Regression?

El tío Tono abandons the communal relationship among the fishermen and instead adopts an individual, modern orientation toward others that is confirmed by the legal debts that he assumes to begin farming. El tío Paloma laments: "quería a los suyos dedicados a la pesca, por esto se enfurecía al ver a su hijo contrayendo deudas y más deudas en su empeño de ser agricultor. Los labradores pobres eran unos esclavos; rabiaban todo el año trabajando, ¿y para quién era el producto? Toda su cosecha se la llevaban los extranjeros: el francés que les presta el dinero y el inglés que les vende el abono a crédito" (Blasco Ibáñez 133). Although el tío Paloma disparages Tono's way of life, Tono and other Albufera residents are represented in such a way that the reader, and perhaps especially an urban reader in early 20th century Spain, can sympathize with the son's desire for change. C.A. Longhurst argues that Blasco Ibáñez disguises "a thoroughly negative picture of the albufereñas" by "conveying the thoughts of an old male character [el tío Paloma] through free indirect discourse . . ." (84). The communitarian way of life that el tío Paloma defends sustains high infant and maternal mortality rates, illiteracy, economic stagnation, an inadequate food supply, and a lack of knowledge about and participation in state matters, which are all factors contributing to the nation's backwardness.
For Tono, participation in the *Comunidad* is not at all liberatory. He makes the following argument as he tries to explain to el tío Paloma why he wants to take up agricultural labor:

¿Qué eran ellos? Unos mendigos del lago, viviendo como salvajes en la barraca, sin más alimento que los animales de las acequias y teniendo que huir como criminales ante los guardas cuando mataban algún pájaro para dar mayor substancia al caldero. . . .

No; él se rebelaba; quería sacar á la familia de su miserable postración; trabajar, no sólo para comer, sino para el ahorro. (Blasco Ibáñez 40)

As a member of the *Comunidad*, Tono feels dominated by nature, and the prelapsarian lifestyle of el tío Paloma has lost its dignity for him, especially since the encroachment of the state's control over the natural environment. Tono equates fishing with begging, a decidedly ignoble occupation by his family's and his community's standards, and one which makes him entirely dependent upon factors beyond his control.\(^{21}\) Rather than understanding his aged father's lifestyle as a contribution to the perpetuation of life and the commons, he understands their lifestyle as the perpetuation of poverty: "¡Y esta miseria prolongándose de padres a hijos, como si viviesen amarrados para siempre al barro de la Albufera, sin más vida ni aspiraciones que las del sapo, que se cree feliz en el cañar porque encuentra insectos a flor de agua!" (40). Based on the novel's scheme of biological evolution, el tío Paloma is still "unevolved" and oriented toward the past, a time when he understood his social place to be fixed from birth and entirely dependent upon geographical place. According to Tono's point of view, the community structure, which does not allow for the proliferation of private wealth in its limitations on opportunistic behavior and the exploitation of natural resources, inhibits the potential of men. Tono's breaking point with the community arrives after the birth of his son, when he realizes that what he desires is precisely

\(^{21}\) Sangonera's reputation is proof of the community's attitude toward beggars, which are also identified by Ostrom as "free-riders" one of the primary challenges facing any common-pool resource system (6).
what the community denies him: that which is proper. Esposito explains that modernity is founded on individuals immunizing themselves from communal relationships:

There is no need to hypothesize any sort of former idyllic community, no primitive "organic society" that exists only in the Romantic imagerie of the nineteenth century, to see how modernity is affirmed in its violent separation from an order in which the benefits no longer balance the risks that these same benefits require as the two inseparable faces joined in the combined concept of munus — gift and obligation, benefit and service rendered, joining and threat. Modern individuals truly become that, the perfectly individual, the 'absolute' individual, bordered in such a way that they are isolated and protected, but only if they are freed in advance from the "debt" that binds them one to the other; if they are released from, exonerated, or relieved of that contact, which threatens their identity, exposing them to possible conflict with their neighbor, exposing them to the contagion of the relation with others. (Esposito 12-13)

With his agricultural endeavor, Tono leaves the community to become a modern man, who voluntarily chooses which debts to take up through contractual relationships rather than being involuntarily obligated to community members.

The relationship between el tío Paloma and his son enacts historical and still ongoing debates about the benefits of common and private property. The fishermen of the Albufera have possessions that are the product of their labor, such as lines, boats and huts, which they pass down to their children, but the fishermen do not own wealth-generating land. According to John Locke's Enlightenment era support of private property, Tono's actions can be interpreted as a natural and positive evolution: "As much land as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the product of, so much is his property. He by his labour does, as it were, enclose it from the common. . . . God and his reason commanded him to subdue the earth, i.e., improve it for the benefit of life . . ." (Locke 136). Though el tío Paloma constantly disparages Tono for his actions, the narrator represents Tono's motivation as an unselfish desire to provide a more comfortable lifestyle for his wife and son. Furthermore, while he and the narrator compare el tío Paloma to an animal, Tono is recognized for his determination and constant labor, which have
shaped his strong, clearly masculine body that stands out from the rest of the weak Albufera natives:

un hombre de musculatura recia arrojaba capazos de tierra desde su barca. Los pasajeros le admiraban. Era el tío Tono. . . .

No había en toda la Albufera hombre más trabajador que el tío Tono. Se había metido entre ceja y ceja ser propietario. (Blasco Ibáñez 16)

El tío Tono embodies forces of change, replicating the process of enclosure, as he actively alters the Albufera's existing constitution by filling his small portion of it with soil on which he will eventually cultivate rice in an effort to create a steady source of income. Whereas men do not control the reproduction of wild fish and fowl, they can, to a great extent, control the reproduction of rice, which becomes the primary method to acquire and invest capital in the region. Not only is rice cultivated from a rooted plant, fixing it in space and therefore making it possible to divide into private plots, but also the physical character of rice lends itself to quantification, storage and transport, making it the equivalent of currency in the novel, as when Neleta admires the yield that fills her house: "Esta admiraba la riqueza encerrada en los sacos, embriagándose con el polvillo astringente del arroz" (223). El tío Tono imagines that sacks of rice will one day represent his family's wealth and Tonet's status as a desirable bachelor to the community: "Cuando éstas se convirtiesen en campos y en el Palmar viesen a los Palomas recoger muchos sacos de arroz, ya encontraría Tonet una compañera. Podría escoger entre todas las muchachas de los pueblos inmediatos. A un rico nadie le contesta negativamente" (183). As proven by Neleta's marriage to the older and physically unattractive Cañamèl, the acquisition of wealth guarantees the procurement of a partner, regardless of an individual's status in relation to community.

Although for Tono, the cultivation of private land is intended to be a corrective action to poverty, the novel also challenges the idea of legitimately acquired property by exposing the
deception behind Cañamèl's ever-increasing estate, and it demonstrates how the production of capital reproduces poverty. Marx exposes what he believes are oversimplified myths that shape the way that people interpret the division of labor and wealth in the world. He describes the myth that justifies primitive accumulation and the violent assertion of power that it disguises:

In times long gone by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and above all, frugal élite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living. The legend of theological original sin tells us certainly how man came to be condemned to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. . . . Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. . . . Such insipid childishness is every day preached to us in the defense of property. . . . In actual history it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part. (Marx 784-5)

Cañamèl is potentially the Albufera's model capitalist, but he initially makes most of his money using knowledge from his previous occupation as a border soldier to profit from the black market, smuggling tobacco from northern Africa. Even his legitimate sources of profit in the local economy are unethical. He sells wine at a loss in his tavern to undercut other local vendors and gain control of the market, and he lends money to struggling fishermen at exorbitant rates. Cañamèl expertly manipulates the local circulation of money to his advantage by, for example, hiring local men to perform the riskiest labor involved in his smuggling operation and then counting on those men to spend most of their earnings back in his tavern (Blasco Ibáñez 81). His character complicates the idea of the model capitalist who acquires his wealth through hard work. As the area's most successful businessman, Cañamèl instead embodies the dangers of capitalism. Any interest in reproducing life is replaced by his utmost concern with reproducing wealth. Having been born outside el Palmar, he is excluded from the Comunidad de Pescadores, and this fact combined with his lack of concern about his infertility and the future of his estate, with the exception of trying to use it to secure his wife’s celibacy, reveals that he has no interest
in future generations. As a result, he exploits the local community without pause. Furthermore, Cañamél's insatiable appetites: financial, dietary and sexual, are reflected in his ever-expanding body and decreasing mobility. The villagers attribute his poor health to excessive leisure and consumption. The narrator expresses their opinion that "¡Si tuviera que ganarse la vida con agua á la cintura, segando arroz, no se acordaría de estar enfermo!" (11). While wealth in Cañamél's case is adversely related to labor and health, Tono is made more masculine through labor, however, whether or not Tono's rebellion against the pre-modern community represents a positive trend for the larger population is precisely the matter that the novel calls into question.

The hunters from the city, who can afford the hunting licenses required to exploit the Albufera's fowl, arrive to the Albufera already in possession of excessive quantities of food as they indulge in killing for sport. The narrator includes the following reflection during the annual hunting festivities:

Tonet, al ver tan animado el Saler . . . recordaba los relatos de su abuelo: las orgías organizadas en otros tiempos por los cazadores ricos de la ciudad, con mujeres que corrían desnudas, perseguidas por los perros; las fortunas que se habían deshecho en las míseras barracas durante largas noches de juego, . . . todos los placeres estúpidos de una burguesía de rápida fortuna que al verse lejos de la familia, en un rincón casi salvaje, excitada por la vista de la sangre y el humo de la pólvora, sentía renacer en ella la humana bestialidad. (Blasco Ibáñez 231)

The behavior of the hunters from Valencia contradicts the assumption that the urban population is inherently more civil than the rural population. In contrast to the hunters, the Paloma fathers rarely indulge in the consumption of alcohol, and they are appalled by Tonet's drinking and by his adulterous relationship with Neleta because they fear it will damage the family's reputation in the community. The description of el tío Paloma's daily labor and his expectation that his son, grandson and fellow community members will make the same contributions to their families and to the community also provides evidence that contradicts the myth of the lazy, "riotous" savage.
Furthermore, the novel describes at length the long-standing, highly organized and orderly operations of the *Comunidad de Pescadores*, in which men exploit nature out of necessity. In comparison, even Don Joaquín, with his "aspecto bonachón y pacífico" recognizes an unfamiliar and more aggressive facet of his character when he begins shooting at the Albufera's birds (231):

"Toda la mañana la pasó disparando, sintiendo cada vez con más intensidad la embriaguez de la pólvora, el placer de la destrucción" (249). The hunters' behavior calls into question the values behind the civilization that they represent.

Smith defends the division of labor and privatization and links them to increased quality of life and care for human life in *The Wealth of Nations*. He argues that poverty leads people to savage behavior that can be avoided in more prosperous nations:

> Among the savage nations of hunters and fishers, every individual who is able to work, is more or less employed in useful labor, and endeavors to provide, as well as he can, the necessaries and conveniences of life, for himself, or such of his family or tribe as are either too old, or too young, or too infirm to go a-hunting and fishing. Such nations, however, are so miserably poor, that from mere want, they are frequently reduced, or at least think themselves reduced, to the necessity sometimes of directly destroying and sometimes of abandoning their infants, their old people, and those afflicted with lingering diseases, to perish with hunger, or to be devoured by wild beasts. Among civilized and thriving nations, on the contrary, though a great number of people do not labor at all ... all are often abundantly supplied, and a workman, even of the lowest and poorest order, if he is frugal and industrious, may enjoy a greater share of the necessaries and conveniences of life than it is possible for any savage to acquire. (40)

Smith's association between poverty and a lack of care for human life resonates significantly with the content of the novel, in which miserable living conditions lead to the suffering and death of many Albufera residents. Because there is no surplus of the necessities of life, the most vulnerable members of the community are at great risk. The deaths of el tío Paloma's own children are treated with shocking indifference and are even interpreted by the father as advantageous for his poor family; Tonet reflects: "sentía resucitar en él la dureza de los viejos
Palomas, la cruel frialdad de su abuelo, que veía morir sus hijos pequeños sin una lágrima, con el pensamiento egoísta de que la muerte es un bien en la familia del pobre, pues deja más pan para los que sobreviven" (Blasco Ibáñez 243). While as a young man el tío Paloma dismisses the deaths of his children as a boon to his family, as a community elder he is stirred to make an emotionally charged speech at the annual meeting of the Comunidad in defense of the insolvent fisherman who are, in part, unable to pay their taxes due to the funeral expenses for their malnourished children. While Cañamèl preys on these most vulnerable members of the community to make himself richer, el tío Paloma has a higher regard for the community, which represents a whole way of life, than for individual human lives. While Smith argues that developed economies create a common wealth that can be enjoyed by all, it is precisely the absence of mutual care for the common good under a hierarchical arrangement of private property that many theorists identify as an inhibiting factor to the practice of freedom. Rousseau identifies the enforcement of private property as the end of freedom: "the origin of society and law, which bound new fetters on the poor, and gave new powers to the rich; which irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, eternally fixed the law of property and inequality, converted clever usurpation into unalterable right, and, for the advantage of a few ambitious individuals, subjected all mankind to perpetual labour, slavery and wretchedness" (2nd part, par. 36). Hardt and Negri argue: "Reforming or perfecting the republic of property will never lead to equality and freedom but only perpetuate its structures of inequality and unfreedom" (pt. 1.1 sec. 3 par. 8).

22 Rousseau also questions the values of "civilised man" when compared to the "savage" man: "The savage and the civilised man differ so much in the bottom of their hearts and in their inclinations, that what constitutes the supreme happiness of one would reduce the other to despair. The former breathes only peace and liberty; he desires only to live and be free from labour. . . . Civilised man, on the other hand, is always moving, sweating, toiling and racking his brains to find still more laborious occupations " (Rousseau 2nd part, par. 63).
Because the lawmakers and landowners who condone the changing use of land around the Albufera are elusive to the area's longtime residents, their actions are difficult to combat. El tío Paloma identifies the emotional connection between locals and their environment as a differentiating factor between their behavior as restrained exploiters of natural resources and that of outsiders, who have no connection to the local land and exploit it in more drastic ways: "La gente del Palmar robaba leña en la selva; no ardían en sus hogares otras ramas que las de la Dehesa, pero se contentaba con los matorrales, con los troncos caídos y secos; y aquellos señores invisibles, que sólo se mostraban por medio de la carabina del guarda y los trampantojos de la ley, abatían con la mayor tranquilidad los abuelos del bosque . . ." (Blasco Ibáñez 51). The fisherman's understanding of the relationship between residents and their surrounding natural environment complements Nixon's distinction between "vernacular" and "official" landscapes (17); whereas the natural features of the Albufera, such as the trees, are regarded by el tío Paloma as part of his family, outsiders see them only as a potential source of profit. The fall of the trees of the Dehesa signals the end of el tío Paloma himself, who is the grandfather figure in the novel, and it also signals the end of the community practices of his generation. The freedoms that the fishermen have within the Comunidad will decline as the diverse natural resources under their management disappear or come under the control of other entities, while urban capitalists defy the natural cycles of reproduction of life in the Albufera to initiate a cycle of the reproduction of capital that begins with the moment of primitive accumulation through the acquisition of land for farming.

The Albufera appears to overpower the two "rebellious" Paloma men at the end of the novel, but, according to my interpretation, it is not "Tío Toni's war with nature" that triggers the downfall of the family (C. Anderson 71). Rather, a combination of factors within the human
population, including Cañamèl’s and Neleta's greed, the wrath of la Samaruca and Tonet's laziness and weakness cause the circumstances that lead to tragedy.\textsuperscript{23} El tío Tono deems himself a failure because he identifies failure as the absence of an heir, but his grandfather can seemingly live on in relative peace despite Tonet’s death because his legacy involves his larger community, not only his family. Tono is an industrious laborer who is building wealth for his son with his own hands, but his plight at the end of the novel, just as he is starting to have some success in his farming venture before losing his only heir to suicide, emphasizes the importance of the succession of human life before wealth: "Su vida estaba terminada. ¡Tantos años de batalla con el lago, creyendo que formaba una fortuna, y preparando, sin saberlo, la tumba de su hijo . . . !" (Blasco Ibáñez 286). Without a son, the father's gains are worthless when he considers the future.

In the conflicts arising from the practice of rice farming encroaching on the space of the Albufera, neither is nature nor mankind a clear victor. Both suffer in the name of economic progress and for the benefit of wealthy landowners. The novel represents two imperfect and conflicting ways to order the social world, and yet the representatives of each way of life manage to live under the same small roof for decades. Despite their opposing viewpoints, the father and son maintain some degree of mutual respect and adhere to many of the same basic moral tenets, which manifest themselves, for instance, in their similar reactions to Tonet's refusal to work and his adulterous relationship. Tonet represents a dangerous break from all forms of community, even the corrupted version that manifests itself in the institution of the family.

\textsuperscript{23} Surís's article "Los siete pecados capitales" attributes each of the seven deadly sins to a character in the novel.
2.4 Life and Death in the National Community

The residents of el Palmar are largely ignorant about the structure and function of the state, and they resist its encroachment into their environment by turning inward and utilizing their knowledge of the vernacular landscape to protect their long-term, local interests. For example, the locals collaborate in underreporting their annual catches to avoid being obligated to increase their contribution to the intangible, outside entity: "todos se hablaban al oído, repitiendo misteriosamente las cifras de la pesca, temiendo que les oyese alguien que no fuera del Palmar, pues desde pequeño cada cual aprendía, con extraña solidaridad, la conveniencia de decir que se pescaba poco, para que la Hacienda—aquella señora desconocida y voraz—no les afligiera con nuevos impuestos" (Blasco Ibáñez 110). They must also either obey or evade new hunting restrictions: "ahora . . . la Albufera pertenecía al Estado (¡quién sería este señor!) y había contratistas de la caza y arrendatarios de la Dehesa, y los pobres no podían disparar un tiro ni recoger un haz de leña sin que al momento surgiese el guarda con la bandera sobre el pecho y la carabina apuntada" (29). The members of the Comunidad might technically be members of the nation, but in the practice of the characters of the novel, there is no identification with any national community. Valencia is "al otro extremo del mundo" (28) for the Albufera residents, and "Spain" is referred to like a distant world (28, 79). Unlike the past, when el tío Paloma, supposedly, personally interacted with heads of state and could comprehend that the Albufera belonged to those noblemen and women who resided in Valencia or Madrid, the idea of the state eludes him. The fishermen have a democratic arrangement and are immediately accountable to one another and the surrounding natural environment for their actions within the Comunidad; el tío Paloma, and the other Albufera residents that he represents, do not understand politics at a more abstract level, as is demonstrated by their identification of la Hacienda as the "misteriosa
señora que nadie había visto, pero de la que se hablaba con respeto supersticioso, como dueña que era del lago . . . " (104). The majority of the Albufera residents are already surviving in a state of poverty, so the state's intervention in the redistribution of their local natural resources has severe implications on their daily lives. Other than the threat of violence by armed guards to restrict hunting and enforce tax collection, and the loss of some local men to the war in Cuba, there is barely any trace of a larger state. In the opening chapter, the visual presence of "Spain" is noticeably deficient: "En el agua muerta, de una brillantez de estaño, permanecía inmóvil la barca-correo. . . . La vela triangular, con remiendos oscuros, estaba rematada por un guíñapo incoloro que en otros tiempos había sido una bandera española y delataba el carácter oficial de la vieja embarcación" (8). Aside from the school-house, which is described as a "casucha húmeda pagada por el Ayuntamiento de la ciudad" where children receive only an elemental education (48), there is no sign of any public service available to Albufera residents. Citizenship, for the poor, is observed by the payment of debts to the state, in the form of taxes and the lives of their young men.24

As a child, Tonet enjoys special status as the most handsome and beloved boy of the village, but when he gets older, he faces the harsh reality that he is expected to work like everyone else: "Ahora era un hombre. En vez de hacer pesar en casa su voluntad de niño mimado, le mandaban a él; era tan poca cosa ocmo la Borda . . ." (Blasco Ibáñez 77). He quickly tires of the labor required in the premodern community of his grandfather, and later his father's farming operation produces the same reaction. Tonet enjoys the freedoms of a free-rider, a status which entails a break with the norms of the premodern community and with the national

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24 Balfour explains that after the Cuban insurrection, "the burden of conscription fell on the poorer social classes who could not raise . . . money. Indeed, the colonial armies were made up not of volunteers but of the poorest peasant and working-class men" (End of the Spanish Empire 93).
community and presents a significant problem for both. He is concerned only with the satisfaction of his own needs and desires, and he tries to escape all community obligations by enlisting in the army, which, he claims, leaves him obligated only to himself, to preserve his own life. He refers to his time as a soldier in Cuba as the maximum expression of "libertad," and he reflects: "había pensado muchas veces con melancolía en sus años de guerra, en la libertad sin límites y llena de peligros del guerrillero, que teniendo la muerte ante los ojos, no ve obstáculos ni barreras, y carabina en mano, cumple sus deseos sin reconocer otra ley que la de la necesidad" (187). Notably absent from Tonet's experience in Cuba is any expression of commitment to the nation, or to any ideal at all. The novel's representation of the "Desastre" of 1898, which is marked by disorder and a massive loss of life, reveals the simultaneous presence and absence of a national community in Spain and the nation's imperiled status in relation to a global community.

If Tonet's role as the representative of a defeated army returned home also makes him a representative of the body politic, then the Albufera can be interpreted as a metaphor for the nation itself. The loss of Spain's colonies entailed a loss of resources and a market for goods around the globe, which intensified the need to exploit the full potential of domestic resources. In this way, the nation's orientation inward also reflects events occurring around the Albufera, where el tío Paloma senses that the land is closing in around him, and he fears that resources are becoming scarce. Though the novel is focused on only one small area of the country, Tonet's experiences in Cuba remind readers of the distressing state of the nation's foreign affairs and their impact on the poorest and most sparsely populated areas. The loss of Spain's colonies not only resulted in a diminished national territory, but also had the effect of isolating Spain within Europe. After analyzing a passage from a 1896 article in which Blasco Ibáñez identifies Spain as
Alda Blanco concludes: "el que la intelectualidad española a finales del siglo tornara su mirada hacia dentro y que se concentrara en lo que llamaban 'el problema de España' puede entenderse a modo de una consciente ruptura con la comunidad imperial europea que había repudiado a España como nación europea" (14).

