



Spectators, Spectacles and the Desiring Eye/I in

La Regenta

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To what extent is the seeing/being seen dyad akin to a theatrical performance? Take the example of Saturnino