After Tonet returns from Cuba, he assumes his role as a full-time free-rider, but at the same time, he becomes increasingly involved in some aspects of community practice. Tonet is a popular public figure who is at the center of the village's social events, but he despises the routine labor that everyone in the community is expected to perform. In her analysis of Pérez Galdós's *Nazarín*, which was published in 1895, Teresa Fuentes Peris states: "Both begging and vagrancy become linked with dissolution because they are seen to be transgressing, in a threatening way, the political and economic interests of the nation" (154), and in the example provided by the novel, vagrancy is equally threatening to the traditional community. The novel challenges Tonet's belief that vagrancy is an expression of freedom and dispenses harsh consequences for free-riding in the cases of both Tonet and Sangonera. Though Tonet romanticizes his own experiences outside of his community, the narrator's interpretations of Tonet's conditions of "liberty" destroy the romantic illusion that independent survival in nature is an expression of freedom. The narrator first shares information about Tonet's experiences in Cuba by critically interpreting his first letter to his family; the narrator states that it is "encabezada con frases dramáticas, de un sentimentalismo falso . . ." (Blasco Ibáñez 89), which gives readers the sense that Tonet's later reflections about the war are also distortions of the truth. Tonet's behavior in Cuba recalls that of the obsolete conquistadores who preceded him; he is "satisfecho de su oficio, encantado de sufrir fatigas, hambre y sed, a cambio de librarse del

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25 Blasco Ibáñez's article is entitled "La Turquía española" (Blanco 13).
trabajo monótono y vulgar, de vivir fuera de las leyes de los tiempos normales, de matar sin miedo al castigo y considerar como suyo todo cuanto ve . . ." (90). His skewed perception of the war is made clear by its real outcome. He returns home, noticeably underweight but in good condition compared to the majority: "Todos marchaban a sus casas, incapaces para el trabajo, destinados a morir antes de un año en el seno de las familias, que habían dado un hombre y recibían una sombra" (95). Once the frustrated Tonet decides again to leave behind his family and his village in the Albufera, he becomes "un perdedo que no temía ni á Dios ni al diablo" (188). He lives in a hovel with only the company of Sangonera, who acts as his hunting dog, and he receives the pity and aid of la Borda. The narrator undermines Tonet's romantic notions of life as a "free man" by describing the misery of his situation and through the presence of these supporting figures, who comply with his illusion of freedom by allowing Tonet to dominate them.

Tonet's character can be interpreted as an example of a wasted opportunity for progress. El tío Paloma and Tono provide opportunities for Tonet to gain financial stability by diversifying the family's activities. During the course of the novel, the Palomas are productive on two fronts: fishing and farming. Tonet could potentially initiate a new phase for the family, combining his grandfather's practical skills and the fruits of his father's ambition as a farmer. He has access to the family home, his grandfather’s fishing tools, gun, and boats along with his father's land and farm implements, which all could give him an advantage in his environment. Instead of adapting to his circumstances and potentially combining values of his father's and grandfather's generations in a productive way, Tonet's self-indulgent behavior leads to the demise of the family. In his analysis of the *Cañas y barro*, Besó Portalés finds:

El mensaje ideológico, en el fondo, es pesimista. El pueblo, como entidad colectiva, queda definido por una carencia esencial, que le impide constituirse
como sujeto revolucionario, como capaz de tomar en sus manos su propia emancipación. Pobreza, ignorancia, trabajo embrutecedor, alcoholismo, crueldad, animalización: éste es el círculo infernal que define la situación precedente. (sec. 4, par. 15)

Certainly each of the men of the Paloma family is in a state of impasse at the end of the novel, but this social and economic stagnation around the Albufera is not, according to my interpretation, attributed to nature. Rather, a pessimistic outlook at the end of the novel can be attributed to Tonet's irresponsible behavior, a breakdown of communication among men and the emerging interests of women. The most productive members of Tonet's generation are la Borda and Neleta, Tonet's adopted sisters, and while they clearly have had no voice in the traditional community, it remains to be seen what their role will be in the modern community.

2.5 Women, Nature and the Community

According to the events of the novel, the women and children of the Albufera live as the most subordinate members of, or as outsiders to, an already poor community. The hunger that Neleta and Sangonera suffer in childhood is testimony to the lack of nutrients readily available to Albufera residents, and women and children are the most vulnerable to its effects, as their physical conditions and social status obstruct their access to resources. From birth, Neleta, Sangonera and la Borda suffer disadvantages that are beyond their control; their parents cannot provide adequately for their needs, so they are largely or completely abandoned. Neleta's mother suffers an agonizing demise at a young age. She is left alone in pain in her hut with only the charity of her former colleagues to sustain her and her daughter: "la pobre mujer permanecía inmóvil en su barraca, gimiendo a impulsos de los dolores de reumática, gritando como una condenada y sin poder ganarse el sustento. Las compañeras del Mercado la daban como limosna algo de sus cestas, y la pequeña, cuando sentía hambre en su barraca, corría a la de Tonet . . ."
Even the paltry sustenance that women do obtain seems to work against them, according to the critical eye of el tío Paloma, who says of the potential marriage candidates for his son: "Su perfil anguloso, la sutilidad escurridiza de su cuerpo y el hedor de los zagalejos las daba cierta semejanza con las anguilas, como si una nutrición monótona é igual de muchas generaciones hubiera acabado por fijar en aquella gente los rasgos del animal que les servía de sustento" (36).

The way that women are compared with anguilas by the male characters, such as el tío Paloma and Cañamèl, supports the argument made by ecofeminists that women and the environment have been exploited by men in very similar ways: "It is deeply sculpted in our collective consciousness that women have been designated as men’s common, a natural source of wealth and services to be as freely appropriated by them as the capitalists have appropriated the wealth of nature" (Federici, "Feminism" sec. 5 par. 8). In the Paloma household, women are tolerated only because of their utility, and their lives are defined by anonymity, resignation and suppressed pain. El tío Paloma exclaims in conversation with Cañamèl: "¡Las hembras . . . ! ¡Mala peste! Eran los seres más ingratos y olvidadizos de la creación" (Blasco Ibáñez 82). The narrator reflects that el tío Paloma "De su esposa apenas si retenía en la memoria una vaga imagen. Había pasado junto á él rozando muchos años de su vida, sin dejarle otros recuerdos que su habilidad para remendar las redes y el garbo con que amasaba el pan de la semana . . ." (32).

The death of Cañamèl's first wife is represented as a positive change in his life, and he says that he could only benefit from marriage again if he could take advantage of a woman's wealth (82).

The narrator refers to the women's capacities as caregivers, such as when la Borda attends to Tonet, imparting "esos cuidados de que sólo es capaz una mujer" (189), or when Sangoneria is dying, and "Nada revelaba . . . la gravedad de su estado como esta solicitud de las mujeres," who
possess "esa valentía de que sólo es capaz la mujer ante la desgracia" (258), but even in these caretaking functions the local women are severely inhibited by their lack of education.

The status of women "is that of a powerless, oppressed, and oftentimes forgotten group" (C. Anderson 95), which is expressed in their textual expunction and vocal suppression in the novel. After giving birth with only the assistance of other village women, el tío Tòni's wife, who is never named, "parecía siempre enferma, . . . andando ciertos días como si se arrastrara, con quejidos que se sorbía entre lágrimas para no molestar á los hombres" (Blasco Ibáñez 47). After el tío Tòni's wife suffers a slow and painful death, she is remembered by el tío Paloma for the comfort created by her submissiveness: "El tío Paloma lamentó la ausencia de aquel ser dócil que sufría en silencio todas sus manías; sintió crearse el vacío en torno de él . . ." (77). There is little evidence of solidarity among the seemingly defeated and largely silenced women of el Palmar. They celebrate together during festivals, for example, when they enjoy Tonet's moment of triumph during the redolins and remember his deceased mother, but they generally live in isolation until the men of the village leave to fish during the day. Even these hours that the women spend working and talking together outside of their individual huts are marked by an ambient silence: "Las dos [la Borda and her adopted mother] hablaban con las vecinas, en el gran silencio de la calle solitaria e irregular . . ." (48). Despite their vital contributions to the work of their husbands, the women are prohibited from entering the meetings of the Comunidad de Pescadores, and their voices are publicly silenced: "la charla de las mujeres subía con molesto zumbido. El alcalde hizo salir al alguacil, saltando por entre la gente para imponer silencio y que el jurado siguiera su discurso" (119). When la Samaruca becomes angry and verbally aggressive upon learning that Cañamèl is going to collaborate with Tonet in the exploitation of the best fishing plot, she is forcibly removed from the town plaza “por orden del alcalde” (130).
The clearest case of the exploitation of women occurs with la Borda, who has a name, Visanteta, which is replaced by a degrading epithet upon her adoption (C. Anderson 83). La Borda becomes an adopted servant, and her inferior status is expressed by her actions during mealtimes, when "en la mesa comía con los ojos bajos, no atreviéndose a meter la cuchara hasta que todos estaban a mitad de la comida" (Blasco Ibáñez 48). The disregard for la Borda's health and well-being, which is demonstrated by the difficult chores that she is expected to perform along with her substandard living conditions in the Paloma family home, only becomes worse with time due to Tono's ambitions and Tonet's indolence. Still, she dutifully performs the role that has been assigned to her in the Paloma house and spends her childhood "como un perrillo vivaracho y obediente que alegraba la barraca con sus trotecitos, resignada a las fatigas, sumisa a todas las maldades de Tonet" (47). According to Jeremy Medina, la Borda "is love and self-sacrifice incarnate" (80); though, legally, she has no family, and she is treated as a "bestia sumisa" (Blasco Ibáñez 85), she remains "siempre animosa para todo lo que diese prosperidad a la casa" (98). La Borda embodies community values by caring and working for others, and it is not until the final passage of the novel when she finally indulges what is perhaps her only desire, when with a single gesture she affirms her humanity and individuality by stealing a kiss from Tonet's corpse. In that moment, the horror of her reality is compared to her strength, which has been emphasized throughout the text in her work ethic. The narrator, who adopts the perspective of the inhabitants of the Albufera, remarks in the introduction that la Borda is known as "aquella expósita infatigable, que valía más que un hombre . . ." (25). Through the comparison of la

26 When considered in relation to the nautical world, the name "la Borda" implies the border between what is inside and what is outside, which might reflect la Borda's status in the family, as both an insider and outsider, and also her status as a woman, who is both inside and outside the community. Alternatively, if the nickname is related to the word "borde," the dictionary of the Real Academia Española identifies one of its meanings as "Dicho de un hijo o de una hija: Nacido fuera de matrimonio" ("borda," "borde").
Borda and Neleta, who share several notable similarities, including their adoption by the Paloma family, their love for Tonet, their productivity and dedication to their work, and the possibility that both will be among the next generation of landholders in the Albufera, the text reveals a profound uneasiness about the changing role of women in the social order.

Neleta spends her married life increasing her husband's fortune, and she not only manages his tavern, but she also submits to his insatiable sexual desires. Neleta stifles her own desires and, later in life, she muffles her physical pain to improve her station in life. The actions taken by la Samaruca and Neleta to try to change their respective situations results in each one insulting, plotting against and even physically fighting the other over Cañamèl's estate, which is a fortune unprecedented for any woman of the Albufera. The relentless Samaruca tries to capitalize on her own claim to Cañamèl's wealth by attacking Neleta's reputation, and accusations of witchcraft are hurled by both characters and the narrator (Blasco Ibáñez 199, 203, 211, 212, 239). Unlike their neighbors who abide by social norms, these two women are named in the novel and narrated more extensively, but in both cases the representation is negative. As an unwed woman, la Samaruca attracts the derision of "characters and narrator alike" (C. Anderson 94). Neleta is unique among her neighbors in appearance, and her actions are unprecedented by local standards. She is not only upwardly mobile, but she is also sexually desirous and active, financially competent, and ambitious. Consequently, she is not compared to an eel, like other women of her community, but rather to land-dwelling predators: "El viudo, que hasta entonces había vivido tranquilo con sus viejas criadas, despreciando públicamente á las mujeres, era

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27 The use of "bruja" is a meaningful insult, given Federici's conclusions in *Caliban and the Witch*. Federici notes that witches can be understood as "a symbol of female revolt." She identifies the witch-hunts as "the 'original sin' in the process of social degradation that women suffered with the advent of capitalism," and asserts that "Feminists were quick to recognize that hundreds of thousands of women could not have been massacred and subjected to the cruelest tortures unless they posed a challenge to the power structure" (*Caliban* 164). It is not surprising, then, that precisely the two female characters in *Cañas y barro* who aspire to increase their estates are tainted by accusations of witchcraft.
incapaz de resistir el contacto de aquella criatura maliciosa que le rozaba con gracia felina. El pobre Cañamèl sentía-se inflamado por los ojos verdosos de aquella gatita . . ." (91-2). While the rest of the Albufera's inhabitants emit "el eterno hedor viscoso y frío de los anfibios criados en el barro" (117), "Neleta rewrites her bodily text by altering her style of dress (a change perceived by smell), whereby she publicizes her new socioeconomic station and establishes significant boundaries/differences between the local women and herself" (C. Anderson 102). Her pursuit of fortune leads her to behave increasingly violently, and she is eventually described as a "víbora" who attacks la Samaruca and then afterwards enters the room to see her dying husband only after wiping her enemy's blood from her teeth (Blasco Ibáñez 205). The danger that Neleta represents is made clear in her argument with the local priest, when she asserts her independence: "Ella vivía sin faltar a nadie. No necesitaba hombres" (213). The threat to the local way of life that is embodied by Neleta is narrated as her transformation into Sancha, the snake that is subject of a popular local legend.

Though the understanding of the legend of Sancha changes along with the social context that the successive generations of Paloma men encounter, and all of the fears that Sancha represents over time are eventually consolidated in Neleta's character. From the first chapter's introduction to the Albufera during the trip of the barca-correo, it is clear that the legend is an important part of the way that the locals relate to their place. Sancha is the namesake of a place in the Albufera, and upon seeing it, "surgió en la memoria de los hijos de la Albufera la tradición que daba su nombre al llano" and "los del lago contaban a el forastero más próximo la sencilla leyenda que todos aprendían desde pequeños" (Blasco Ibáñez 19). Anderson contends that "Sancha's tale (1) allegorizes the relationship of nature to humanity in the Albufera, (2) helps set the background against which the plot unfolds, and (3) functions as a structurally unifying
element, as becomes clear during the final moments of Tonet's life" (C. Anderson 44-45, note 26). Nature, represented by Sancha in the legend, is physically dominant over men, capable of easily crushing a full-grown man, and the boy who attempts to domesticate nature is suspected of being a "brujo" (Blasco Ibáñez 20). El tío Paloma recognizes that the most dangerous threat to men like himself are no longer creatures found in the wild. Rather, he reflects that even formerly dangerous creatures, such as the snakes that his father had helped to exterminate to tame the Albufera, were "bichos más simpáticos que los hombres del presente" (51). The local wilderness has become an ally against those outsiders who wish to dominate it through the cultivation of rice, and in several passages el tío Paloma expresses his hopes that nature will overpower the men who partake in that practice (46). El tío Paloma invokes the legend of Sancha as a reminder of the position of men in relation to nature: "contemplando el paisaje verde y sombrío, en el que parecían crujir los anillos del monstruo de la leyenda, se regocijaba al pensar que algo existía aún libre de la voracidad de los hombres modernos . . ." (52). He relates modernity to a loss of freedom, and in this sense he champions Sancha as a symbol of freedom; the snake does not comply with any social hierarchy and threatens all men equally. The legend has an entirely different meaning for Tonet, who reflects on it before taking his own life. When Tonet identifies Neleta as his Sancha, the metaphor contains a double threat inherent in modernity as it describes a man being dominated by a woman and by the uncontrollable process of the accumulation of capital.

Before committing suicide, Tonet contemplates how he has been living out the legend of the shepherd, and Neleta is his snake. In his reinterpretation of the story, Tonet fails to take into account Neleta's reality during the years when he left her alone in the Albufera. Like the snake that remains docile and whose consumption is limited as long as it is nurtured by the shepherd,
Neleta does not become dangerous until she is abandoned by Tonet. At that point, she hones her survival skills and learns to use her body to her advantage to survive as an attractive, unwed, orphaned woman in the Albufera. For Neleta, the actions that have guaranteed her survival, particularly the utilization of her sexual appeal, eventually lead to the demise of her partner(s). The danger of growth without restraint of an apex predator in nature, represented by Sancha, has been replaced by an uncontrollable desire for wealth, which is the motivating force behind Neleta's and, consequently, Tonet's actions. As the snake's body seems to grow unbounded, so does Neleta's ambition, and this growth entails both a terrifying and impressive demonstration of force: "¡Y pensar que la mitad de aquel tesoro podía haber sido de la Samaruca . . . ! Sólo al recordar esto, Neleta sentía renacer sus fuerzas á impulsos de la cólera. Sufría mucho con la dolorosa ocultación de su estado [de embarazo], pero antes morir que resignarse al despojo" (Blasco Ibáñez 223). Neleta repeatedly states that she will even sacrifice her bodily integrity to retain her fortune, preferring loss of limb to any loss of property (214-215).

The natural environment facilitates Neleta and Tonet's union, first in their childhood adventure in the Dehesa, and then in their illicit romance that begins in the middle of the lagoon. Neleta, the most attractive woman of the village, must suppress her physical desire for Tonet, the most attractive man of the village, and then she must also suppress the pregnancy that is the result of their mutual desire and which is identified by the narrator as "la más augusta función de la naturaleza . . . " (Blasco Ibáñez 218). To retain control over her late husband's entire estate, Neleta takes extraordinary measures to disguise her pregnant figure, and it is through these efforts to appear physically normal that her character appears increasingly more inhuman in the text: "parecía crecer cada noche con monstruosa hinchazón. Neleta odiaba con furor salvaje el ser oculto que se movía en sus entrañas, y con el puño cerrado se golpeaba bestialmente . . ."
(218). As she violently combats the reproductive process going on in her body, Neleta carefully tends to the health of her fortune: "Prestaría el dinero mejor que Cañamèl; se ingeniaría para que su fortuna se reprodujese con incesante fecundidad . . ." (215). Anderson observes that "Neleta becomes afraid, not of what is taking place around her, which she still feels she can manage, . . . but rather of what is happening inside her" (C. Anderson 108). Neleta's fertility, and Cañamèl's continued control over her body from beyond the grave through the legal persistence of his will, threaten to turn her body into her own Sancha, but her ability to conceal her pregnancy proves that while her body is dangerous, her desire to be financially independent is even more powerful.

Although, as Anderson demonstrates, "Most studies of Cañas y barro blame Neleta, either directly or indirectly, for the unfortunate chain of events that closes out the novel" (98), her character is also far more developed than other female characters and does not have to be read in only a negative light:

textual data suggests that Tonet is responsible for his family's tragedies. It also indicates that Neleta should not be categorized as a one-dimensional embodiment of the vice of greed, for Blasco has created in her a more complex female character who struggles with confining patriarchal codes to combine her professional/business/economic ambitions with her personal/intimate/sexual needs. (C. Anderson 113)

Gómez de Baquero offers that "La feroz codicia y la inhumana insensibilidad de Neleta están definidas en el recuerdo de la miseria de su infancia, cuando se acercaba humildemente á la puerta de la barraca de sus vecinos y esperaba allí que se fijasen en ella y la dieran de comer" ("Crónica" 175), and then the critic goes on to name Tonet's flaws as factors contributing to his decision to kill his son. The novel also explains the motivation for Neleta's actions as a survival instinct that she has developed due to the adverse circumstances that she has faced since childhood: "La avaricia de la mujer rural se revelaba en Neleta con una fogocidad capaz de los mayores arrebatos. Despertábase en ella el instinto de varias generaciones de pescadores
miserables roídos por la miseria. . . . Recordaba su niñez hambrienta, los días de abandono, en
los que se colocaba humildemente en la puerta de los Palomas . . . " (Blasco Ibáñez 213). Rather
than accept the fate of most women of the Albufera, which, by all accounts in the novel, is
wretched, Neleta aspires for a more comfortable, modern lifestyle: "No siempre había de estar
llenando copas y tratando con beodos; quería acabar sus días en Valencia, en un piso, como una
señora que vive de sus rentas" (215). Neleta is aware that a fortune by Albufera standards will
not amount to much in Valencia, and she calculates how much she will need to earn to enjoy
comforts and freedoms that are not available to her in el Palmar, a place where women not only
live in the same state of poverty as their male counterparts but also occupy a subordinate place in
the community.

Neleta's desire for financial and social independence, which is expressed as a dream of
living independently in a flat in the city, fulfills some of the greatest fears brought about by
women's changing social roles during the era of modernization. Catherine Jagoe describes the
tension created by the suggestion of women's independence in an already unstable climate:

Fear of women's economic and sexual liberation gave rise to growing misogyny
among many male writers by the end of the 1890s. Turn-of-the-century
antifeminist writings escalated in number and urgency of tone; many made direct
reference to a last-ditch attempt to close the barriers to feminism, which they
portrayed as a revolting foreign aberration. Once the doors were opened, they
argued, "á esa inmunda cloaca iría a caer la sociedad moderna, envuelta en una
corrupción universal" (modern society would fall into that filthy sewer, and be
swamped by decaying matter). The same writer raised the possibility of the sexes
defacing themselves disappearing into a monstrous androgynous figure, "el hombre-
femina" (the man-woman). (124)

The reinterpretation of the legend of Sancha transforms the image of the Albufera's most
attractive woman into that of a swamp-dwelling monster, and it demonstrates a correlation
between women's participation in the economy and the danger of the disintegration of society.

Bookchin states, "reproduction and family care remain the abiding biological bases for every
form of social life as well as the originating factor in the socialization of the young and the formation of a society" ("Ecology" 9). Neleta's willingness to sacrifice her child for wealth indicates the perceived disintegration of society through the breakdown of the relationship between mother and child, which is one of the basic expressions of the commons. Meanwhile, the Albufera itself is represented as a good mother that is the source of all social and biological life in the world of the novel, but its passiveness also makes it vulnerable to overexploitation.

For el tío Paloma, nature merits his respect and love while human women usually provoke his scorn, but he also regards the Albufera itself as a mother. Though he speaks about his father's legacy as an important part of his identity, the Albufera is the only mother that he ever mentions. The idea of the Albufera as a mother appears for the second time in the text when Neleta's pregnancy is being narrated, which complicates the understanding of motherhood in the text. The end of Neleta's pregnancy corresponds with the rice harvesting season, when "El lago sonreía dulcemente al arrojar de sus entrañas la cosecha anual; los cantos de los trilladores y de los tripulantes de las grandes barcas cargadas de arroz parecían arrullar á la Albufera madre después de aquel parto que aseguraba la vida á los hijos de sus riberas" (Blasco Ibáñez 221-222). Interestingly, in this chapter, which focuses on the crisis suffered by Neleta and Tonet as they approach the impending birth of their child, the rice seems to be born naturally from the "mother" Albufera, though it is the product of men who el tío Paloma claims are working against nature. This particular representation of the beneficent Albufera in labor provides a sharp contrast with Neleta, an infanticidal mother who is hoping for and attempting to induce a miscarriage. After giving birth, Neleta orders the immediate removal of her baby to avoid developing any bond with it. Neleta's capacity as a reproducer of life is compared to that of the Albufera, which makes her conscious renunciation of motherhood, and adoption instead of
individualistic and capitalist values, appear as a grave threat to both social and biological life. The Albufera, who acquiesces to the will of men and does not speak or represent itself, is represented as a good mother, while Neleta, who acts upon the desires that she shares with men, is what Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar identify as "the female monster" that provides "a striking illustration of Simone de Beauvoir's thesis that woman has been made to represent all of man's ambivalent feelings about his own inability to control his own physical existence, his own birth and death" (33).

At precisely the same moment when Tono compares the "vacío de su existencia" (Blasco Ibáñez 286), created by the loneliness that he experiences after Tonet's death, to the seemingly deserted Albufera, the narrator also makes a striking comparison between the Albufera and la Borda. The emptiness that Tono perceives when he looks at the still surface of the water body is contradicted by the rest of the novel, which proves, especially through the perspective of el tío Paloma, that the Albufera is the source of all life for the community around it. The narration of the action of la Borda, whose profound and tragic emotional life is suddenly given importance as it concludes the novel, humanizes and nuances a character who is otherwise defined only by her subjection to the desires of others. The Albufera's fateful return of the two dead bodies at the end of the novel forces the men of the Paloma family to confront the brutal reality of Tonet's decision. The revelation of la Borda's desire at the end of the novel also makes a similar move by exposing the reader to the brutal reality of her existence, creating tension about the existence of her latent feelings, which are finally made apparent only to the reader in their silent reflection off Tonet's corpse. The comparison of the two main female characters in the novel, who represent two extreme opposite types, la Borda as "love and self-sacrifice incarnate" (Medina 80) and Neleta as the maximum expression of greed, with the Albufera, is a manifestation of the "abismo
moral" between women and men to which Pardo Bazán refers. According to the novel, women at once derive power from nature, through their reproductive and caregiving capacities, but they are also like men, which is demonstrated by the labor performed by la Borda and Neleta. Kirkpatrick quotes Pardo Bazán in "La mujer Española": "Repito que la distancia social entre los dos sexos es hoy mayor que era en la España antigua, porque el hombre ha ganado derechos y franquicias que la mujer no comparte . . . Cada nueva conquista del hombre en el terreno de las libertades políticas, ahonda el abismo moral que le separa de la mujer, y hace el papel de ésta más pasivo y enigmático ['Mujer española', 33]" (Mujer 7). Women's simultaneous productivity and failure to successfully reproduce in the novel reveals anxiety about an impending social crisis that is occasioned by the advancement of modern values, which also threatens to suppress the voices of men like el tío Paloma as it makes obsolete the commons on which he depends. The representations of women in the novel, including their actions but perhaps especially their silences, reflect the fears of largely uneducated men who are facing their own disempowerment as the acts of reading and writing become the most important ways to participate in a national community which exists in contracts and laws that are largely indecipherable to and often impractical for the common people.

2.6 Conclusion

Cañas y barro reveals both the risks associated with founding national regeneration in capitalist ideals and the risks associated with economic stagnation. The characters who have the most entrepreneurial ambition face their genealogical end, and their actions threaten a democratic form of social organization and endanger the natural environmental. On the other hand, while the Comunidad de Pescadores exemplifies freedom for el tío Paloma and provides a

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model of successful local resource management, this equilibrium is achieved at the expense of a broader community, and at the expense of the women and children who are the most vulnerable members of the traditional, patriarchal community. Furthermore, the narrator's frequent comparison of the men and women of the Albufera to its native wildlife calls into question the understanding of their social place. The character Tonet could potentially find some compromise between the two opposing worldviews represented by his father and grandfather, but he self-destructs in his retreat from the relationships of community and his unwillingness to confront the inequalities inherent in the modern world. Meanwhile, two of the most diligent workers in the novel, the two women for whom el tío Tono is a father figure, stand to improve their statuses when Tonet's desperate actions at the end of the novel eliminate the Paloma family's male heirs. Anderson argues that the novel's ambiguous orientation toward Neleta reflects "the novelist's internal battle between enlightenment and misogyny, a life-long struggle Blasco never resolved" (C. Anderson 151). Whether or not the author supports women's liberation from poverty and powerlessness in traditional patriarchal systems, the novel suggests that women will be a dangerous factor in the modernization of Spain. Though Cañas y barro and Baroja's El Mayorazgo de Labraz are examples of very different literary styles, to the point that one literary critic identifies the latter as the "contraste más vivo" to the former (Deleito y Piñuela 640), they correspond well in that Baroja's novel, published shortly after Blasco Ibáñez's, seems to fulfill many of the fears introduced by its predecessor. In Labraz, the privatization of common lands has been fully realized, to disastrous effects, and men fail to reproduce the commons in their interactions with each other. Though the situation in Labraz is grim, my analysis of El Mayorazgo de Labraz will challenge conclusions, like that of Granjel, that the novel represents Baroja's definitive rejection of society (116).
CHAPTER 3. NOTHING IN COMMON: PÍO BAROJA'S *EL MAYORAZGO DE LABRAZ*

3.1 Introduction

Baroja's *El Mayorazgo de Labraz*, published in 1903, is a narrative about the obstacles to the reproduction of community in a modernizing world in which the commons has lost its value. The reader is introduced to the walled, medieval, Cantabrian town of Labraz by the disheartened narrator of the prologue, who visits Labraz to experience "la desolación profunda de un pueblo casi muerto" (7). Two residents of Labraz explain to this first narrator that the town's decline had begun with *desamortización*, the privatization of Church property that, in the case of Labraz, had formerly been used as common land by peasants. This process initiates the decline of the reproduction of the commons and a period of social instability. In contrast with Hardin's theory about the "tragedy of the commons," which defends the logic that human beings will overexploit common resources for personal benefit, it is the privatization of natural resources in Labraz that results in a common impoverishment of the land with long term consequences for the entire community. Once the woodlands of Labraz have been felled to suit the interests of the flourishing bourgeoisie and the floundering nobility, the townspeople turn to agriculture to sustain the local economy, but the elimination of economic and biological diversity results in failure: "El pueblo que antes vivía de la agricultura y de la ganadería al mismo tiempo, trató de vivir sólo de la agricultura; se roturaron todas las tierras, se labró más terreno que el que buenamente podía cultivarse y todo quedó mal cultivado" (Baroja 12). The critique of the overexploitation of the earth and forests around the city echoes Lucas Mallada's critique of deforestation in post-entailment Spain in *Los males de la patria*, published in 1890, and it contributes to the impression that the history of the backward town of Labraz is a metaphor for a backward nation overly fixated on its past.
According to the frame story in the prologue, the downfall of Labraz is marked by its resistance to modernization, and particularly its resistance to increased communication with the outside world. For example, the mayor refuses to allow the construction of a railway that would pass through the town, and the town becomes more isolated as a result. With the deterioration of surrounding roads and the location of the railway station outside of the village (Baroja 13), Labraz becomes increasingly isolated in time and space while neighboring Chozas thrives and becomes integrated into a broader economic community. This situation reflects Spain's position within the European community around the turn of the century. Balfour proffers, "A striking feature of bibliography of the Spanish Empire and the consequences of imperial collapse in 1898 is its relatively high degree of self-absorption. This seems to mirror the international isolation of its dynastic elite at the time, reliant . . . on family and religious connections rather than on engagement in the system of international relations for the preservation of its empire" ("Spanish Empire" 151). Likewise, the failure of residents of Labraz to engage with the outside world quickly results in the city's irrelevance. According to Tortella, Spain's geography contributed to economic and cultural isolation that impeded modernization:

The sheer size and . . . shape of the country, as well as the altitude and aridity of the central plateau (Meseta Central), make for costly transportation, isolate a large part of the country from trade in goods and ideas, and discourage the transfer of human resources to more productive activities. In Spain, geography and culture reinforced each other as obstacles to modernization from the seventeenth to the mid-twentieth century. (Development 8)

After the loss of Cuba and the Philippines in 1898, Spain was left with even fewer natural resources and a reduced market for its goods (Balfour, "Riot" 406). While other nations prospered from industrialization and expanded their borders through imperialist projects, the

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28 Mallada argues that the failure of individual communities to maintain their own roads and the roads that connect them with other communities is a major detriment to national development (104-105).
boundaries of the Spanish nation had been greatly reduced, and its protectionist economic policies prevented development in the already lagging agricultural sector (Tortella, Development 8). The novel that is attributed to Samuel Bothwell Crawford, who chooses to live in Labraz because he finds it more inspiring than his native, industrialized England, reflects on how the wall around Labraz, the persistent influence of the Church therein, and the insular orientation of its residents coupled with their ignorance, greed and fruitless aggression, encumber both the reproduction of the commons and the processes of modernization.

According to Cohen, the meaning of "community" depends on boundaries, as the term is used primarily to distinguish one group from another (12). Cohen reasons that the symbolic boundaries of the community are the most vital to its existence, especially as geographic, economic, linguistic, etc. boundaries are blurred as a result of industrialization and urbanization (44). For the people of Labraz, there is an inherent worth in being labracense, and they are careful to distinguish who does and does not meet the criteria. For example, one of the men who speaks in the prologue admits that he cannot claim the status of "hidalgo" because he is not originally from Labraz (Baroja 13). Townspeople also know that the manner in which one refers to the local guesthouse also reveals whether or not someone is from Labraz (30). One resident says of Don Ramiro, the Mayorazgo's adopted brother, "Don Ramiro no es de Labraz. Podrá tener el apellido, pero no la sangre de los Labraz" (68). As the world outside becomes better connected and the boundaries of traditional communities begin to break down, the townspeople of Labraz react by asserting the importance of their local identity. Cavarero describes the dangerous reactions of local communities to the processes of globalization: "The identity that is denied by the deterritorializing process of the global is thus rediscovered in a mythologization of the territorial history of local communities that are antistate or antimodern: pockets of identity
that assert their identity in an exclusive way, through ethnic cleansing and so forth" (203). As the people of Labraz encounter the processes of modernization, they have a similar reaction. The guise of patriotism among labracenses is similar to Mallada's description of "local patriotism," which he claims is common in Spain and works to impede rather than foment national development. Mallada claims that this kind of misunderstood patriotism is that which only favors immediate local interests: "En tesis general, de tan estrecha manera entiende el país el patriotismo, que apenas se hallará un solo pueblo dispuesto á hacer el menor sacrificio por el interés común . . ." (37).

In Labraz, the existence of physical boundaries seems to constantly reinforce the symbolic boundaries that exist in the minds of its inhabitants. The town looks like a cohesive unit due to the common history that is reflected in its architecture, especially the intact perimeter wall, which separates it from the outside world and locates it in an era when a such a wall provided a defensive advantage. As previously mentioned, Bauman explains that the idea of community evokes a sense of physical security, but that security comes at the price of freedom (4). The loss of freedom, though, does not seem to bother the people of Labraz, who value the security provided by the wall so much that they even accept being locked out of their own town if they do not make it inside by their common curfew (Baroja 64-65). The figure of the Capitán, who guards the keys to the village gates, is interpreted positively by the residents: "representaba para el pueblo entero la familia, el reposo del hogar" (66). Despite the high level of control over entry into and exit from Labraz, the townspeople still take further steps to ensure their security so that they can be at peace: "estaban guardados, primero, por la puerta de la alcoba, después por la de la casa y luego por las dos del pueblo" (64). Though it purportedly describes the

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29 Litvak gives a detailed account of Labraz's medieval features in *A Dream of Arcadia.*
"tranquilidad" of the townspeople, this detail also implies that there is not much trust among them, and in some cases, trust does not exist even among members of the same household.

The social environment in Labraz is, above all, oppressive. Suspicion of others and an instinct of self-preservation leads villagers to not only shut the doors of their community to that which is outside, including the larger national community, but to also shut the doors of their homes to each other. The local inn, a place that allows the relatively free entrance of outsiders, is censured by locals for being the "albergue de liberales" (Baroja 33), and it is, in fact, the gathering place for the most liberal thinkers in town. The townspeople are capable of insulating perceived threats from among themselves to the point that they construct impregnable social walls, as demonstrated by the treatment of any young lady suspected of having inclinations toward sexual activity: "toda la gente honrada, formaba como una muralla para que no les contaminase la atmósfera ponzoñosa de la muchacha perdida que ya no podia ir á la iglesia, no podía pasear, ni podía salir á la calle porque el alguacil inmediatamente la llevaba á la cárcel" (131). This passage gives evidence of concerted action among the townspeople, but their behavior in this case does not fulfill social needs or build social wealth, it rather leads to the marketization of the bodies of fellow citizens, and specifically the bodies of those young women who would become the bearers and nurturers of the next generation.

Despite maintaining a closed border and enthusiastically preserving a few cultural practices which reinforce relationships of domination, especially over women and the natural environment, the population of Labraz fails to engage in practices that would create social wealth. It is instead represented in Bothwell Crawford's novel as "una sociedad carente de nobleza e ideales, ruin, bárbara y cruel" (Granjel 114), where "consideraban la idea nueva, el proyecto nuevo como una cosa aborrecible y diabólica" (Baroja 134). The character Bothwell
Crawford, who is fond of the town, openly despises its inhabitants, and the novel's hero, Juan de Labraz, who is the sole heir to the most important remaining estate in Labraz, becomes so disgusted with the behavior of his fellow townspeople in response to a crisis in his household that he sets fire to their harvest and flees the town at the conclusion of the novel. Through the experiences of these two characters, the novel both acknowledges the importance of commoning practices and disparages human nature. Bothwell Crawford's novel suggests that the town is beyond saving, but at the same time, the novel represents Bothwell Crawford and Juan de Labraz as heroic figures because of their respective searches for different kinds of social wealth and their efforts to defend vulnerable members of their community instead of preying upon them. In its representation of the false bonds between the people of Labraz, and through that, the false bonds of members of the national community in Spain at the beginning of the twentieth century, the novel explores how men fulfill their social needs and create social wealth by engaging in something like what Cavarero calls "the absolute local," "where in any part of the globe, some human beings actively and reciprocally communicate their uniqueness and show this uniqueness as the material given that constitutes the contextuality of their relation" (205). This chapter proposes that Baroja's novel explores commoning as a practice that is not dependent on space and also does not depend on the recognition of likeness but of differences, and in so doing, it discredits the notion of a homogenous national identity that, according to Balfour, had been popularized to increase support for the war at the end of the nineteenth century:

The campaign had been the first serious effort at mass nationalization in a country fragmented by localism and regionalism. The icons of national identity that were mobilized for the war effort expressed above all the values of conservative center, patrician, Castilian, Catholic and anti-liberal, projecting a monocultural Spain in contrast to its multicultural and multilingualic realities. ("Spanish Empire" 155)
While the novel attacks the credibility of this version of a Spanish national identity, it does not propose any substitute for that identity. Each character, instead, is defined by his or her words and interactions with others. The work of representation is presented as a principal method of cultivating commons, but at the same time, the intellectual men who defend the values of the commons avoid practices that would contribute to its material reproduction. Additionally, although the novel identifies women as reproducers of the commons, it discredits or ignores them as readers, writers or artists and characterizes them as easily manipulated by men. In its representation of the social deterioration of Labraz, the novel demonstrates the disadvantages of patriarchal culture, but at the same time, the novel upholds a patriarchal discourse that normalizes the subjugation of women and therefore contributes to their exclusion from community practice.

3.2 Representation as an Act of Commoning: The Role of Samuel Bothwell Crawford

The novel's insistence in Bothwell Crawford's original point of view, as an eccentric, foreign loner serves as a critique of a society that he perceives as corrupt and as an appeal to different values. The character contributes to an understanding of politics that depends on each individual's "expression and communication of oneself, through words and deeds, which allow each one, already physically distinct, to distinguish him- or herself actively, and therefore politically, from every other" (Cavarero 189). While he is an outsider in Labraz, Bothwell's commitment to debate and to literature and art contributes to the impression that the character reflects the perspective of an author for whom the work of representation is an important manner of expressing an individual perspective, and therefore, it is a political act that hails a community
of individuals. Notably, while in his novel Bothwell Crawford imagines a character who breaks from Labraz to start a new life, he himself remains in Labraz, working as a painter, even as the town languishes.

Although the contents of Bothwell's paintings are never revealed, the reader is led to understand that the narrator of the novel, Bothwell the painter, and Bothwell the author all share the same, highly critical, perspective of Labracenses, even though Bothwell claims to value Labraz precisely because of its backwardness. Bothwell claims to not want to paint the townspeople, with the exception of only the eldest daughter of the local innkeeper and Don Juan, because they all remind him of animals. The narrator describes how "la gente del pueblo ni leía ni pensaba, todas sus energías eran únicamente vegetativas" (133). While uneducated people are lumped together, the novel pays homage to a broad range of artists, authors and intellectuals, in the prologue and in the chapters' epigraphs. Initial reviews of El Mayorazgo de Labraz reveal that the novel is also intended for an intellectual audience, rather than the masses, at the time of its publication. In the Revista Contemporanea, José Deleito y Piñuela remarks, "Baroja busca la aprobación de una minoría capaz de comprenderle" (640), and the novel leads him to ask whether "el arte debe ser privilegiado manjar de una minoría selecta ó patrimonio común de las masas populares" (639). Gómez de Baquero concludes his review of the novel by saying that it "parecerá desordenado y obscuro a los lectores de folletín, pero . . . encierra regalado deleite espiritual para aquellos que gustan de hallar alguna vez en las letras el 'haschisch' de la fantasía . . .

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30 Luis Granjel proposes: "Mr. Bothwell . . . es el encargado por su creador de explayar las conclusiones doctrinales o teóricas que tal espectáculo desvela. Lo que él dice es cuanto Baroja proclama" (114). Lourdes Lecuona Lerchundi reaches the same conclusion: "Ya hemos visto que su funcionalidad no puede estar en el nivel de la narración, . . . tampoco estaría en el nivel de la historia. . . . Creo que la importancia de este personaje hay que buscarla en el nivel conceptual, ideológico, de la novela[.] . . . tengo la impresión de que en ese inglés al que parece gustar la contradicción, Baroja ha creado una especie de doble en el que proyecta dialécticamente gustos y rechazos" (156).
The novel suggests that while the masses do not appreciate fine art, its creation and circulation is still meaningful.

Though Bothwell does not respect most of the people of Labraz, the social environment suits him, not because he shares values with the townspeople, but precisely because his differences become amplified in their company. Bothwell enjoys being a social outsider who "se entretenía en asombrar al pueblo con sus rarezas" and is inclined to act "en contra de las preocupaciones de los labracenses" (Baroja 125). At the same time, the fact that Bothwell dedicates a significant portion of his life to the creation and admiration of art hints at his will to participate in commoning, by sharing social wealth. Jean-Luc Nancy's examination of community illustrates how Bothwell's act of self-expression in painting both acknowledges the impossibility of a perfect communion with others but also demonstrates the impulse to communicate with those others:

the passion of and for community propagates itself, unworked, appealing, demanding to pass beyond every limit and every fulfillment enclosed in the form of an individual. It is thus not an absence, but a movement, . . . it is the propagation, even the contagion, or again the communication of community itself that propagates itself or communicates its contagion by its very interruption. . . .

But the interruption of community, the interruption of the totality that would fulfill it, is the very law of compearance. The singular being appears to other singular beings; it is communicated to them in the singular. (Nancy 60-61)

Therefore, he states, "literature . . . has as being . . . the common exposure of singular beings, their compearance. The most solitary of writers writes only for the other" (66).\(^3\) Hannah Arendt also identifies the essential element of public life as people's seeing and hearing from a variety of perspectives, whereas in a family, for example, members tend to see and hear from a similar or

\(^3\) On a previous page, Nancy includes painting and other forms of expression within the scope of "literature": "But if we can say . . . that being-in-common is literary, that is, if we can attempt to say that it has its very being in 'literature' (in writing, in a certain voice, in a singular music, but also in a painting, in a dance, and in the exercise of thought), then what 'literature' will have to designate is this being itself . . . in itself" (64).
the same position. Further, she insists that worldly reality itself is dependent upon varied input
about the same object from "a multitude of spectators" who occupy a variety of positions (57).

Despite living as a loner much of the time, Bothwell Crawford contributes to the
generation of a common world by offering different perspectives on matters of local culture and
politics. He eagerly debates the dangers of modernization with Antonio Bengoa, the local
regenerationist thinker, and he would presumably engage in more debates if he found willing
partners. He argues that industrialization results in the increasing ignorance and lack of creativity
of mankind: "El progreso material no ha hecho más que debilitarnos. . . Mañana no necesitarán
los hombres sumar, porque sumará una máquina; no necesitarán escribir, porque escribirá una
máquina; no necesitarán masticar, ni digerir, porque masticará y digerirá una máquina; y la
máquina pensará, hablará y hará cuadros . . . Y un día desaparecerá la Humanidad y le sustituirá
la Maquinidad . . ." (Baroja 188).32 In this exchange, Bothwell identifies writing, speaking and
artistic production as some of the activities that define mankind and are at risk from the
processes of modernization. Bothwell calls Labraz "uno de los pueblos más artísticos" because
neither its landscape nor its culture reflect the processes of modernization that are going on in
other parts of the world: "Nada de ese falso y estúpido progreso; nada artificial" (51). In his
praise for the "natural" products of Labraz is a criticism of mass production and of
homogenization; while Bengoa argues that material progress will improve the quality of life for

32 Bothwell's high estimation of the material qualities of Labraz echoes Litvak's description of the author's own
feelings about medieval architecture: "Medieval Spanish architecture expresses for Baroja the social, political, and
spiritual virtues of the country. Modern architecture represents, on the contrary, an inorganic, chaotic, and
disorganized society. Baroja's love for medieval architecture leads him to compare it with modern architecture and
to strongly attack Industrial Civilization. The consequences of the latter he considers to be decadence of human
work, decadence of art, and decadence of the whole society now centered in the notion of profit" (Dream ch. 5).
the majority of people, Bothwell argues that it will bring about the end of civilization as men become less intellectually capable and less ambitious.

In addition to engaging in debates around town, Bothwell is the only character who offers ideas that could potentially improve the local economy in the novel's present. Bothwell "Tenía proyectos descabellados de explotaciones de minas y de saltos de agua. Todo el mundo se burlaba de sus proyectos; él nunca se incomodaba" (Baroja 126). While he proposes further exploitation of nature in this instance, Bothwell is also a keen devotee of nature, which is demonstrated by the narrator's description of the Englishman's favorite place, a tree where he reads and from which he fishes and swims in the river (125-6). His fondness for literature and for trees provides a point of identification between the character Bothwell and the Bothwell of the prologue, who is the novel's only explicit proponent of conservation. He remarks that the residents of Labraz have no respect for trees, which are the most important symbol of the local, natural environment: "Es lo que no les perdono á los de Labraz; el odio que tienen á los árboles" (15). In order to protect the tree in front of his residence, he resorts to building four walls around it, effectively preserving it for his and for common enjoyment. This could even be considered a parallel to the way that he feels about the town of Labraz; it's walls also preserve it for Bothwell's enjoyment and inspiration. The Bothwell of the prologue demonstrates his inclination to share social wealth by inviting a stranger, the narrator, into his house to enjoy his art collection and discuss cultural production while having a meal. The representation of Bothwell sharing his novel with his guest in the prologue is, in effect, reflecting and calling attention to Baroja's own act of sharing through the publication of his novel.

33 In Naturaleza patria, Santos Casado de Otaola explains the debate between conservation of the natural environment and social change that existed in Spain in the mid 18th century, gained momentum with disentailment in the mid 19th century and persisted into 20th century (105).
While Bothwell's artistic production might represent his inclination to create and share social wealth and even engage in critical debate, ultimately, the character tolerates an oppressive social environment and makes little effort to change the practices of the people who sustain it. As an educated, single man with no family members toward whom he has any responsibility, Bothwell is not only free to travel and express his opinions, but he is also able to ignore the material conditions of the reproduction of community as he Concerns himself with fulfilling only his own needs. When Don Juan, who is responsible for his orphaned niece, adopts a similar attitude, the neglect of material conditions promptly leads to the tragic death of the young girl. The novel represents both Bothwell and the revitalized Don Juan of the conclusion as heroic for defending Marina, the innkeeper's daughter, at different times, but their dramatic actions, which add a great deal of interest to the text, do not contribute to any long term social changes. While Bothwell's character explores the relationship of the artist and writer to the community, the other active male characters in the novel further explore the relationship between the individual and the community, though none of them contribute to its material reproduction.

3.3 The Individual's Orientation toward the Community: Distinct Models in Juan and Ramiro

Don Juan de Labraz and his adopted brother Ramiro, who was born into a family of gypsies, represent opposite viewpoints about the nature of the relationship between the individual and the community. The text identifies a separation from the mother as a defining moment in the lives of both men, but they have opposite reactions to their respective losses. Juan attempts, during most of the novel, to become more enlightened through suffering in a state of relative alienation: "Yo siempre he pedido á Dios que si me envía desgracias, deje mi alma
The novel reveals the problem with Juan's inwardness, which is further emphasized by his physical blindness, in the threats upon the happiness of others that are occasioned by his resolution to inaction. Since the simultaneous occurrence of losing his sight and losing his mother's love, he ceases to defend the interests of the women in his life to the point that he allows his adopted daughter to die in poverty. Juan favors a return to childhood with Rosarito instead of accepting his role as her adult guardian (237-238), which emphasizes his inclination toward collaborative rather than authoritative relationships with others but also his failure to act authoritatively when required. Juan's retreat from action is contrasted with Bothwell's immediate commitment to sensationally defend Marina's reputation when it is attacked by Ramiro defense of Marina, even though it requires him to resort to violence (130). In comparison, rather than take action as Rosarito is dying, Juan desires death and eternal anonymity: "¡Cuanto antes morir, cuanto antes desaparecer! Y ya que la Naturaleza había hecho en él, un monstruo, una desdicha viviente á la que había privado del más dulce de los bienes, deseaba que ni una inscripción recordara su nombre, que ni una piedra indicara el sitio donde se pudría su cuerpo" (247). Tellingly, in a moment of crisis, the author-character Bothwell becomes an active figure whereas the reclusive Mayorazgo yearns for death, and specifically for textual oblivion. When Juan accepts that it is not destiny but conscious human will that is responsible for the series of painful separations in his life, which would include the loss of his mother, his sister, his cousin, and his niece, he finally resolves to act. Once he determines to defend his

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34 Throughout the text, passion is manifested in the eyes of the characters, as for example, when Raimundo's gazes betray his passion for Micaela (Baroja 95). Juan has "ojos vacíos" after losing his vision to smallpox, and the innkeeper suggests that Juan's mother favored Ramiro, at least in part, because of his charm and good looks (59): "Pasó una sonrisa . . . por los ojos de don Ramiro" (69). Blanca observes that Ramiro looks as though he has "fuego en los ojos" (68).
interests with action, he successfully imposes his own will upon men and nature. He breaks with the corrupt manifestation of community in Labraz to relate to the world in a different way.

Though both Ramiro and Juan, before their respective escapes from Labraz, defer to the power of fate, Juan uses fate as an excuse not to act while Ramiro uses fate as an excuse to always act upon his desires. Ramiro is said to possess "una voluntad de las que arrastran" and is recognized as an "hombre de voluntad firme" who dominates those around him, especially women (Baroja 115, 138). Shaw observes that Ramiro is the first of Baroja's characters to fully embody the philosophy of Nietzsche: "Ramiro de Labraz... es el primero en proclamar su independencia de cualquier 'código religioso o moral'" (139). While Ramiro claims to be free, "soy de otra raza despreciada que no tiene más leyes que sus instintos y la libertad" (Baroja 161), he also admits that he is not self-made: "yo no me he hecho á mí mismo" (199). He denies responsibility for his actions, admitting "Mis deseos son mis dueños" (199), and he instead assigns responsibility to an innate impulse. Ramiro's failure as an individual is manifested in his entrapment in a cycle of misdeeds that are repetitions of his own past actions and imitations of the acts of others, all with the aim of satisfying a desire that he admits can never be fulfilled. His lack of originality is obvious in his resemblance with the classic Don Juan character but even more directly in his imitation of the father of Don Diego de Beamonte, who had once sold his family's religious relics to support his paramour. Don Ramiro's final insult to Don Juan's family occurs when he steals religious relics from their chapel and sells them to finance his escape with Micaela, who is a distant relation of Juan and lives with the Mayorazgo since being orphaned.

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35 Arthur Owen says of Baroja's representation of Ramiro: "He began experimenting with Nietzsche's philosophy of ruthless power in 1902, sketching briefly, and not too competently, a crude, over-simplified Nietzschean figure in the character of Ramiro in El Mayorazgo de Labraz, an individual who knows no law but his desires, to accomplish which any means are legitimate" (17).
Ramiro and Micaela's exit from Labraz is a reiteration of Ramiro's escape with Cesárea some years earlier, which ended in the couple's return to Labraz once Cesárea is terminally ill.

The novel identifies the source of emptiness in Ramiro's life as a lack of community, whose maximum expression is represented as the relationship between mother and child. When Ramiro is alarmed that he has begun to feel sincere affection toward Micaela, he recalls the most disturbing moments of his life, which are precisely when he first recognizes the loneliness of his situation as an orphan. While wandering the countryside by himself, he feels "una enorme tristeza" when he observes a group of people shucking corn together and then enjoying traditional Basque songs and dances when their work is finished. As he continues to wander the area, he finally breaks down and sobs violently after he nears a house and "oyó vagamente el cántico de una madre que dormía á su hijo." He is profoundly affected when he becomes aware of what he does not have: "Nunca después había sentido una emoción tan grande como la de aquella noche" (Baroja 148). Ramiro's childhood situation of absolute poverty and abandonment seems to provoke excessive greediness in him as an adult.

In a conversation between Juan and Ramiro, the novel expresses doubt in the potential of the urban environment to foster the practice of community. Ramiro admits that when he is in the city, he experiences a complete lack of self-control: "en la ciudad lo deseo todo. Entonces el deseo del día me atormenta como una necesidad, y hasta que no lo realizo, sufre" (Baroja 198). Don Juan, whose material needs have always been fulfilled, feels that the city is entirely artificial and disrupts his natural instincts, which are presumably good: "Mis inclinaciones naturales se deshacen por las palabras del uno y del otro, y tengo que volver al campo para encontrarme á mí mismo y para que mis inclinaciones recuperen su antigua fuerza" (198). Instead of being a positive sign of community practice, an excess of words is problematic in the urban environment,
where people are dominated by self-interest. Although it is Ramiro who has more contact with
the outside world, living in the city and chasing lovers, in reference to his soul, he admits, "'Yo tengo mi choza . . . cerrada á cal y canto'" (200). Don Juan, on the other hand, reflects that
although he has lived in relative isolation, he has left his soul "'abierta á los cuatro vientos'"
(Baroja 200). His openness has left him vulnerable to abandonment and theft, but the text insists
that through these experiences he has gained the wisdom and strength that make him a superior
human being, as noted by the narrator and Bothwell and perhaps most noticeably, by Micaela.
Micaela and Ramiro acknowledge the Mayorazgo's "grandeza de alma," and even though she is
romantically involved with Ramiro; "al comparar á Ramiro con Juan, comprendió la inmensa
superioridad de éste sobre aquél" (198). The comparison of the souls of the two men illustrates
the difference between what Labraz stands for, as a closed town, in comparison with other
villages that are open to outside influences and exchange. The character who should seemingly
identify most deeply with the town of Labraz is its foremost citizen, Don Juan, who descends
from the town's founders and, as Katharine Murphy notes, whose "physical appearance mirrors
the decrepit, ruinous state of the town[;] . . . Although he is 'alto y hercúleo' [14], Juan is also
described as old, shabby, and unkempt" (200). Though it is Don Juan who, on the surface,
resembles the walled and degenerate town, once he renounces Labraz, he demonstrates
surprising strength of character and body. It is actually the more youthful, handsome, urban and
energetic Ramiro who shares the town's essence of selfishness, brutality and inaccessibility. The
text recognizes that the complete realization of each man's desires is impossible, but while
Ramiro allows others to suffer for his personal benefit, Juan's desires encompass the well-being
of others.
Though after fleeing Labraz Juan abandons a repressive social environment to confront the reality of the outside world on his own, his new orientation toward life does not correspond with the solitary men who he encounters on his journey. The anonymous vagabond and the bandit, Melitón, embody two more potential orientations toward community, and Juan rejects them both. The vagrant avoids all forms of social organization and material possessions; he survives on alms and resorts to theft when required. When he remarks that Juan is a slave of society, Juan points out that even the vagrant, who claims to have no state, no village and no family, is enslaved by his ideals: "También tú veo que eres esclavo, esclavo de tu libertad' murmuró el Mayorazgo" (Baroja 265). Though, like the vagrant, Don Juan has expressed his incompatibility with urban life and his fondness instead for the countryside (198), the Mayorazgo's reaction indicates that in his escape from Labraz, he is seeking something other than the vagrant's notion of freedom, which is characterized by solitude in nature. Despite his newfound physical strength and strength of will, neither does Juan embrace a purely competitive view of his fellow man like the feared rapist and bandit Melitón.36 Villagers describe Melitón as a force more fearful than nature, and the bandit's reputation alone frightens them into verbal submission: "Comenzaron todos los hombres á hablar de Melitón. Había logrado infundir un terror tal en los corazones, que apenas se atrevían á decir nada malo de él" (271), but Juan's swift thrashing of Melitón proves that he will no longer permit a man's selfish interests to bring harm to others. Melitón defends his own behavior by citing examples from nature, "Los osos y los lobos, las zorras y los pájaros, los hombres y las comadrejas, todos matan y hacen daño; es su regla," but when Juan responds, "puede haber una regla superior á esa" (281), he indicates that he does not accept the direct application of simplified versions of natural laws to social

36 Given Bothwell's fondness for trees, it is not surprising that the most violent villain in his novel, Melitón, is a woodcutter.
relationships. Perhaps the most important difference among Juan and Ramiro, the vagabond and Melitón is that while, like those three men, Juan asserts his individual will, he also expresses a desire to have mutually respectful relationships with others and to establish a permanent home.

Though Don Juan says that he feels strongest and most complete in the countryside, he condemning the countryside around Labraz when he sets fire to the harvest: "¡que el rayo lo incendie y lo aniquile todo! ¡los campos y los bosques y las casas! ¡que todo quede ahogado y exterminado en este pueblo maldito!" (Baroja 255). Owen argues that destruction has a purpose in Baroja's work: "The old, traditional ideas must in part be destroyed, so that new ideas may be nourished on their remains. To destroy is only to change, and it is both cowardly and foolish to be afraid of destructive ideas, for through them in the end humanity advances" (15). Juan's definitive actions, which represent his efforts to destroy traditional ideas, also represent the importance of changing the relationship that residents of Labraz have with others and with space. Don Juan's crime can be interpreted as an attempt to force open the boundaries that enclose Labraz and impel its residents to take action as they must face their economic vulnerability and the loss of the town's former status. Already immediately after the Mayorazgo's act, the locals are forced out of their homes and outside of the town walls: "la gente se había dado cuenta del incendio . . . se habían abierto las puertas de la ciudad, y hombres y mujeres salían despavoridos de Labraz" (255). Finally, it is a crisis from within the town that forces open its doors. Though he is undoubtedly asserting his will over the community with his act of arson, Don Juan also refrains from deliberately inflicting harm on any living organism, including non-humans. In fact, Juan, and the narrator's, aversion to violent physical domination is emphasized throughout the text, even after Juan's conversion into a man of action who is capable of resorting to physical aggression. In a demonstration of his newfound inclination to react against oppression, in one of
the villages he visits after leaving Labraz, Juan becomes visibly upset and uncharacteristically attracts attention to himself by slamming his fist on a table upon hearing about the deliberate torture of a street cat (273). His escape from Labraz demonstrates his rejection of relationships of domination and his desire to live in a more fertile natural environment: "he reconstruido mi vida, tengo un plan. En un pueblo, á orillas del Mediterráneo, mi familia poseía una casa y un huerto . . Allí no hace frío como aquí. Allí dicen que el cielo es azul y el cielo siempre puro" (262). At the same time, his plan to establish himself and provide for his and Marina's needs seemingly depends on property that has always been promised to him as the eldest son of a wealthy family, and retreating from the social world altogether will prevent Don Juan from engaging in community building practices, a strategy which has not worked well for him in the past.

3.4 The Reproduction of the Commons in Labraz

The telling name of the practice of "monoculture" helps reveal how the reproduction of the commons is halted in Labraz. The narrator explains that in and around Labraz, money supplants all other virtues: "los ejes de la existencia del pueblo, eran sentimientos metafísicos: honor, religión, patria . . pero sobre todos estos sentimientos metafísicos estaba el dinero" (Baroja 134), and the compact but telling biotic history of the land surrounding Labraz in the prologue reflects the values of the hierarchical order dominated only by economic interests. When local landowners utilize all their available land for a single cash-generating crop, other forms of life are negatively affected. Murray Bookchin criticizes the practice of monoculture as an example of the destruction caused when human beings impose an unnatural, hierarchical system over the natural world, and he claims that despite initial appearances, hierarchical systems do not stabilize nature or society (Ecology 102). Instead, he contends, the natural world
flourishes because of diversity, and this diversity is supported by conditions that allow for natural spontaneity: "Farmers have repeatedly met with disastrous results because of the conventional emphasis on single-crop approaches to agriculture or monoculture. . . . Without the mixed crops that normally provide both the countervailing forces and mutualistic support that come with mixed populations of plants and animals, the entire agricultural situation in an area has been known to collapse" (Ecology 88). According to Bookchin, the relationships between species are not only more complex than predation, but "plants and animals continually adapt to unwittingly aid each other" (Ecology 91); the complexity of organisms and their relationships with each other are signs of a healthy ecosystem. The novel's narrator attributes the social degeneration of Labraz to the same conditions that impoverish the natural environment surrounding the town. A hierarchical order, dominated by economic interests, discourages diversity and mutuality and results in the population's poor health.

The women of Labraz are not publicly appreciated for their contributions to the commons and are instead exploited by men for either money or sex, which leads to relationships that are either unproductive or produce children whose fathers do not recognize them. When the local men marry for money, it is well known that they often satisfy their sexual desires with prostituted women instead of their wives: "Este era el estado perfecto para un labracense: la mujer fea alimentaba, y el marido, entre golpes de pecho y señales de la cruz, andaba en tratos con la Cañamera" (Baroja 133). The resulting crisis of paternity is apparent in the absence of heirs among the town's principal landowners, including Don Juan and Don Diego de Beamonte. The witty song of Perico "el liberal del pueblo," therefore, reveals a real problem:

¿Cómo quieres que en Labraz,
haya muchos liberales,
si son tos [sic] hijos de cura,
de canónigos y frailes? (135)
The narrator uses a crude metaphor to remind the reader of the fruitlessness of sexual relationships with prostituted women when he says of the home where the abandoned Ramiro had temporarily stayed in his childhood: "El dueño se pasaba la vida trabajando, pero tenía una tierra malísima, más estéril que una cortesana . . ." (145). The one seemingly healthy and potentially fruitful romantic relationship in the town, between the regenerationist thinker who is also a pharmacy student, Antonio Bengoa, and the innkeeper's eldest daughter, Blanca, is the source of a family dispute that results in Bengoa's forfeiture of his potential inheritance, which leaves the young man without a secure place in Labraz for the future.

The circumstances surrounding the townspeople's judgment of Marina demonstrates the extent to which women's ability to act is severely limited within a system of drastically unequal gender relations. Before she is even certain about her sister's relationship with Don Ramiro, Blanca fears for Marina's future:

recordaba dos o tres muchachas que habían cometido algún desliz. La conducta del pueblo para ellas había sido de una crueldad tal, que la vida allí se les hizo imposible. Las demás muchachas se apartaban de ellas como de un apestado; los hombres se creían con derecho a su cuerpo ya perdido y les mandaban recados con la Cañamera y la Zenona, las dos Celestinas de Labraz; los chicos las insultaban. Era el espíritu canalla y cobarde de todos los pueblos levíticos. (Baroja 112)

The men of Labraz effectively own the bodies of the women in the town. Despite the silently accepted and copious sexual activity of the local clergy and married landowners, local women who are suspected of sexual transgressions are publicly shamed and exiled to one of two brothels. The narrator notes that it is not only men who persecute women and tolerate the hypocrisy rampant in the village but the village as a whole that colludes to force socially comprised and economically vulnerable young women into a life of prostitution. Bauman's examination of community suggests that the unhealthy relationship that the villagers have with
sex, publicly renouncing it but privately indulging in its illicit forms and/or gossiping about it, is the result of the tension between freedom and security. He offers that in *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud recounts the conflict encountered by the rich and powerful: "to enjoy the twin gifts of social freedom and personal safety, one must play the game of sociality according to such rules as deny free vent to lusts and passions" (Bauman 23).

Because of this environment, when Don Ramiro publicly insinuates that he has had an affair with Marina, Bothwell promptly resolves to confront him and rectifies the situation under the threat of violence. After Bothwell defends Marina, who requires the novel's heroes to defend her name and her body on multiple occasions, there is a visual pause in the chapter, after which the narrator launches a scathing critique of the gender bias that exists in Labraz and the general brutality among the village's inhabitants toward women and animals alike. The narrator gives examples that support his observations that "Labraz era vicioso, pero de una manera oscura y siniestra" (131). He describes how the villagers torture bulls for pleasure in the *corridas de toros* and how the processions of Semana Santa once resulted in a bloody attack on a visiting performer and his monkey. Even Mamertín, a physically disabled boy, is depicted attacking a dog without cause (240). The extraordinary violence directed toward captive animals in Labraz is a manifestation of the villagers' repressed aggression, and these rare demonstrations of vigor are indicative of their general impotence.

The narrator further underscores the gross absence of practices of commoning in Labraz when the townspeople spurn Marina's charitable care of Rosarito, Don Juan's fatally ill niece. While the townspeople find no fault in denying Rosarito medical care when Don Juan can no longer afford to hire help, they cannot tolerate an unmarried woman and an unmarried man staying in the same house. When Marina receives a warning that the townspeople are slandering
her, she responds "Aunque todo el mundo me insulte, no dejaré á esa niña sola" (Baroja 249). She affectionately cares for the dying, orphaned girl, who adopts Marina as her mother in her final days. As initial reviews of the novel, such as that by Gómez de Baquero, point out, the narrator gives detailed and moving descriptions of the innocent and affectionate interactions between Marina and Rosarito and of the latter's death. These passages, along with several others in the novel, call attention to the significance of the work that is performed by women in the domestic environment. At the same time, the two active female characters in the novel, Micaela and Marina, are explored in some depth only as a consequence of each one's desire for Ramiro, who is a conspicuous exploiter of women. Blanca is the woman most highly revered by Bothwell in the entire town, and she is defined precisely by her performance in the domestic environment. According to the narrator, Blanca "tenía un carácter tranquilo, sereno y reposada, era una excelente mujer de su casa, y gracias á ella todo marchaba en orden y á su punto en la posada" (36).

In the work's epilogue, Marina and Don Juan finally reach the coast during the initial onset of spring, which is described in hopeful terms as "Aquél despertar de la naturaleza, aquella ráfaga de vida que se sentía en el aire" (Baroja 302); the end of the novel is deliberately represented as a beginning, the arrival to the "tierra prometida" (301-02). Murphy insists that despite the less optimistic conclusion of Granjel, "El Mayorazgo de Labraz closes on an ambiguous note, not a pessimistic one" (Murphy 194). Though as Murphy explains, after Juan suffers from Rosarito's death and the ensuing criticism of the townspeople, he goes through a period when he "will acknowledge the present only as a reinvented past" (187), both Juan and Marina appear to definitively break with the past when Marina insists that Don Juan recognizes her identity as a woman. She briefly appears as Juan's equal when she insists: "Yo no soy
Rosarito; ya no soy una niña" (302). The narrator undermines her declaration, though, when the final line of the epilogue identifies Don Juan as "el ciego" and Marina as "la niña"; these last words seem to allude to the couple's naivety, despite the fact that both characters have undergone dramatic changes. Though the text demonstrates Juan's resistance to relationships of domination, he is clearly the dominant figure in their relationship; he tells Marina that if she is going to accompany him, "Tú serás mi hija" (262), and after their mutual declarations of love, he asks Marina, "¿Quieres ser mía?", to which Marina responds, and more precisely, murmurs, "Eres mi señor, eres mi amo" (303). Romantic love is communicated here as a relationship of possession, and Marina's fading voice and submission to Don Juan in the final passage of the epilogue do not suggest an empowering situation for her. The union of the older, educated and established gentleman with the young, hardworking, rural woman points to a future generation that incorporates traditions and resources, including the plot of land on the Mediterranean coast, from a noble background on the husband's side, while also acknowledging the need and capacity for labor present in the wife's background. Still, Marina's value is associated either with actions that are confined to the private realm, as when she is caring for Rosarito, or to her body rather than her voice, as when she serves as Don Juan's guide while pretending to be his daughter, which indicates that her potential contributions to the commons will be limited.

3.5 The Other Side of the Wall: Community without Borders

Though he leads a relatively solitary existence, Don Juan always seeks human, and specifically female, companionship: first with his sister Cesárea, then in the company of Micaela and by acting as a father figure to Rosarito, and even after he turns against the inhabitants of

37 Relationships that follow this same formula are also present in novels such as Valera's Pepita Jimenez (1874), Pereda's Peñas arriba (1895), and Baroja's own Camino de perfección (1902).
Labraz, he recruits Marina to accompany him. He and Marina, whom he insists on relating to as a daughter until the two finally engage in a romantic relationship, are more kindly received as anonymous and penniless travelers than they had been in their respective social positions in Labraz, where they were both under attack due to the circumstances surrounding their care of Rosarito. During their journey to the coast, Marina and Juan depend on the generosity of strangers for food, shelter and information. This experience can be contrasted with the way of life in Labraz, where it is taken as a matter of course that even the village's own residents can be locked out of the city and left to spend the night outdoors after the gates are closed in the evening and where the most vulnerable members of the community are the most likely to become victims of the rest. As they trek eastward, Marina and Juan encounter a "vaquero," a blacksmith who is also the mayor of his town, and an old cattleman in a shack, who all provide the travelers with directions, provisions and shelter. Then, the pair comes across a small settlement of homes, where they are welcomed into the house of the wealthiest resident, whose wife is in labor.

In this final chapter of Bothwell's novel, the author adopts the costumbrista style, recounting elements of the daily lives of rural Spaniards, without specifying exactly where the characters are located. According to Labanyi, costumbrismo "perfectly incarnates the contradictory liberal project of constructing a unified nation based on individual freedom or difference" as it makes "educated Spaniards aware of the urban and rural popular masses . . . in the process incorporating the latter into the nation as fellow members of the 'imagined community'" (17). Considering the work of Nancy in conjunction with Labanyi's comments, the work of costumbrismo can perhaps be described as sharing between communities who need not, and in fact must not, be alike to "be-in-common": "On all sides the interruption turns community

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38 That two shepherds are identified as Basque seems to indicate that the travelers are not in País Vasco at this point (Baroja 293), but traditional Basque songs are reproduced several times throughout the text (148, 248-49).
toward the outside instead of gathering it in toward a center — or its center is the geographical locus of an indefinitely multiple exposition” (Nancy 60). The narration of the Mayorazgo's travels and encounters across regions of Spain creates the sense that community exists where stories and resources are shared between men, regardless of location, education or social place.

The day after arriving to the stranger's home, the pair participates in a Christmas feast that brings neighbors and fellow laborers together and is prepared by Marina and another woman. The group simultaneously celebrates the birth of Jesus and the baptism of the baby boy, who the local doctor refers to as the "ciudadano" (Baroja 289, 290), which clearly conveys the child's acceptance into a social group, and specifically, into the national community. The coincidence of the two births recalls the foundation of the Christian community, but the living presence of the "ciudadano" is superimposed on it with new meaning. When Nancy considers the relationship of lovers to the community, he proposes: "When the infant appears, it has already compeared. It does not complete the love, it shares it again, making it pass again into communication and exposing it again to community" (Nancy 40). In this sense, the birth of every mortal child is an act of sharing that demonstrates a movement toward community. Though Murphy argues that "El Mayorazgo de Labraz was inspired by Shakespearean tragedy" (173),39 the final chapter of the novel lends a positive tone to the work. In light of Nancy's analysis of the significance of literature, Juan's debut as a storyteller can be interpreted as the of death of the individual but also his birth into the community. At the head of his own dinner table, inside the formidable walls of the town where he is still considered nobility, the Mayorazgo's voice is overpowered by opinionated clergymen and landowners who are resigned to the idea that social degeneration will be the dominant trend of the future. However, as an anonymous traveler among

39 Murphy includes a quote from Baroja: "Al principio quise hacer toda la obra en diálogo, imitando el estilo de una tragedia de Shakespeare" (173).
nameless goatherds, Don Juan has an attentive audience, and despite his blindness, he can participate fully in cultural production because it is part of an oral tradition. The story narrated by the Mayorazgo in the rancher's home combines classical mythology with a folk tale that Don Juan had heard as a child, which makes evident his regard for both local and world knowledge, highlights the creative capacity of the storyteller, even when his material comes from a literary or oral tradition, and de-emphasizes the nationalist element of folklore.\(^4\) The lesson contained within Don Juan's tale, "Barriga grande," is that selfish behavior will lead to one's downfall, whereas unselfish behavior, in collaboration with others and with one's surroundings, will increase one's chances for survival and success. The tale, which is not specific to any particular place or people, teaches the importance of mutual respect in the struggle for survival in both the natural and social worlds. The oral traditions being shared and enjoyed by Don Juan and his audience, which include songs and riddles, stress the importance of storytelling as an activity that creates social wealth; they are a reminder that the group has language, values and experiences in common that they are inclined to share for everyone's enjoyment. Although the majority of the novel may be inaccessible to many, this final chapter, which takes place after the hero breaks free from the social constraints of Labraz and when he decides to rebuild his life on the northeastern coast of the country, would be accessible to a wide variety of audience members. Though the chapter could suggest that Baroja is taking "refuge in a vision of a pre-capitalist utopia of small farmers and artisans" (Balfour "Riot" 415), the representation of Labraz indicates that it is not only the processes of modernization that are responsible for the demise of

\(^4\) Luz Colina de Rodríguez quotes the last of Antonio Machado y Álvarez's six objectives of folklore: "Recoger, acopiar y publicar . . . todos los elementos constitutivos del genio, del saber y del idioma patrios, contenidos en la tradición oral y en los monumentos escritos, como materias indispensables para el conocimiento y reconstrucción científica de la historia y la cultura españolas" (27).
community practice. The failure of citizens to communicate and interact with their neighbors at a basic level also leads to social poverty.

3.6 Conclusion

In his study of nationalism in turn of the century Spain, Balfour remarks, "Castile exerted a fascination even among those regenerationist writers most critical of the supposed decadence of Spain. Their nostalgic musings over the medieval ruins and the harsh landscape of the meseta helped to nourish this conservative myth of national identity" ("Lion" 116). El Mayorazgo de Labraz, on the other hand, both spurns the idea of a utopian past and sows doubts in the likelihood of a cohesive national community in the future. The novel attacks hallmarks of "Spanish" culture such as the bullfight, Catholicism and the figure of Don Juan, who is represented in the cowardly and petty Don Ramiro. It denies the existence of a national identity worth defending and also dismisses the potential of the urban environment, characterized by the novel's heroes as materialistic and artificial, as a site of community practice. At the same time, when Don Juan leaves behind his dysfunctional village, he encounters the generosity of simple people of the countryside across multiple regions. Among these people, who are vulnerable to the constant and extensive influence of natural environment and are quite dependent upon their neighbors, there is a greater value for the commons than in Labraz, where a loss of respect for plant, animal and even human life precipitates the town's ruination.

The novel complements Baroja's declarations, made on behalf of "el Grupo de los Tres" with Ramiro de Maeztu and Azorín, made after the premiere of Galdos's fiercely anticlerical Electra in 1901:

No aspiramos a ser hombres de acción, sino hombres de representación. . . .
Seguramente, no tenemos fórmulas nuevas para resolver el problema social, no conocemos la receta para llevar la felicidad a los hombres. . . . Si podemos, queremos turbas las conciencias, remover los espíritus, sacudir con flagelaciones la voluntad. Que las almas queden abiertas, para que germine y fructifique el Ideal nuevo. (qtd. in Litvak, "Los tres" par. 19)

Here Baroja endorses a collaborative process in which no single entity imposes a specific solution to social problems or controls the behavior of the rest; the artist and the audience engage in the sharing of ideas to create an opportunity for social change. However, this kind of interaction is limited to literate men, a minority in Spain during the time of the novel's publication, a fact that is perhaps reflected in the solitude of the two heroes of Labraz. Although in the novel, the sharing of the oral traditions of common people is an important expression of community practice, these traditions do not appear to be useful in the process of effecting social change. Neither do women, who are represented in the novel as passive or easily manipulated consumers of literature, have a place in any conversation between the writer and his audience. The serial fiction and the romantic novels that the innkeeper and Micaela read encourage the women's awareness of their own and others' sexuality, which thereafter consumes their minds and bodies.

The structure of Baroja's novel reflects a collaborative process in that it offers multiple possibilities for interpretation. Whereas in Bothwell Crawford's novel, Juan and Marina flee Labraz and reach the Mediterranean coast where they plan to start a new life together, the novel's prologue negates this action by placing Juan back in Labraz, and, significantly, returning home from church. By locating the author-character and the novel's hero in moribund Labraz in the prologue, the novel may indicate that the work of representation is futile. However, by providing an alternative ending in the hopeful epilogue, the text implicates the reader in the interpretation and potential impact of the work. Yet, the potential for change in the body of the novel met with
the dismal return to the status quo of the prologue may also reflect the political process going on in Spain, where, as Balfour explains, regenerationists had hoped that the disaster of 1898 would drive change, but "After a short period of bitter recrimination on all sides, the old politicians readily adopted the new rhetoric of regeneration without changing very much in practice. The power of the landed oligarchy and their allies remained intact . . ." ("Riot" 407). One of the novel's heroes, Don Juan, definitively abandons the town and leaves its residents to regenerate themselves or perish. The other hero of the novel, Bothwell Crawford, uses literature to call attention to the plight of Labraz, both sharing his unique perspective with his audience and perhaps initiating conversation about healthy and unhealthy social practices. Still, the exclusion of much of the population from the production or consumption of literature emphasizes why it alone is not an effective tool to generate sustainable community practices. Concha Espina's El metal de los muertos explores the struggle of miners to reproduce the commons as they face the forces of global capital and also explores the role of the press in that struggle. The novel examines the various social roles of women, and their relationship with a clearly feminized natural environment, in the communities of the industrialized world.
CHAPTER 4. BETWEEN ROCKS AND HARD PLACES: VOICES OF EXPLOITATION AND REPRODUCTION IN *EL METAL DE LOS MUERTOS*  

4.1 Introduction 

Concha Espina's *El Metal de los Muertos* appeals to the national community on behalf of workers who are challenging the forces of global capitalism that "Casa Rehtron," the fictionalized version of the Rio Tinto Company Limited, is imposing on them. Juan Carlos León Brázquez identifies 1917 as the year that Espina traveled to Huelva investigate the mines and begin working on the novel (37), and the major events that it describes are based on real incidents at the British-owned Rio Tinto in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The novel's basis in reality was obvious to readers at the time of its publication, when another strike by Rio Tinto miners was ongoing. In the Madrid-based periodical *La Voz* on October 28, 1920, Enrique Díez Canedo's review of *El metal de los muertos* is titled "La novela de Riotinto." The fictional company is patently linked to the history of the English company by facts that appear throughout the text: the date of purchase and the price of the company's lands in Huelva; the recollection of historical occurrences such as the "matanza" of 1888, when Spanish troops fired upon residents protesting "las teleras"; the representation of the living conditions for the

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41 This analysis considers only the first edition of the text, which was published in 1920. For descriptions of the differences among later editions of the text, see León Brázquez, *El periodismo literario de una novela social*.
42 Several characters in the novel have surnames that form words in English when spelled backward. The English words describe the identities of the characters to which they are attached. In this case, "Rehtron" spelled backward is "norther." For the names of the historical characters on whom Espina's fictional characters are based, see León Brázquez, *El periodismo literario de una novela social*.
43 As part of the miners' conditions of employment, Echea includes "investigar los criminales acontecimientos del 88 y tratar de conseguir que se imponga una sanción penal a los culpables y cómplices de aquella matanza" (Espina 283). Galán asserts in a 2007 article in *El País* that "La primera protesta ecologista de la historia costó más de cien vidas en 1888." Her characterization of the events of Feb. 4, 1888 are subject to debate, but 14 deaths were reported at the time of the incident, when the Spanish army fired upon a large group of people protesting "las teleras," "montañas de mineral que se quemaba al aire libre" and devastated the natural environment around the mining operations (par. 6).
English management in "Vista Hermosa," which is based on the "Bella Vista" of the Rio Tinto Company; and the specific terms demanded by the striking workers. Even a critical example from among the initial reviews of the novel concludes, "A pesar de todo, a Concha Espina le cabe el honor de haber sido el primer novelista español que se ha sentido preocupado por uno de los más trascendentales problemas de lo que se llama en la jerga periodística 'palpitante actualidad'" (Ballesteros de Martos 119).

Despite the control exerted by the mining company over nearly all aspects of their lives, Spanish laborers in the novel retaliate against the mining company by joining a union and fighting for their interests with a widespread and long-lasting strike. The representation of the miners' concerted action makes manifest the contradictions inherent in the relationship between laborers and capitalists, while the journalists in the novel, along with the author herself in the context of the novel's publication, work toward balancing that relationship by generating support for laborers from a wide audience. David Avery, who published a history of the Rio Tinto mines in 1974, contends that Espina's novel had a significant impact on its readership:

"Su pluma consiguió un gran apoyo para los huelguistas entre aquellos que perteneciendo a las clases medias educadas, pudieran de otra forma haberlos condenado como revolucionarios franquistas o comunistas. La descripción de la vida de Riotinto que hizo para sus lectores, quedó impresa en la mente de estos, y contribuyó en gran parte a la hostilidad manifestada frente a la compañía en los años siguientes." (qtd. in León Brázquez 44)

In his study of the historical context in which Concha Espina wrote the novel, León Brázquez says that Espina approached *El metal de los muertos* as a piece of journalism (19), and he maintains that the novel is among the first " novelas sociales" in Spain:

Condicionada por su habitual geografía literaria, Concha Espina se enfrentó en esta ocasión a un tema mayor, por lo que necesitó de sus dotes periodísticas para abordar un conflicto social, con connotaciones patrióticas; con un entorno de lucha polarizada entre el capitalismo y el socialismo . . . y con un sindicalismo radicalizado dispuesto a romper de una vez por todas las reglas de siglos. Aquel
remolino telúrico de la mina se encontraba en el centro del remolino oportunidad de un gran tema, en un momento especialmente tenso de la historia, de ahí que no sean pocos los que consideren a esta novela como su obra cumbre y la gran pionera de la novela social. (21)

The text itself is keenly aware of the importance of the Madrid-based press, as demonstrated by the characters Rosario and José Luis Garcillán, journalists who travel to Huelva to report on the miners' living and working conditions and the activity of their union. Rosario and José Luis give voice to the miners' cause in writing, acting as intermediaries between the miners' union and readers in the capital. The success and even survival of the striking miners is at times dependent upon the support that they receive from outside of Huelva, and the printed news is among the most important ways to cultivate that support, according to the novel. While the miners' and journalists' actions prove that the organization of labor is an important source of power, the conclusion of the novel concedes the ephemeral quality of the laborers' community in a world in which they do not control the resources required to sustain life. The novel depicts how an itinerant existence by laborers in search of wages can be detrimental to both the practice of community and to the natural environment, as it leads laborers to adopt the same orientation toward their environment as their employers.

In her analysis of the novel, Mary Lee Bretz states that the "emphasis on the conflict between the individual aspiration for happiness and the collective struggle for justice sets The Metal of the Dead apart from other novels with a similar theme" (Concha 68), but the novel also represents the specific struggle of women whose happiness is often overlooked and who are largely excluded from the public activity of the collective. Though its plot depends on the activities of a labor union, El metal de los muertos is very much about the exploitation of nature and the reproductive labor performed by women in the industrializing world. Years after publishing the novel, Espina reflects on her experiences in mining communities and emphasizes
the devastation of the natural environment, stating: "Yo no puedo olvidar nunca la emoción de Riotinto. . . Todo tiembla y hasta el suelo parece que solloza. No solamente es el quejido de los hombres el que se oye, es el quejido supremo de la tierra que parece que también pide libertad" (qtd. in León Brázquez 22). The novel's comparison of women and the natural environment imparts additional intensity to the female characters and illustrates the injustice of their circumstances. If, as Nancy contends, "it is literature if it is speech (a language, an idiom, a writing)—whatever kind of speech it may be, written or not, fictive or discursive, literature or not—that puts into play nothing other than being in common" (Nancy 65), then the novel asks how women, who, like the natural environment, are largely silenced by capitalist and patriarchal institutions, experience community. While the men in the novel speak and vote in the meetings of their union and choose to withhold their labor in the struggle to improve their employment situation, the novel recognizes the plight of the women who do not have the same resources at their disposal in their own struggle for justice and who, despite that, perform much of the labor that reproduces community.

4.2 Reproducing the Commons in Language

When Rosario Garcillán asks Aurelio Echea, the leader of the labor union at the Casa Rehtron mines, how she and her brother can help the miners' cause, Echea indicates that journalism provides the best opportunity for them to contribute. Despite the setbacks that occur as the mining company exercises and maintains its power by buying the favor of intellectuals and members of the press to stop potentially damaging stories from coming to light (Espina 76-77, 221-2, 227), as the miners' strike continues, the "Prensa nacional" becomes a cohesive group

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44 León Brázquez explains that the character Aurelio Echea is based on the union leader Eladio Fernández Egocheaga (75).
with a united stance in opposition to foreign interests: "un impulso de indignación y patriotismo sacude a toda la Prensa nacional" (387). As Benedict Anderson proposes in *Imagined Communities*, "the novel and the newspaper . . . provided the technical means for ‘representing’ the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (25). He describes how community is made real to citizens through the act of reading a mass-produced object:

The significance of this mass ceremony — Hegel observed that newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers — is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar. . . . At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life. (B. Anderson 35-36)

Though in other passages Anderson's explanation of the national community focuses on the mass production of texts, here it emphasizes the act of consumption as a constitutive practice of community. *El metal de los muertos* itself represents and is a representation of the importance of women's contributions to cultural production, but it also represents how the speaker's, artist's or author's membership in the community is dependent upon another's act of listening or reading. Zerilli's insistence on nonsovereignty as "the condition of democratic politics" along with Nancy's explanation of community as an act of sharing (Zerilli 19, Nancy 60-61), complement the understanding of listening or reading as actions that are indispensable to community.

Newspapers published at the same time as the novel reveal how the press is used to organize aid for the miners' families. The passage in the novel that describes how the children of the miners are sent away from the miners' villages to stay with volunteer families resonated with readers at the time of the novel's publication, when an ongoing Rio Tinto miners' strike was threatening the well-being of miners' children. A review of the novel by Antonio Zozaya
published on October 1920 in *La Libertad* begins and concludes with the writer's reflections on the arrival of miners' children to Madrid. The presentation of Espina's novel in *La Acción* in September 1920 appears on the same page as information regarding funds given by the owner of a newspaper to help provide food for the children from Río Tinto. Alomar's review of the novel in *El Imparcial* reads: "*El metal de los muertos, recién aparecido* . . . *adquiere un gran valor de actualidad con el dramático éxodo infantil de Riotinto*" (par. 5). These and other newspapers raise awareness about the situation of the miners' children and in some cases the newspapers organize action on their behalf. The novel, then, complements the press with which it is contemporaneous and contributes to the practice of commoning. Through the characters Rosario and José Luis Garcillán, the novel highlights the writer's role in community action in the age of print capitalism, and the bourgeois Garcillán siblings provide the literate urban audience with a somewhat familiar perspective from which to relate to the unfamiliar mines of Huelva and the unfamiliar laborers who inhabit them.

Rosario and José Luis Garcillán are able to bridge the class divide and gain the respect of the men of the union, though Rosario in particular stands out among the miners and the other union employees. One way that the text idealizes Rosario is in the details that dispel any impression of arrogance on her part. Aurora, who is the partner of a miner, uses the informal register with Rosario and demonstrates that she does not feel socially inferior to her friend (Espina 212). When Aurora admires how Rosario is working "*por esas mujeres infelices que no saben leer ni escribir y están cansadas de llorar,*" Rosario affirms her esteem for them: "*Es cierto; las quiero mucho: ya verás qué buenas y qué inteligentes son*" (213). Though the text insists on Rosario's kindness and sincerity, her unique access to the discourse of class struggle
also threatens to exclude the women from the mining community from defining their own situation and determining their own course of action.

Though the miners readily accept Aurelio Echea and the Garcilláns into their community, the presence of these more educated characters threatens to eclipse the voices of the laborers on whose behalf they are working. The description of how Rosario is idolized by the community of miners is accompanied by the observation that she and her brother come to "possess" the union: "Poco tiempo después la obra socialista de Nerva pertenecía a los dos hermanos forasteros como a los mismos trabajadores andaluces; era ya intimamente suya . . . Y en ella sabían con orgullo los hombres toscos de la zona que se movían incansables las manos blancas de una mujer" (Espina 228). Rosario's status among the mining families is reinforced by the management of Casa Rehtron, which recognizes her as the "presidenta" of the union and invites her to Vista Hermosa to try to persuade her to oppose a miners' strike (231). The chapter "Caminos de perfección," whose title, in its reference to Saint Teresa of Ávila, suggests the importance of women's intellectual pursuits and their struggle against the hypocrisy of Church representatives, explores the roles of women in their respective communities. The wives of Casa Rehtron leaders believe that women will be less combative and more sensitive to the impending threats of violence and famine than their male counterparts, so they request a meeting with only women from the mining community. Rosario is assumed by both the union members and Casa Rehtron leadership to be the best communicator among the women of the mining community. Aurelio Echea instructs Dolores, the mother of a miner, to allow Rosario to speak on behalf of the female representatives from the mining families: "dejarás que hable la señorita' advierte Aurelio" (233). Echea, who is represented as an idealistic rather than a practical leader,45 would silence the

45 Bretz comments that "Echea and the Garcilláns espouse a humanitarian system which Concha Espina leaves purposefully vague. . . . Echea propounds a return to the early Christian values eroded by modern capitalism[.] . . .
voices of those who have directly suffered from the exploitative practices of Casa Rehtron in favor of an educated outsider, even though the narrator reveals that Dolores, for example, "revienta por hablar" (246). The text sows doubt in Echea's integrity as his wife, Natalia, declines to go to the meeting, stating: "'quieren hablar con mujeres de la mina: yo no soy de aquí,'" after which Echea upsets his ailing wife by questioning her courage (Espina 232). The voices of the women and men of the mining community are muted due to their lack of education, and, additionally, they are deprived of the means of communication in the company's effort to inhibit the practice of community among them.

Though the region of Huelva where Casa Rehtron operates has been under its ownership for 50 years, the novel describes how the villages where the miners reside are purposefully underdeveloped. While foreign managers of the company stay in lush surroundings in the fortified Vista Hermosa, the miners and their families are deprived of the comforts of basic infrastructure that would improve their basic quality of life and modern technologies that would allow them to better communicate with each other. Aurelio Echea identifies services that should be provided, presumably by the state, but have been privatized by the company and made inaccessible to the laborers:

nombra las localidades inmensas que componen el dominio extranjero en el regazo español, y afirma que todas ellas carecen de servicios públicos tan precisos y vulgares como el telégrafo y el teléfono; los centros de enseñanza; los organismos de higiene; la luz eléctrica; los caminos vecinales; el ferrocarril. Los únicos elementos de comunicación y de cultura, sirven allí con exclusiva gracia a la Empresa que los monopoliza y explota, y la luz moderna que ya ilumina a todos los pueblos civilizados del mundo, sólo brilla para los invasores, prisionera en estancias y jardines, lejos de la chusma nacional. (Espina 79)

he seeks to defeat the Rehtron Mining Company by an appeal to justice and the organization of a strong labor union dedicated to nonviolence" (Concha Espina 66).
There is one bookstore in Nerva, but there are few literate people to patronize it, and neither do the conditions in which the miners live and work encourage their participation in tertulias. The miners' villages are connected by unpaved, unilluminated walking paths that are patrolled by Casa Rehtron's guards, which further decreases their opportunities to organize action among themselves. Jacobo Pmip, el "diplomático" of Casa Rehtron, also circulates among the miners' families and employs spies to collect information about the population. Despite these impediments, the union leaders are to some degree protected by the discretion of the miners and their families. They find ways to gather together and mutually decide upon their courses of action, and a major decision, such as whether or not to go on strike, is left to a vote by the members (260). When the union representatives need to gather the members of the union together, they distribute sheets of paper to the miners to alert them to the time and place of their meeting.46

The seamless incorporation of the Garcillán siblings into the union, the framing of the strike as a national issue and the style of the representation of the collective nature of union action all work to create a sense of inclusion that can potentially extend the commons to the reader, who would likely experience the text individually, but would still be "engaged in speech" through the act of reading. Aurelio Echea's most important speech to the mining community is presented in a way that highlights consensus among community members who are engaged in listening. Echea only addresses the crowd when they demand that he do so: "sigue aumentando la gritería; el público, impetuoso, casi violento, rebozante en la crecida anchura de la plaza, quiere que hable el campeón" (Espina 262), and once the speech begins, they actively listen and

46 For an insightful analysis of the language used in the "hojas sueltas" that were distributed among the Rio Tinto employees, see Francisco Baena Sánchez’s "La formación de la clase obrera en las minas de Riotinto, Huelva (1913-1920). Una aproximación desde la cultura y la comunicación social" (204-205).
react in unison: "Los asambleístas se conmueven igual que un bosque de cañas temblorosas . . ." (267). Zerilli's understanding of freedom and power, which she clarifies through her interpretation of *The Human Condition*, gives insight into the effect of the description of the event. Zerilli says,

> Political freedom requires others and is spatially limited by their presence. No subjective relation of the self to itself, freedom requires a certain kind of relation to others in the space defined by plurality that Arendt calls the 'common world.'

The common world as the space of freedom 'comes into being whenever men are together in the manner of speech and action,' that is, whenever they come together politically. . . . We can see how any physical space can be transformed into a political one. . . . The peculiarity of such a space of appearance is that it exists only so long as people are engaged in speech and action. . . .

What keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance, in existence is power. . . . power as 'that which springs up between men when they act together and vanishes when they disperse,' as Arendt puts it. (19-21)

Though the miners live and work on Casa Rehtron's land, the novel details the common world that they create and affirms their power despite their significant vulnerabilities. Zerilli's explanation of power, though, also implies the impermanence of freedom, power and the common world, which is reflected by the description of how the assembly of miners ends: "la multitud se dispersó enmudecida, abrumada por las estrellas" (Espina 270). Community action, even at the initial stage of intellectual activity, is also thwarted by malnutrition: "sin comer no pueden vivir ni sostener los gallardos pensamientos" (393). The novel reveals that the ability to gather in space and discuss matters of common concern, and the ability to read or write, depends upon physical security and access to basic resources and time, which cannot be taken for granted among poor or persecuted groups. Thousands of the striking miners leave the mining region to look for work abroad or in other regions of Spain as a result of widespread hunger (406), and it is not clear to what extent the laborers will be able to involve themselves in community practices if they are forced to migrate frequently, as does Gabriel in the first half of the novel. The text suggests that many of them will revert to the same lifestyle that they had hoped to improve upon.
with the strike when they leave "para buscar jornales en otras minas, arrastrando la cadena tenaz de su esclavitud" (406).

Rob Nixon affirms the challenges and importance of representing the exploitation of the poor and of the natural environment. He explains that the passage of time and victims' displacements dull representations of "slow violence," which he defines as "violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous but instead incremental, whose calamitous repercussions are postponed for years or decades or centuries" and is "particularly pertinent to the strategic challenges of environmental calamities." He argues that slow violence and its victims are largely invisible even though the consequences of such violence are far more widespread and long-lasting than what he calls "spectacular violence," which is represented more often and whose representations are consumed more easily ("Slow Violence" 1). The lives of Andalusian miners were already being erased from memory by the dearth of information about even the spectacularly violent events of 1888, the "año de los tiros," and the death, injury and illness among them due to contamination and workplace accidents received even less attention.

In addition to representing gross social injustices committed by Casa Rehtron, the narrator gives voice to nature by both personifying it and giving it as much importance as human beings in certain passages of the text. Upon the very formation of the earth, nature is personified and gendered: "Así crecieron estas montañas, puras y virtuosas como las de Mercurio . . ." (Espina 120). The narrator simultaneously laments the exploitation of workers who have been subjected to slavery in the mines and the environmental devastation that has resulted from mining operations over centuries (122-123). By discussing laborers and the natural environment concurrently in the structure of the text, and by using similar language to describe the suffering of both, nature, including inorganic material, is given as much importance as human life: "No
hubo compasión para los criaderos grávidos y profundos, ni para los hombres miserables y tristes" (121). Nixon suggests that the representation of slow violence has the potential to impact both past and future instances of environmental abuse: "the causes and the memory of catastrophe readily fade from view as the casualties incurred typically pass untallied and unremembered. Such discounting in turn makes it far more difficult to secure effective legal measures for prevention, restitution, and redress" (Slow Violence 9). In the case of El metal de los muertos, bringing to light the violence of the mining company has the potential of "giving the unapparent a materiality upon which we can act" (Nixon, Slow Violence 16), and it can therefore be considered a factor in the creation of an active community at the time of its publication.

4.3 The Effects of Capitalist Processes on Men's Relationships with Nature and Women

Aurelio Echea and the union members struggle to wrest control of the institutions that reproduce capitalist ideology from Casa Rehtron, but their ability to act is weakened by the company's domination of the bodies of its employees, their employees' families and nearly all material and cultural aspects of their lives in common. Casa Rehtron controls most of the natural resources in the region of the mines by consuming and regulating access to them in its quest for profits, and whatever natural resources remain are made unfit for human consumption due to their contamination by the mining process. Echea describes the extent of the company's reach over the miners: "la Compañía nordetana es en la villa dueña absoluta, sin término ni condición, de la tierra, de las fincas, del subsuelo, del monte, del aire, de la ley, de la libertad" (Espina 76-77). Workers' are under physical pressure and surveillance while they are at work, and outside of the mines, exhaustion, injuries and the contamination that seeps into the employees' living environment all inhibit their capacity to act by physically weakening them. The miners and their
families subsist on just enough to be able to reproduce the labor force without ever being able to save enough to escape the vicious cycle; the sons of miners go to work in the mines, and the daughters of miners marry other miners and continue the succession. By organizing themselves and acting in concert, the miners effectively establish their labor as the single local resource under their control, but even that action is thwarted by the obstruction of access to other resources. As the miners remain on strike, the infertility and isolation of the place where they live contribute to the occurrence of starvation. Jacobo Pmip confesses that he has considered cutting off the striking workers' access to water and has advised Martin Leurc, the most senior Casa Rehtron manager in Spain, to evict the miners from their homes to force them into submission (402).

Though the miners in the novel are surrounded by earth for much of their lives, their relationship with nature is damaged by their employment situation. Evidence of workers' changing relationships with nature is evident from the first chapters of the novel, which describe when Gabriel goes to work in mining for the first time. New technology pushes him out of his chosen profession of fishing; the arrival of steam-powered boats financed by large businesses brings about the ruin of independent fishing captains who cannot compete with the larger, faster and more versatile vessels. When he leaves fishing for mining, Gabriel senses a loss of independence that had been encouraged by working in the open air and being mobile as opposed to working in the claustrophobic spaces of the mines: "dejaba un oficio que desde la niñez le envolvió en aromas salobres, en ímpetus audaces, en bravías independencias: hasta el nombre, arbitrario y rebelde, tenía que abandonar allí, bajo la disciplina de un cautiverio desconocido, temeroso, amenazador . . ." (Espina 10). Gabriel leaves behind part of his identity, that of a fisherman called "Charol," to become a miner, and he identifies his new profession with
imprisonment: "vuelve a sentir la presión de unos grillos en su vida, el cerco de las montañas en torno a su libertad . . . ve los perfiles de los cerros andaluces empujados por las tinieblas alrededor del valle; son los carceleros de su mocedad; tiene que derribarlos con el picachón, golpe a golpe . . ." (293-94). Gabriel and the other miners become complicit in the destruction of nature through their entrapment in the mining industry, but their behavior outside of their jobs suggests that they otherwise revere the natural world and are dependent upon it as a source of identity. Once they are on strike and have some leisure time, the miners gather at the local "cafetín" to discuss only the local flora:

Han callado todas las voces mientras Santiago refiere las noticias del rosal. Va diciendo sus cualidades, el cultivo que necesita, las tierras donde abunda; y los mineros imaginan las rosas y los botones, perciben su olor, se entusiasman con su belleza. Sobre la fantasía indivivdual [sic] influyen las memorias con su magia y su lumbre; ¿qué andaluz no ha tenido en un jardín o en un patio, algún día una flor? (363)

The above passage demonstrates a peaceful character and fondness for the cultivation of biotic life that corresponds with a regional identity. The narrator proposes that the landscape affects the character of the region's inhabitants. During the celebration of their only annual festival, the miners spread out on the slopes of the village, which fosters their sense of independence: "las personas, los derroteros se apartan unos de otros, se ahíncan al azar para no derrocarse, y ofrecen un conjunto de independencia bravía muy extraño y valiente. Por eso los mineros que viven aquí recobran a menudo su aire altivo de hombres libres y los patronos saben que en la matriz hojosa de estas pizarras se alumbran las huelgas y las sediciones" (180). The natural world is described here as a mother who fosters the workers' sense of independence. Mies argues that the exploitation of women by men is a product of the increasing distance of men from nature in industrialized society (137), and the events of the novel also suggest that a potentially positive relationship between men, women and nature is corrupted by the processes of capital.
Carolyn Merchant recounts the history of the representation of nature as a mother before the rise of the capitalist market economy. She states: "Central to the organic theory was the identification of nature, especially the earth, with a nurturing mother: a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe" (Merchant 2). She explains how this representation works to limit the exploitation of nature:

The image of the earth as a living organism and nurturing mother had served as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings. One does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold or mutilate her body, although commercial mining would soon require that. As long as the earth was considered to be alive and sensitive, it could be considered a breach of human ethical behavior to carry out destructive acts against it. For most traditional cultures, minerals and metals ripened in the uterus of the Earth Mother, mines were compared to her vagina. (3-4)

*El metal de los muertos* utilizes this imagery to instigate resistance to foreign-owned mining operations within the boundaries of Spain. Nira Yuval-Davis observes: "The object-like characteristic of women in the collectivity finds its strongest expression in the construction of women/mothers as the embodiments of the homeland. In peasant societies, the dependence of the people on the fertility of 'Mother Earth' has no doubt contributed to this close association between collective territory, collective identity and womanhood" (128), and she later considers how "the systemic rape of women can be seen as a tool of the utmost humiliation of the enemy community . . ." (129). As it uses the personification and feminization of the earth to build an argument against the Rio Tinto Company, the novel also describes the exploitation of women of the labor class and the negative consequences of industrialization on them.

In the region surrounding the mines, nature loses its capacity to reproduce due to Casa Rehtron's activity; the sterility of the land is a motif repeated throughout the novel (Espina 131, 419). Vicente Rubio recalls the devastation caused by the *teleras*:

El padre lamenta aún los terrenos esterilizados por la trágica devastación.
"En esta parte de la Sierra Morena los incendios de azufre no dejaron ni un nido, ni una flor, ni una hierba de salud!" (116)

The company's extreme methods of exploitation interrupt natural cycles of reproduction. Mining is compared to an act of rape as the narrator recalls centuries of mining fueled by greed, to which the earth responds with further destruction: "Violado sin piedad el seno ruboroso de los montes, quedó el espanto desnudo en el fondo de la sima, porque se rebelaba contra el secuestro la trágica omnipotencia de la roca y defendía sus carnes, desatando las lívidas lagunas, los ácidos venenosas, los bárbaros gritos de las fallas, como si también las piedras tuviesen un sentimiento racional, una especie de humana volición" (122). Here nature is personified, assigned feminine characteristics and antagonized by man. In the text it is a human female body that provides the narrator with the most apt metaphor for the exploitation of nature. With this in mind, the prostitutes around the mining villages, who are characterized by flagrant nudity, drunkenness and hostile language (211), not only embody the destructive forces of the mining operations on the natural world and the threat posed by foreign capital to the integrity of the nation, but they also represent the dangers of capitalist and patriarchal institutions to poor women.

According to Federici, the exclusion of women from market relations from the late 15th century onwards redefined their labor as a natural resource. She argues: "proletarian women became for male workers the substitute for the land lost to the enclosures, their most basic means of reproduction, and a communal good anyone could appropriate and use at will" (Federici, Caliban 97). Federici's study of the relationship between women's exclusion from the workforce in the 15th through the 17th centuries in Europe and the corresponding rise of prostitution points out:

Marriage was now seen as a woman's true career, and women's inability to support themselves was taken so much for granted, that when a single woman tried to settle in a village, she was driven away even if she earned a wage.
Combined with land dispossession, this loss of power with regard to wage employment led to the massification of prostitution. *(Caliban* 94)

Whereas Rosario's reputation and ability to practice her profession is protected by the constant presence of her brother and their inheritance, Aurora is the fatherless daughter of a prostituted woman, which sullies her reputation from childhood. Aurora's life demonstrates the absence of options for women to sustain themselves independently of men, though she has received an education, courtesy of relatives in America, and she repeatedly demonstrates that she is willing to work hard. She does not feel compelled to marry, either for money or for love, until she has a daughter, when she makes marriage an urgent priority so that her daughter will have the protections offered by a father. Even though she tries to distance herself from her mother by taking on any available jobs, including menial work, to avoid prostitution *(Espina* 14), Aurora's situation is persistently and dangerously precarious. The chapter entitled "Aurora" recounts the character's journey to reunite with Gabriel, but it begins and ends with her interactions with prostitutes. The chapter opens with the account of Aurora's pregnancy out of wedlock; she is thrown out of the home of her mother, who would support the prostitution of her daughter but will not support Aurora and Gabriel's poverty-stricken, monogamous relationship. Just before reaching the village where Gabriel is staying, Aurora encounters la Corales among the homeless, prostituted women on the fringes of the village and perceives pain in her voice after la Corales divulges that she had once given birth to a child: "En la voz cavernosa ruge una desesperación infinita, y al contacto brusco de aquel dolor percibe la muchacha la intensidad de su propia desventura . . ." *(160)*. Aurora later ignores la Corales, but their conversation reveals that the two women share something in common through their experiences as mothers.

The prostituted women who survive on the outskirts of the mining villages provide evidence of the contaminated relationships between men and women and a loss of respect for life.
around the mines. The earth and the women both present seductive figures from a distance but are later revealed to be sterile as a consequence of their overexploitation. As Gabriel approaches the mines while traveling across the countryside, the earth appears to have a sultry outline: "en el fondo del paisaje desplegado a la luz sólo ve muy remota erguirse una montaña caliente y sensual, con blanduras de carne . . ." (Espina 92). Soon after, when Gabriel and Thor make their first visit to the mines of Dite, the rameras form part of the landscape: "Ya se descubre la linde pecadora y se destacan sobre los escuálidos palmitos insinuaciones provocativas de mujeres medio desnudas." However, the men who are observing the prostituted women in this passage are soon disgusted by the women's "estéril lujuria," which is reflected in their barren surroundings. In contrast, in the minds of the men, the virgin Casilda Rubio "evocó la hermosura de los campos" (134). The text condemns the lack of compassion on the part of the mining community toward the prostituted women when Pedro Abril, a favorite local personality and Casilda's designated partner, hurls a rock at the face of a woman who unwittingly provokes him. When the men in his company see that the woman's face is bleeding, "Ríen los hombres sin un asomo de compasión" (134). In addition to being impoverished, the prostituted women are subject to violence from men and imprisonment by the state: "no es raro que alguna quede muerta de una paliza o de una puñalada en los atroces holgorios. Entonces acude la Guardia civil a levantar el campamento, y las desgraciadas meretrices son repartidas entre la cárcel y el hospital" (133). Though they are excluded from the mining community, these women provide evidence of damage to the social fabric of the populations around the mines and provide a grim reminder of the fate of women who are not legally attached to men.

In some instances, Casa Rehtron is directly at fault for the exploitation of women in addition to its obvious exploitation of nature. The foremost company representative among the
mining families is sardonically named "Jacobo Pmip"; like the other foreigners in the company, his surname spelled backwards defines his character. Not only is Pmip's name inspired by his support for the foreign exploitation of land that was formerly part of Spain, but he also has a reputation for buying the loyalties of locals and for hiring attractive, young women to work at his home. His interactions with women cannot be interpreted as innocent, given his name, the narrator's comment that "De su vida privada se contaban muchos escándolos" (Espina 223), and the repeated mentions of how he gives special attention to young ladies and their families (223, 272, 395). When Casilda and her friend Carmen talk about their potential romantic partners, they consider that a relationship with any of the "señores," is equivalent to selling oneself:

"Entonces, ¿te venderías?"
"No: me dejaría querer con delicadeza y con gracia."
"¿Por don Jacobo?" pregunta Casilda atónita, casi olvidando su pena.
"¡Quiá! . . . es viejo."

In a statement that reveals a sense of powerlessness, Carmen sadly acknowledges that, regardless of what they might want, she and Casilda are "para los mineros," and those "mineros" are men battered by their harsh working conditions (278). The only prospect, then, for even the most desirable women from the mining families, is to partner with miners and live with the constant fear of that partner's loss or injury, or to "sell themselves" to company managers to obtain material comforts. Women's employment opportunities are even more limited than their marriage prospects. Carmen's only option for work around the mining community seems to be serving in Vista Hermosa, where she would be subject to unwanted sexual attention from Jacobo Pmip.

Interestingly, even the novel's heroes exhibit less-than-exemplary ethics in their personal relationships. Gabriel Suárez is the source of the central personal conflict in the novel, and the narrator represents him as an imperfect partner who is partially responsible for Casilda's harmful actions. Gabriel has difficulty finding and keeping a job in a fixed location due to his subversive
activity, and this poses an obstacle for Aurora, who travels alone around the country, searching for him so that she can deliver the news of her pregnancy. Meanwhile, Gabriel gets overly intoxicated in a brothel, is robbed by women working there and loses his employment on a ship as a result. While staying with Vicente Rubio's family near the mines, Gabriel inexplicably denies being in a relationship despite being asked multiple times if he has a partner (Espina 116, 130), which gives Casilda an opportunity to fall in love with him and initiates a tragic chain of events.

Similarly, the champion of workers' rights, Aurelio Echea, is not always a supportive partner in his relationship. Though Echea espouses the cause of feminism, calling it an "energía saludable" (Espina 266), the character takes advantage of the labor of women. Echea first meets his wife, Natalia, while she is studying to become a teacher. The narrator recounts Echea's first impressions of "aquella mujercita, cándida y rubia, que le pareció un rosa de carne." He "enamoróse de la dulzura y la docilidad con que la niña se portaba. Fueron amigos y en seguida novios; ella se le confió, ilusionada y creyente. . . . Y con la intención de hacerla dichosa la arrastró en el huracán de su vida" (234). Natalia's career and health are subsequently sacrificed to Echea's work. She is jailed as a result of her association with Echea, and she gives birth to their first child in jail, where the baby dies in infancy. Natalia thereafter suffers from chronic health issues. According to the text, while Echea falls in love with Natalia in part because of her submissive nature, this is what will eventually lead to her demise: "No se había quejado nunca, pero su carácter pasivo, su debilidad física no le ayudaron, tampoco, a secundar las empresas del marido, y se quedó siempre al margen de aquellos empujes tempestuosos que la llevaron inerte a las orillas de la tumba" (235). In Rosario, Echea discovers both a romantic partner and someone who can support his ambitions by performing physical and intellectual labor. Echea remains
silent regarding Natalia's existence long enough for Rosario to fall in love with him, and Rosario is shocked when she finds out that he is married (141-142). Even after Rosario finds out about Natalia, Echea still does not speak about his wife except when required:

Volvió Echea la cara, disimulando su emoción, y dijo con un trastorno casi imperceptible:
"Voy a llamar a Natalia."
No había nombrado hasta entonces a su mujer. (226)

As Natalia is dying, Echea reflects on the differences between her and Rosario: "Quiso a Natalia como a una niña buena y candorosa; él sabe que allí a su lado, ha puesto Dios una mujer, la presentida y fuerte[;] . . . siente el perfume de su recia juventud. . . ." Here Natalia is relegated to the status of "niña" while Rosario has graduated to the status of "woman," though Natalia is the mother of Echea's young daughter and has been persecuted for years due to his political activity. As soon as he realizes that Natalia has died, Echea speaks on her behalf, pronouncing "Está contenta" (Espina 330), and in the moments immediately following the death, Echea again compares Natalia and Rosario and reflects that by dying Natalia has chosen the easier course of action: "Acaso es más digna de compasión esta mujer [Rosario] que la otra: vivir es llorar" (330-331). Meanwhile, the text suggests not only that Echea's lifestyle contributes to Natalia's premature death but also that he will take advantage of Rosario's youth and education to perform labor in his personal and professional life. The women who work in the union headquarters where Echea lives take active roles in a cause they believe in, but at the same time, they are "rendidas . . . por el excesivo trabajo . . ." (331). Though Echea and Rosario hope that their separation after his imprisonment will be temporary, Rosario is left to care for his young daughter indefinitely, and this changes her role in the community. Rosario is described as fixed in a domestic role in the novel's last pages: "es la diosa vigilante de la llamada purísima en el
Aurelio Echea's speech to the miners before they vote to strike in one moment appears to celebrate the female body as a model for social change; he says, "Se evoluciona revolucionando, porque no se puede crecer sin sufrir: en todo seno fecundo hay pulsaciones y dolencias y una paz definitiva sería triste, lo mismo que la de una mujer estéril . . ." (Espina 264). However, not only does Echea seem to identify pain as a defining characteristic of womanhood, but also the conclusion of the sentence assumes that the primary function of women is to serve as mediums of reproduction. As Federici explains, the historical dismissal of women's reproductive rights contributed to women's social degradation: "While in the Middle Ages women had been able to use various forms of contraceptives, and had exercised an undisputed control over the birthing process, from now on their wombs became public territory, controlled by men and the state, and procreation was placed at the service of capitalist accumulation" (Caliban 89). Like the novel itself, Echea's statement calls attention to the importance and challenges of women's reproductive labor; he celebrates the female body as a model for social change. At the same time, he seems to support women's exclusion from public life by characterizing the political practices that exclude them as natural, and he imagines women's contribution to the reproduction of the commons as limited to biological reproduction.

The way that the text describes José Luis Garcillán's attraction to Carmen at the end of the novel implies that he also might perceive her as an object for consumption. Though Garcillán apparently dedicates his life to fighting unjust capitalist labor practices, when Carmen tells him that she is going to work in a factory where she'll be packaging fruits, "el poeta se ilusiona imaginando a la niña entre los colores y los perfumes de la mercancía incomparable . . ." (Espina
446). His fantasy seems to confuse Carmen with the goods that she will be preparing for shipment. Unlike Carmen, who was ready to go to work for Casa Rehtron before the strike, Casilda Rubio is inclined to resist her circumstances, but her rebelliousness inadvertently limits her options even more. She is regarded as the most attractive young woman among the mining families, but even she seems to have been corrupted by the poisonous environment around her. Like Carmen, she faces a suffocating future. While Casilda's father, Vicente Rubio, is described as a man with "Un alto sentido de justicia y libertad," he never mentions the well-being of the women in his family as an objective of his participation in the union's efforts. He advocates for the miners despite the fact that "ni él ni su hijo disfrutarán los bienes que se pueden conseguir . . ." (113, emphasis added). Meanwhile, the situation of the Rubio women deteriorates drastically.

One daughter, Hortensia, is married to an increasingly abusive husband who maintains an abusive extra-marital affair with la Corales. Casilda is described by her father in terms of the benefit that she brings to him, as "la que me vale y ayuda" (112), and when she is pursued by Pedro Abril, Vicente Rubio attempts to assert his authority over his daughter: "parece otra criatura: es el tigre que reclama su cachorro" (191). Rubio's wife, Marta, never recovers from the brutal and untimely death of her son from an accident in the mines, and she wanders through life mostly blind and deaf and apparently oblivious to her surroundings. After Vicente Rubio dies, in part due to his shame about the loss of Casilda's virginity to Pedro Abril and in part due to the brutal nature of his work in the mines, Casilda's scorned lover assumes rights over her:

Pedro sabe que ella estuvo enamorada de Gabriel y no le sorprende que la quiera Thor, sino que se juzgue correspondido; ¿no está él allí con todos los derechos de una honra que es suya?

Si ha voceado un poco su buena suerte es porque pensaba cumplir como un hombre de honor . . .,[...] vive ciego de orgullo, sin temer la competencia de un rival, más celoso de goces que de restitución: quiere creer que su actitud es muy gallarda no demorando los ofrecimientos que debe a Casilda, hoy que gime sin la sombra de su padre. (339)
Bretz observes, "Having witnessed the slow deterioration of her mother and the physical as well as mental abuse of her sister by a brutal husband, Casilda rebels against a future that can offer nothing but suffering. On the individual level, her insistence on emotional gratification parallels the miners' call for social justice" (Concha 67). However, from the time that Casilda becomes jealous of Aurora, she is vilified by the narrator. Her attempt to defy her circumstances culminates in a crime that alienates her from the community of women, which is the only community from which she can hope to obtain genuine support. After she fires a gun at Aurora and instead accidently kills Aurora's infant daughter, the narrator participates in Casilda's dehumanization by referring to her as "La bestia" (Espina 379). While she is most attracted to the man who is least likely to dominate her will, the anarchist Gabriel, at the end of the novel Casilda instead succumbs to the only person left who will defend her, the physically imposing "gigante," "rudo y sencillo" who is known as "Thor" (65).

4.4 Aurora as a Common Mother

While the comparison of women and nature in the novel serves to voice the exploitation of both, it also threatens to perpetuate the dichotomy between "rational modern Man" and nature/woman that was furthered by Rousseau and the violence that this binary disguises (Mies and Shiva 151-2). Merchant describes how this dichotomy works against women:

Anthropologists have pointed out that nature and women are both perceived to be on a lower level than culture, which has been associated symbolically and historically with men. Because women's physiological functions of reproduction, nurture, and childrearing are viewed as closer to nature, their social role is lower on the cultural scale than that of the male. Women are devalued by their tasks and roles, by their exclusion from community functions whence power is derived, and through symbolism. (144)
The narration of the female characters in the novel reflects a challenge for the female author who recognizes the potential power of women's association with nature as well as the potential disadvantages of that association. Gilbert and Gubar describe this dilemma in their analysis of Mary Shelley's story about entering the Sibyl's cave. The cave, they explain, is "a female place, a womb-shaped enclosure, a house of earth, secret and often sacred," but it is both a space of empowerment and imprisonment (Gilbert and Gubar 93). Coincidentally, it is the subterranean world in *El metal de los muertos* that provides a space for the expression of a value system different from those in practice in the male dominated communities above ground. In her analysis of *El metal de los muertos*, Bretz maintains: "Concha Espina's descriptions of the geological elements are without equal. Adopting a rich and often technical vocabulary, she transforms the inanimate world of stone into a living, amazingly diverse and beautiful creation . . . It is, as she proposed, a work of justice and art" (*Concha* 71). Aurora's character embodies the conflicts between the processes of capitalism and the reproduction of the commons, and the narration of her experiences demonstrates a profound understanding of the relationships between biological and social life. However, like the natural world that is represented from her point of view, her perspective goes largely unnoticed by the people around her.

From childhood, Aurora takes on some of the physical properties of her natural surroundings; for example, as a young girl, her eyes supposedly turn the color of the ocean because she contemplates it so much (Espina 12), which also serves as evidence of the bond that Aurora feels with nature rather than with her mother. When she turns her gaze inland as an adult, Aurora's eyes reflect the features of the countryside: "Hacia él [el monte] se dirigía la enamorada llevando en los ojos toda la claridad de los campos . . ." (27). Not only does Aurora look at nature, but nature also looks back at her: "Aurora ve temblar el horizonte bajo el temblor de su
llanto y le parece que la miran inmensos y húmedos los ojos verdes del paisaje" (153). Nature is sometimes more active in its relationship with Aurora, interacting with her in a friendly and familiar way. The first cave she enters adorns her with the reflections of colors that are naturally occurring there: "Eflorescencias de variadísimas rocas pintan de colores las manos de la muchacha: blanco de nieve, rojo de melocotón, azul de Berlín . . ." (47). On a different occasion, she shares an intimate moment with the wind: "Allá en la hondura, el mar volvía al escondrijo de los escollos, subiendo y clamando como un alma que llamase a la moza desde lejos, y el aire . . . le puso en los labios una caricia duradera y picante igual que un beso" (153).

Though her descent into the mine when she is searching for Gabriel could be represented as an intrusion by a human into nature, Aurora is distinguished from the laborers who enter the mine to exploit it. In fact, she must evade the men who work in the mine to gain access to its depths. She enters the mine without permission, and though she senses that she could be detained for her actions, she proceeds even deeper, where she is scolded by a man who shouts: "¡Fuera de ahí! ¡Está prohibido a las mujeres bajar a la explotación!" (Espina 39). As the narration of Aurora's experience in the mine gives the readership, especially women, unprecedented access to an environment that they would otherwise not be able to see, it also articulates an experience that is represented as uniquely feminine. During Aurora's journey into the depths of the mine, her connection with the earth reaches a level of closeness that establishes their integration and reveals that Aurora has an entirely different understanding of the space than the miners.47 The language in which her experience is recounted indicates that she compares the space to a female

47 Unlike the miners, Aurora does not remove anything from the mine, even when tempted to do so. It may be representative of something significant to the author that, alone and in the depths of the mine, Aurora finds and dotes on an object whose description contains the author's name along with symbols of femininity: "encuentra Aurora una venus de concha libre, lúnula grande y espinas aguzadas; la coge, la mira con embeleso . . . y la vuelve a dejar . . . Rompe, luego, la fascinación de aquella rebusca febril, llena de antojos . . ." (Espina 47).
body: "Retrocede Aurora[,] . . . llevando en sus ojos de mar la visión formidable de la tierra
violada, de la mina desnuda[,] . . . piensa descender hasta la semilla de fuego que ha visto
moverse en la cava profunda: quiere ir a las entrañas de la roca buscando al compañero de su
vida" (Espina 40). The expectant Aurora understands the earth as a human body with a soul that
suffers as a consequence of the processes of reproduction:

Lucen venas sanguíneas, como los cuerpos humanos, y zonas resplandecientes,
como las almas eternas; aguardan y sufren, dóciles a las leyes del evo insondable,
y están interrogando a Aurora con las pupilas obstinadas del cristal.
Ella recibe, févida, la iridiscente consulta de los cien ojos extraños que al
fulgir parecen llenos de lágrimas; la duele, entonces, el peso de otra vida dentro
de sí, y sabe, de repente, con luminosa certidumbre, que en la Naturaleza todo
germina y trabaja por medio del dolor. (44)

In addition to the reflections of nature in her appearance and what she perceives through
sight and touch, a harmonious relationship between Aurora and nature is demonstrated by the
narrator's repeated descriptions of how the character listens sympathetically to the sounds of the
earth, for example, "Disfrutó la moza inconsciente dulzura en la compañía de aquellos sones
frescos y hondos, que parecían subir de las profundidades de la tierra como tranquiló llanto,
riego feraz de un abundante corazón" (36). Nature also actively communicates with Aurora:
"Avanza la joven escuchando el esfuerzo que hace la naturaleza por hablar." These "diálogos
incomprensibles" are not easily discernable (37), but Aurora is identified as a uniquely keen
listener: "Los crujidos apenas perceptibles de la montaña, le suenan a la moza como revelaciones
apremiantes, igual que si la fuerza dinámica del filón tuviese de pronto un solo grito, destinado a
clavarse en la sensibilidad de la mujer" (46). Through Aurora's interpretation of sounds, the
author works through one of the problems with the representation of slow violence against the
natural world and implicitly confronts slow violence experienced by women as a result of their
exploitation and the absence of an audience for their speech. When Aurora finally exits the mine,
she immediately encounters a hostile reality: "Oye la moza algunos chistes bárbaros, requiebros atrevidos, risas insolentes; la masa varonil rezuma sus brutalidades humanas con el desnudo celo de la inconsciencia: es la hora del holgorio y de la libertad, el instante de reír, la ocasión de acercarse a una mujer . . ." (52). Whereas she feels a close bond with the natural world, men would restrict her movement, and they also threaten her bodily integrity.

Along with being represented as the character most closely associated with nature in the novel, Aurora is also represented as an intelligent woman who enhances her education by reading works by authors such as Henry George, Ferdinand Lassalle and Karl Marx (Espina 20). Though the refined Rosario takes the lead during the meeting with the Casa Rehtron managers and reflects "pueden sus palabras y su actitud influir en la suerte de miles de criaturas desdichadas" (240), it is Aurora who unexpectedly makes the most impactful statement in the meeting, which is later nearly exactly replicated by Aurelio Echea. After the Casa Rehtron representatives try to persuade Aurora to accept their conditions, Aurora stuns them by responding, "Los obreros ni aquí ni en ninguna parte deben pedir limosna, sino justicia: el que trabaja, lo merece todo y sería indigno aceptar como un favor lo que se puede exigir como un derecho" (247). Soon after, in his most important speech to the miners, Echea insists that the managers of Casa Rehtron deny the workers' need for intellectual leaders:

como si individualmente pudieran conseguir los obreros más que la filantropía de los patronos: la limosna, que es una ofensa para el que trabaja.
—"Todos juntos—asegura—, [...] podemos exigir . . . y sólo de esta manera recibiremos . . ." (263)

By revealing that Aurora is as eloquent and intellectually capable as Aurelio Echea, and by creating in Rosario an educated female writer-character who is an advocate for the poor, the text acknowledges the potential contribution of women to public life. Still, the author defers to patriarchal culture in her characterization of the novel's female characters as the text upholds that
women's ability to act in public is limited by their role in the reproduction and nurturing of children. Following the death of her daughter, Aurora takes on the responsibility of breastfeeding an infant that has been left orphaned during the strike. Her actions give life to the child and derive some benefit from the death of "Nena": "haciendo fecundo su dolor . . . acogió al niño para darle el jugo de su pecho" (409). Aurora is still mourning the loss of her own child and is at first averse to feeding the orphaned boy, but she resigns herself to the task even though "en las zonas profundas de su alma gimiesen los sinsabores de aquella sustitución" (410). Her feeling of responsibility toward the child keeps her from joining Gabriel in his final campaign against his employers. By the time Gabriel refers to Aurora as "la madre más santa de la tierra" (410), she has become, in effect, a common mother, and though her actions give life to a child, the text denies her happiness.

The author creates deliberately meaningful names for many of the characters in the novel, and Aurora's name intentionally invokes the ideas of change and hope. In his most important speech, Echea says, "Nuestra esperanza está solo en algo que ruge y brilla detrás del horizonte: en el ejemplo y el auxilio de Rusia . . ." (Espina 267). Shortly thereafter his character combines the metaphor of the national mother with that of the dawn when he says "España, descubridora de continentes, madre de naciones libres, es tierra bien propicia para las grandes inquietudes: ella es capaz de recoger la amaneciente luz que despunta como una promesa en el confín oriental de Europa . . ." (269). Echea again uses the metaphor of the aurora to convey the imminent change on the horizon of war-torn Europe: "estamos en tiempos de auroras . . . la vida va a perder su sabor crudo y amargo . . ." (286). Aurora's reality at the end of the novel, though, is not characterized by hope. In Gabriel's final recorded thoughts in the text, his observations of the natural world lead him to think of Aurora, who is once again equated with nature:
Aquí le detiene de un modo súbito el canto de las cosas, las voces de la Naturaleza más sensibles en el profundo silencio del país.

Por delante de él pasa la aurora evocando el nombre risueño de la amada. Piensa en ella Gabriel con inconsolable dolor; le parece que vive entre almas dormidas, y que sólo la suya vela y sufre por toda la humanidad. (421)

Rather than being an active member of the community, here Aurora's actions are limited to observation and suffering.

The final chapter of the novel includes a powerful representation of the differences between a male and female perspective of nature when Aurora and Aurelio Echea independently observe the damage that Gabriel has intentionally caused by igniting a fire in one of the Casa Rehtron mines. While Echea "sintió el arrebato de su lumbre como un ímpetu nuevo de sangre espiritual," and he returns from viewing the flames feeling "más enardecido que nunca en su misión" (Espina 435), the narrator reminds the reader that Gabriel's action creates immense trauma for his already devastated partner and contributes to the further destruction and contamination of nature. Once again, the state of the natural environment corresponds with Aurora's emotional state. Unlike Aurelio Echea, she experiences the fire as "el suplicio de las piedras, heridas, quemantes y desnudas," and her connection with the earth goes beyond observation and sympathy: "El monte le devuelve las miradas con los ojos sombríos de los túneles: y así están la sierra y la mujer un largo rato, mirándose inflamadas de horror" (433).

Aurora's perception of nature here complicates the interpretation of the blaze as a victory for the community and calls into question the values of a community that requires such a sacrifice. At the conclusion of the novel, Aurora seems to be stuck waiting for Gabriel in a place that has been physically destroyed and largely abandoned, making it a challenge to reproduce the commons there. If there is any hope for the community, it seems to lie in the friendship between Aurora,
Dolores and Rosario, who physically and emotionally support each other, along with the activity of the union, and are bonded by their religious faith.

4.5 The Moral Order Reflected in Nature

Rosario Garcillán's profession and lifestyle could potentially provide a model of a liberated female author, but the narrator insists that she complies with patriarchal codes of her time. Rosario travels only in the company of her brother José Luis, and the narrator describes the pair as: "Artistas y creyentes, con la fe de los apóstoles y el ardor de los mártires" who "profesaban la pura doctrina de la fraternidad al modo cristiano, amplia y generosamente como la predicó al divino Jesús" (Espina 61). El origen burgués . . . les colocaba en un medio muy favorable para ejercer el periodismo como un sacerdocio" (Espina 61-62). Rosario's profession, her Christian values and her journey to learn and report about the conditions of the miners reflect the professional identity and experiences of Espina herself. Alomar notes in his 1920 review of the novel that "Rosario, la señorita irresistiblemente atraída por la causa de la libertad y de bien, no es el personaje más vivo de la obra, pero sí el más significativo, porque es el caso de la autora misma" (par. 9). Another review also acknowledges the similarities between the author and her writer-characters: "Nos imaginamos a la autora un poco a la manera de los hermanos Garcillón [sic]" (Díez-Canedo par. 3). León Brázquez relates that before writing *El metal de los muertos*, Espina "ya se había interesado por temas sociales, tanto en narraciones, como en los artículos periodísticos, abordando asuntos como la pobreza, la miseria, la infancia y la emigración. Incluso tuvo que enfrentarse a sus editores que querían que cambiara de temática" (35-36). As noted in the newspaper *La Vanguardia* on the 55th anniversary of her death, Concha Espina was a "prolífica articulista en diversos diarios latinoamericanos y españoles," though, as the article also
states, one of the reasons that her work has been largely overlooked may be her "radicalidad cristiana" ("Concha Espina" pars. 1, 6). In the text, Rosario's frequent appeals to Christian values provides the ideological justification for her labor and also for her criticism of the Catholic Church. The fate of Casilda Rubio, who denies the existence of God (Espina 275), makes clear the limit of that criticism.

Despite the novel's endorsement of religious faith, in a scathing review of the novel, Antonio Ballesteros de Martos criticizes Espina for suddenly straying from the conservative ideals of the Catholic Church (117). The Church's most powerful representative in the text, Don Facundo, is exposed as a self-serving hypocrite who supports only a very narrow interpretation of religion that would protect the interests of the wealthy. Another priest is criticized for valuing religious relics more than human lives and for failing to sympathize with the plight of the miners: "Este religioso . . . parece muy distraído en algo que no es su divina misión; vive indiferente al drama de los hombres y al de la tierra, bien amistado con los extranjeros . . ." (Espina 389). Through these characters, the novel critiques representatives of the church for alienating potential followers and contributing to their oppression. On the other hand, nature, which is represented as female, provides a sacred space that is open to all people. Aurora's interactions with nature are spiritual experiences. Through her contact with the subterranean environment, she acquires a profound understanding of life that extends beyond humanity: "se oía el estremecimiento incesante de la tierra, el latido profundo de los gémenes, el trabajo penoso de la roca: una legión de almas decía con balbucientes revelaciones el eterno milagro de la creación"

49 In his article "The Fascist Narrative of Concha Espina," Michael Ugarte also observes that "Relatively little has been written on Concha Espina, even though she is probably the best contender among women writers to become (officially) a member [of] the Generation of 1898" (note 1). Bretz says in the preface to her book on the author, "Another cause of Concha Espina's decline in fame is strictly political. . . . Although Concha Espina does not always identify with rightist politics, she is popularly perceived as a Falangist supporter and this does not enhance her desirability as a literary subject" (Concha 7).
The language of the text fashions Aurora as a kind of disciple of the mountain, though she does not ascribe to any religion: "padece, igual que el monte, el martirio de las ligaduras que oprimen y dislocan el terreno, que le pungen y le profanan: va ella pisando con respetuosa compasión la ceguedad del camino, oyendo, religiosamente, el eterno murmullo de las cosas" (37). The text establishes her faith in God through her connection with nature: "sorprende Aurora con intensidad la fragancia del campo nuevo, el cabeceo del bosque, la perenne vibración de la tierra: percibe en el fondo de su alma y en todo el misterio de la vida, fuerte y divino el pulso de Dios . . ." (40). The associations between religious faith and nature in the text and the support that Aurora receives from her companions in the conclusion of the novel characterize religion as a tool for commoning, but the text also acknowledges that it is not always practiced in that spirit.

While Aurora's experience imbues nature with religious meaning, Casa Rehtron mercilessly exploits nature and labor and uses religion to help justify its actions. The wives of Casa Rehtron managers present themselves as munificent stewards of peace who have initiated action to improve the lives of the miners and their families. Despite Pmip's insistence that "En estos tiempos no deben subsistir prejuicios de clases, y sólo prevalecer los intereses de la religión y la moral!" (Espina 242), and Berta Leurc, the leader of the Acción Social de la Mujer, also saying "Queremos las señoras unirnos con las mujeres del pueblo, sin diferencias de clase" (241), the women of the charitable organization are unwilling to relinquish the material and ideological comforts of their social place to the community of miners. They instead use religion as justification for silencing the workers' voices; in don Facundo's defense of Casa Rehtron, he argues that the miners should embrace "la resignación cristiana" and "conformarse con la suerte" for their own happiness and to secure a place in the afterlife (244). Despite its appearance as an organization promoting community action among women, the Acción Social de la Mujer is
exposed as a tool of domination. Not only is the organization's leader, Berta Leurc, the wife of the head of Casa Rehtron's operations, which proves that the group is an extension of the existing power structure at the mines, but the women also adopt elements of a business model to organize their activity: 'Habían dado un mote rumboso a sus gestiones: 'Acción Social de la Mujer', levantándole hasta la categoría de gran empresa, con reglamento, cargos oficiales, y aun barruntos de una revista quincenal' (Espina 248). The narrator exposes the hypocrisy of charity by expressing Rosario's thought that "aquellas señoras necesitaban a todo trance pobres y enfermos con quienes ejercitar las virtudes providentes de su corazón . . ." (250). Miranda Joseph explains how contemporary invocations of community, in, for example, nonprofit organizations, complement capitalist processes: "it is precisely in generating and legitimating social hierarchy that 'community' supplements (enables, fills a void in) capitalism" (9). For the Acción Social de la Mujer, the practice of community is based on the continued subjugation of one group, which is discouraged from asserting its own interests, and the reinforcement of the superiority of the other. Echea criticizes the ladies' activity as false feminism, saying that the men of the company "Negaron siempre sus derechos a la mujer . . . y de pronto la solicitan para bandera de sus maniobras societarias, le ofrecen la autonomía sin haberla educado ni prevenido . . ." (Espina 266), which implies that rather than being a sign of genuine social progress, the women's charitable efforts may instead extend their own oppression by the same capitalist processes that they are defending.

The "northerners" of Casa Rehtron claim religious authority over the miners as they exploit local resources to impose human comforts and domesticated beauty on their immediate environment in Vista Hermosa, but the local environment eventually checks this intrusion when the lush surroundings cannot be maintained without the constant input of labor by Spaniards. The
novel challenges the means and questions the ends of capitalist processes when Dolores mentions that the exploitation of resources has destroyed the natural beauty of the region in the first place. She recalls that "muchas razas nos han explotado . . . Se cuenta que este pueblo era en sus albores una aldea florida y se llamaba Nuestra Señora del Río Tinto" (Espina 434). Religion, motherhood and nature are indivisible in Dolores's reflection about the original name and condition of the village, and in the text they are all violated by the processes of capital.

4.6 Community Boundaries: Women and Children First?

The fates of the characters in the novel generate a sense of doubt in the potential for the reproduction of community within the existing social institutions that are supposed to foster its practice, including the labor union, the Church and the nation. A dilapidated visual symbol of the nation suggests its weakened state toward the beginning of the novel. Aurora happens upon a group of vagrants being led down the road by the Guardia Civil, and a young girl on foot who is part of the group in custody is dragging a Spanish flag:

Sólo una mozuela, casi niña, codiciosa del sol, marchaba a pie arrastrando en el polvo de la ruta unos harapos de la bandera española, especie de cendal absurdo, que pretendía simular un manto.
   Sonreía la chiquilla con descaro infantil, entre los graves tricornios, castigada a ignorar siempre el origen de su culpa. . . .
   En el camino real se alejan con la niña ambulante, rotos como un símbolo, fuyentes y lastimeros, los sagrados colores de la patria. (Espina 28)

The passage describes a state of deterioration and desperation, in which the nation's resources are being used to persecute its own impoverished citizens. Though the girl is smiling and seemingly oblivious to the direness of her circumstances, Aurora senses and is frightened by the child's extreme vulnerability. These feelings are elucidated by Federici's observations about the particular difficulties that women face after traditional communities are broken up, which occurs
simultaneously with women's exclusion from the workforce: "women were those who suffered
most when the land was lost and the village community fell apart. Part of the reason is that it was
far more difficult for them to become vagabonds or migrant workers, for a nomadic life exposed
them to male violence. . . . Women were also less mobile on account of pregnancies and the
caring of children . . ." (Caliban 73). The image of the girl, who reflects Aurora's own social
place and that of her unborn child, is fixed in Aurora's mind, and the rest of the "bohemios" in
custody in the passage represent a larger population of Spanish "peregrinos" (28) who lead
transient lives at the mercy of capitalist processes.

The migrations of the characters during the first and last parts of the novel establish the
insecurity of laborers and call attention to the dispossession that is central to processes of
colonialism and capital (Harvey 57). Arendt asserts that following the expropriation of the poor
and the emergence of the laboring class, "Membership in a social class replaced the protection
previously offered by membership in a family, and social solidarity became a very efficient
substitute for the earlier, natural solidarity ruling the family unit." She continues to explain that
as a result, "the territory of the nation-state . . . offered all classes a substitute for the privately
owned home of which the class of the poor had been deprived" (Arendt 256). The lives of the
novel's main characters, Aurora, Gabriel, the Garcillán siblings and Aurelio Echea, support this
notion. None of them have a stable family life or permanent home. The male characters put the
work of the union before personal relationships, and they maintain the hope that the nation will
provide a home for the community of laborers. When union leaders are planning the strike and
discussing the meager resources available to sustain the striking miners and their families, Echea
demonstrates his belief in his class and country when he assures Rosario: "nos ayudarán todos
los obreros de España . . ." (Espina 206). He champions the idea of common ownership: "se
embriaga de ilusión anunciando el reino de la Justicia: 'La tierra de nadie, los frutos de todos, las preferencias para los viejos y los niños, la igualdad para el hombre y la mujer; dos coronas: el trabajo y el amor . . .'' (74), but he still imagines this system of common ownership within the nation-state.

Echea's vision of a more equitable future for the mining community does not include a re-evaluation of men's relationship with nature. He focuses instead on the modernization of the workforce, advocating for the miners' access to technology and a scientific education so that they will be better able to manage the mining operations. He states these as some of the miners' most important goals:

"Declarar ruinosa la villa de Dite y hacer que los demoledores busquen a los Municipios terrenos para construir otro pueblo en la zona, donde pueda organizarse una comunidad de ciudadanos que disfruten los beneficios del progreso; preparar la conciencia de los trabajadores por medio de la educación científica y práctica para que merezcan la posesión de las minas, convirtiéndose de obreros en propietarios . . ." (Espina 283-84).

Echea is unable to express a vision for the future independent of the notion of property, which, as Esposito explains, is problematic: "the most paradoxical aspect of the question is that the 'common' is defined exactly through its most obvious antonym: what is common is that which unites the ethnic, territorial, and spiritual property of every one of its members. They have in common what is most properly their own; they are the owners of what is common to them all" (3). On one occasion Echea describes the desperate situation of the miners in Dite as an issue of national borders: "No se trata sólo del incumplido régimen del trabajo ni de la perpetua lucha entre jornaleros y patronos: hay sobre ésta una previa cuestión nacional" (Espina 76). The representation of Berta, the daughter of the director of Casa Rehtron, also expresses the conflict between the miners and Casa Rehtron as a conflict between nations: "La extranjera de nacionalidad era andaluza de nacimiento, y un amor invencible la unía con la tierra esclavizada
por sus compatriotas." Once the strike is underway, Berta exclaims: "¡España para los españoles!" (360). While Echea espouses the idea of common ownership and justice for all laborers, the language of the text makes clear his national pride. In his initial meeting with Rosario and José Luis Garcillán, Echea communicates that "se siente español de toda España" (73), and his description of Casa Rehtron's infringement on Spanish territory makes explicit his bias in favor of his native land and its people: "Las aguas cantarinas del Circem, el más soleado río español, vierten hoy dentro de su misma patria en un territorio extranjero, y los arenales andaluces, limpios, y luminosos, pertenecen . . . a esos hombres avaros y ceñudos, animales de sangre fría, raza nórdica y triste . . ." (78). Once the strike is underway, Echea addresses a crowd of impoverished strikers and assures them that "España no les abandona . . ." (413). While Echea proclaims his faith in the future of the nation, the text is set against the backdrop of World War I, and the reader is reminded on several occasions that both land and sea outside Spain's borders are sites of violent conflict, and disputes over national borders are responsible for massive losses of life (58, 75, 265). Hardt and Negri identify the nation as an institution that can "mobilize and provide access to the common, but at the same time restrict, distort, and deform it" (pt. 3.2 sec. 3 par. 2). They further explain: "Many certainly do experience belonging to the nation as a terrain of the common, which engages the collective cultural, social, and political expressions of the population. The nation's claim as the central terrain of social life is heightened in times of crisis and war, when the population is called to set aside differences in the interest of national unity," but, "just as in the family and the corporation, the common is submitted to severely restrictive operations: the nation is defined internally and externally by hierarchies and exclusion. The nation inevitably functions through the construction and enforcement of 'a people,' a national identity, which excludes or subordinates all those who are different" (Hardt and Negri, pt. 3.2
sec. 3 par. 8). The dire situation of the Casa Rehtron miners exposes how national and regional
governments might also disregard the interests of their own citizens to protect the financial
terests of the nation's more powerful people or institutions.

In her 1913 text, *The Accumulation of Capital*, Luxemburg contends that capital's
"colonial policy" of forcibly accumulating resources to fuel its expansion is directed toward both
foreigners and the citizens of the capitalist state alike:

> Capital increasingly employs militarism for implementing a foreign and colonial
> policy to get hold of the means of production and labour power of non-capitalist
countries and societies. This same militarism works in a like manner in the
> capitalist countries to divert purchasing power away from the non-capitalist strata.
The representatives of simple commodity production and the working class are
affected alike in this way. At their expense, the accumulation of capital is raised
to the highest power, by robbing the one of their productive forces and by
depressing the other’s standard of living. (466)

Though in Espina's novel it is southern Spain that has been colonized and Spanish citizens who
are being exploited by a foreign country, the novel contains a reminder of Spain's own past as a
colonial power. Strangely, the injustices of Spanish colonialism are muffled and excused by the
narrator in a passage in which Gabriel and Thor wander into the ghetto occupied by the
descendents of people who were supposedly brought to Spain by Colón himself. The residents
are described in an unsympathetic light: "Unas criaturas amarillas y cobardes representan la raza
— pura y sin cruce al cabo de los tiempos —, y se asoman a sus guaridas con prevención ante los
intrusos. Y ellos no se atreven a pedir un cobijo en los escombros miserables donde aquella
extraña gente se refugia para vivir" (Espina 103). By simultaneously emphasizing the cowardice
of the "indios" and the integrity of their lineage, the narrator suggests that poverty is their natural
condition. In addition to being described in dehumanizing terms as "criaturas amarillas" who
hide in "guaridas," the weakness of the *indios* is further illustrated by their perception of the two
shipmates as a threat, even though Gabriel and Thor are homeless, penniless and outnumbered.
Gabriel and Thor are active characters while the *indios* are described in a defensive position. The apparent racism in this passage provides evidence of the stratification among members of the same nation and even the same social class.

Vandana Shiva argues, citing Luxemburg, that capitalism is dependent upon colonial relationships, and women and the environment are disproportionately impoverished by it. In "The Impoverishment of the Environment: Women and Children Last," Shiva details a history of disproportionate impact of economic growth on women since colonial times:

The economic and political processes of colonial underdevelopment were clear manifestations of modern Western patriarchy, and while large numbers of men as well as women were impoverished by these processes, women tended to be the greater losers. The privatization of land for revenue generation affected women more seriously, eroding their traditional land-use rights. The expansion of cash crops undermined food production, and when men migrated or were conscripted into forced labour by the colonizers women were often left with meagre resources to feed and care for their families. (74)

While men, women and children all suffer during the Casa Rehtron strike, the novel emphasizes the plight of women who, for example, bear the burden of trying to feed their families. As the strike persists, food becomes scarce in the region controlled by Casa Rehtron, and the text reveals how women resort to night scavenging to obtain some sustenance: "van las mujeres en caravanas nocturnas, huyendo del calor, a buscar hojas y troncos, ilusiones del hambre[;] . . . las colinas y cerros comarcanos, dan esta efímera substancia que las madres codician para sus hijos . . ." (Espina 420). Some of the strikers' children die of starvation (403), and many must be separated from their mothers and transported to cities where they can receive aid. Some mothers go crazy with desperation, and some women commit suicide (403, 406-7). The earth's meager harvest of scrawny plants is compared to the children, who are described as "segados como la cosecha prematura de una mies" (406) and as "fruto marchito" (422), plucked from their mothers' arms and transported to the provincial capital.
Among those who leave the mining community to look for work are the young women with whose story the novel concludes, providing a revealing metaphor for the future of the nation. José Luis Garcillán discovers Carmen among a group migrating from the mines to look for work. Carmen's beauty stands out among the women, and she explains, "Porque he comido . . . Sospecho que mi madre ha robado por mi" (Espina 447). Though the narrator does not reflect on it, Carmen's case exposes a weakness in the practice of community. Her attractiveness is described in a positive way: "un encanto luminoso defiende aquella dominante hermosura" (446), and as she takes the hand of José Luis, "se le alumbra en los ojos la esperanza . . ." (447).

Carmen's eyes provide a contrast with "los pueblos abandonados, los cementarios henchidos: la muerte, la soledad, la perdición" that she is leaving behind (445), but by suggesting that her beauty and hopefulness are sustained by theft, the text injects some doubt about the possibilities for community practice at times when resources are scarce. The leaders of the union are languishing as they adhere to strict rules during the strike, while Carmen presents a more appealing figure and seems more likely to find happiness. Aurelio Echea apparently puts the interests of the community ahead of those of his only child; when the first children are being sent away to receive aid, he says of his young daughter Anita, "No ha de ser de las primeras en salvarse . . . ¡Quiera Dios que no sea la última!" (425). Carmen's mother, on the other hand, has put her child's interests first, and Carmen has clearly benefitted as a result.

Carmen's destination is suggestive of the future of the nation, which is rich in resources but poor in capital. "'Vamos' dice Carmela con cierto orgullo 'a trabajar en el embalaje de las frutas que los barcos y los trenes llevan muy lejos de España" (Espina 446). Carmen, and other young laborers, might themselves be compared to the fruits that are destined to be consumed by foreigners. While the youth of Spanish women will be exhausted in the preparation of domestic
produce for export to wealthier nations, the women's able-bodied male counterparts also either move abroad to earn money as immigrant labor, or they spend their energy working for the benefit of multinational firms. The resources that could be nourishing the domestic population, then, are instead enjoyed by foreigners who are already more prosperous, while the Spanish labor class that Carmen comes from starves due to the unwillingness of foreign industrialists to compensate them fairly. Meanwhile, Aurelio Echea maintains hope of soon hoisting the Spanish flag over the "ruinas de la 'torre feudal'" of Casa Rehtron (438), but the text calls into question whether reclaiming property that is already in ruins will prove worthwhile for the members of the mining community or for the nation. Jacobo Pmip's earlier comment that the miners' rights are sterile because they are not legally enforceable, even if they are morally justifiable, takes on a more profound meaning in this context (286). As the strike goes on, the miners are left with fewer and fewer resources that would enable them to engage in the processes of reproducing the commons.

4.7 Conclusion

Concha Espina's novel lays bare how the processes of capitalism, especially when coupled with colonial relationships, destroy the commons. It was written with the intention of inciting opposition to the British Rio Tinto Company's exploitative practices in Spain, and according to Bretz, the author's modest background might have enabled her to effectively communicate with a wide audience: "the fact that Concha Espina is decidedly not a member of the intellectual community increases her value as a spokesperson for a numerically large and politically influential group[:] . . . Spain's middle class" (Concha 8). While the novel acknowledges the state's complicity in the disruption of community practices, it also appeals to
the readership's identification with the nation in its effort to consolidate opposition to the foreign capitalists in Huelva.

The male characters who receive the most attention in the text are primarily concerned with labor organizing as a way of combatting the processes of capitalism, but other characters contribute to commoning through journalism, teaching, religious practice and practices of care. Efforts to reproduce the commons are obstructed by diminished access to the resources that sustain human life, which are endangered by the exploitative actions of Casa Rehtron. The novel's representations of women's important contributions to community practices, along with their simultaneous submission to their male counterparts and their comparison with the commons, makes their status ambiguous. In its representation of the brutal circumstances of laborers whose plight is unknown to most of their countrymen, and its humanization of a part of the natural world that is known to very few people, the novel gives readers a unique perspective on the consequences of industrialization on women, who are doubly subjugated by its processes in a patriarchal society. It makes sense that a conservative male critic would find fault with Espina's technical language and tendency to "extenderse demasiado en descripciones y relatos accesorios, diluyendo la acción de la obra y cansando la atención del lector" (Ballesteros de Martos 118), when it is precisely the detailed descriptions and secondary plots in the novel that pose the greatest challenges to patriarchal institutions by revealing the injustices that they impose on women, whose contributions to the commons and struggles to reproduce it are often silenced. While bold acts of men drive the novel's plot forward, the text insists on the strength of the women who make fundamental contributions to community practices and ensure the continuation of life despite the sometimes challenging consequences of the actions of their male partners and loved ones. In this light, it seems meaningful that the male characters are dispersed
at the novel's conclusion, but the women who have continuously supported each other and the union throughout their community's crisis remain together.
CONCLUSION

My study spans a period during which Spain became "an increasingly polarised society": the Basque Country and Catalonia underwent significant modernization and the rest of the country lagged behind, the country was alienated from its neighbors when it lost a highly publicized war and its colonies along with it, and citizens were themselves alienated from their leaders and from the Spanish identity they had championed before the war (Balfour, "Solitary" 3). The natural environment provided many artists and intellectuals during this era with a subject that could potentially represent a much desired common ground on which to build a national community. Casado de Otaola proposes that the increased presence of representations of the natural environment around the turn of the century "responde a la búsqueda de un solar patrio, un sustrato físico a la vez auténtico e inocente, en el que poder fundamentar las propuestas de regeneración. Auténtico, pues indudablemente es previo y originario. E inocente, pues está libre de las culpas acumuladas por los hombres en siglos de indolencia y extravío" (16). Ecocriticism and ecofeminist theories, however, help reveal how representations of the natural environment in the novels included here are far from innocent, as they inevitably reflect social hierarchies, and more specifically, anxieties about the changing roles of women and the labor class during the era of modernization. Women are closely identified with nature due to their roles in the reproduction and nurturing of human life, ideally sharing its perceived characteristics of silence, passivity, beauty, generosity and fertility. Nature is celebrated as a source of national identity and potential national health, a symbol of authenticity and proof of the perseverance of traditional values, but it is also challenged by the dominance of the processes and values of capitalism. As men increasingly display their dominance over nature, this reflects their capacity to dominate women, but it also reflects their attempt to control the reproduction of life. When women challenge the
social place of men, they are undermined by being likened to monsters who defy nature. In some ways, Concha Espina's novel, the only novel written by a woman included in this dissertation, complies with this scheme, but in other ways it challenges it by giving a voice to nature and expressing solidarity with nature's understanding of and affection for biotic life. Women's relationship with nature, in this case, becomes a potential source of power that the author draws on with the publication of her novel.

Each novel, with the exception of Cañas y barro, reflects on the work of representation and in doing so explores the relationship between the author and the community. The novels express four different orientations toward the illiterate rural people that comprise the majority of the country, and they reflect changing social realities of the respective historical moments that they represent. The certainty with which Pereda's novel proposes solutions to the social question and the matter of national regeneration corresponds with his location in Spain before 1898. His main character ventures into the mountains and eventually becomes the beloved leader of what appears to be a stable, self-sustaining common resource system but is actually a strictly and individually controlled patriarchy. The novel proposes that the national community can be saved if the educated, urban elite take an active role in managing the countryside, and it also suggests that the rural population, the protagonist's female partner and the local natural environment can be expected to respond obediently. Marcelo not only dominates all the land and people around him, but as a narrator, he also tightly controls the representation of his experiences, including the time preceding and following the main events of the novel.

After the 1898 Disaster, the outlook for the national community becomes uncertain, at best. Joaquín Costa includes a quote in Oligarquía y caciquismo from the newspaper El Correo around the time of the disaster: "Todo está roto en este desventurado país: no hay gobierno, no
hay cuerpo electoral, no hay partidos . . . todo es ficción, todo es decadencia, todo ruinas" (13, note 2). While they are exchanging ideas about how to try to fix some of what is broken in the country, intellectuals create a community among themselves through the oral and written exchange of ideas. This is well documented, for example, in a 1903 publication of Oligarquía y caciquismo by the Ateneo of Madrid, which includes the invitation that was sent to a wide range of intellectuals to attend the presentation of the work or to submit a written response to the work; the publication of the text includes some of those written responses. Pardo Bazán says in the closing remarks of her response, which focuses on education as the key to social progress, "El remedio . . . no consiste en el silencio: al contrario, es preciso hablar, y hablar mucho" (381).

One of the pressing issues, if not the most pressing issue, that arises from this debate is what to do about the uneducated masses. Alvarez Junco notes,

> It was specifically during the first third of the twentieth century that politics erupted in much of rural Spain . . . because the state's two traditional functions in relation to peasant communities were greatly intensified: on the one hand the extraction of resources (taxation for the Treasury and men for the army), . . . and, on the other, repression (the Civil Guard for minor daily incidents, and the army in cases of exceptional strife). ("Rural" 85)

Balfour summarizes the conflicts that intellectuals faced as a result of this situation: "the emergence of the masses at the turn of the century confronted reformist intellectuals with an acute dilemma. They were conscious that it was impossible to challenge the Restoration system without the masses, yet they were unable to identify with those who were beginning to mobilize independently against the established order" ("Solitary" 13). Cañas y barro and El Mayorazgo de Labraz represent doubts about the ability of the uneducated, rural population to move the nation forward. It is not surprising that very shortly after the publication of the two novels studied here, Baroja and Blasco Ibáñez both published novels about the urban environment, the trilogy La lucha por la vida and La horda, respectively, that deal precisely with the struggles of the
working class and its potential or failure to create commons in an increasingly violent atmosphere in Madrid at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In the community that is represented in *Cañas y barro*, the commons is endangered by the encroaching processes of modernization, which are evident in changes to the local landscape and in the laws and contracts that allow for the privatization of land and otherwise restrict the exploitation of local resources by community members. There is a clear need for social and economic progress in this community, as its younger members are no longer satisfied with their indigence and social subordination. The people of the Albufera have not received an education that would prepare them for future interactions with the outside world, but the novel's narrator still upholds the value of the commons that they sustain. While the members of the Comunidad de Pescadores have a good understanding of community, they are completely ignorant about the textual world in which the state operates. Pardo Bazán expresses this condition in her response to Costa's *Oligarquía y caciquismo*:

> Educad, instruid un poco á ese labriego tan sagaz; . . . sabrá adónde llega su derecho. Mientras ignore, temerá, y mientras tema, obedecerá. ¿Y á qué teme? Á la ley. . . . Á lo que se ha hecho para proteger, para amparar al hombre. Á la ley, á la fuerza legal, instrumento manejado por la oligarquía. Ese labriego que acaba de romper á palos la cabeza á otro, . . . tiembla ante el papel sellado. . . . El labriego no sabe leer ni escribir, aunque haya ido á la escuela: para él es terrorífica la organización del Estado. (379)

Meanwhile, the same economic forces that are driving the adulteration of the natural environment in the Albufera are also instigating changes in the nature of the relationships between men and women and further endangering the established order of the social world.

The material commons has disappeared from the setting of *El Mayorazgo de Labraz*, and the townspeople's refusal to engage in practices of commoning brings about the town's irreversible ruin. The harsh social critique in Baroja's novel is followed by Don Juan's rebellion...
against his town, after which he flees to the countryside, where he has healthier encounters with strangers than with his fellow townspeople, and he travels to a place where he hopes to build a better life for himself. Baroja's work denies centralization or a common culture as solutions for the struggling nation. In the novel, the practices of community that exist at the level of direct interaction with others are more important, or more effective, than the concept of community at the national level. Still, by engaging in a conversation about community through writing, the novel recognizes an intellectual community that can contribute to the commons through discussion and cultural production. It is Baroja's novel that most clearly gestures toward transnational communities and highlights the potential of artistic production to traverse borders.

Still, while the novel recognizes the role of women in the reproduction of community within the domestic sphere, it altogether denies them a role in the public practices of community.

Balfour explains that by the time labor organization and protest escalated in 1917, many Spanish intellectuals had abandoned their hopes of creating a community with the uneducated urban and rural populations: "Their sense of alienation was the result not only of the undeniably deep cultural gap between themselves and the masses but also of the failure of many intellectuals to understand the roots of popular protest" ("Solitary" 13). In this environment, Concha Espina, a middle class and self-supporting journalist, traveled to Huelva with her son to research what would become her book about the miners' protests, *El metal de los muertos*. Her novel appeals to the ideals of the members of the national community but also entreats her audience to take action in defense of their compatriots against an incursion by English capitalists. At the same time, through the character Aurora, Espina gives nature a feminine voice that communicates its suffering in the industrialized world, where its efforts to reproduce the commons are ignored. The novel couples its condemnation of the overexploitation of the natural environment and the
overexploitation of Spanish laborers, representing both acts as equally harmful to the nation. Implicitly, through the comparison of working-class women and nature, it also condemns the exploitation of women by any party.

The critical analysis of four key texts of the Spanish fin de siglo leads to a reconsideration of the conditions that promote or discourage the reproduction of the commons. The focus on representations of commons as a physical space, or at least the memory of that space or its production through subversive practices, is intended to clarify the relationship between commoning and the material conditions that support biotic life. Looking at the representation of the commons by members of the intellectual community in Spain around the turn of the century should contribute to our understanding of community practice today, in a digital era in which many people hope for the abundant reproduction of the commons due to the increasing ease of communication and sharing of information. Federici reminds us that despite our hopes in the potential of the internet to aid in the creation of commons, we tend to overlook the material reality that it obscures: "online communication/production depends on economic activities—mining, microchip and rare earth production—that, as presently organized, are extremely destructive, socially and ecologically" ("Feminism" sec. 3 par. 5). Along the same lines, Cavarero's definition of the "absolute local" and Nixon's definition of "vernacular landscape" help us understand why an environment that is conducive to the reproduction of the commons must acknowledge the specific voices and locations of all the parties performing the labor that supports the practice of commoning. With this in mind, the examination of these important literary works, which emerged at a moment when a national social and economic crisis met changing orientations toward the natural environment, has been undertaken with the intention of providing insights that might be enlightening in our present historical moment.
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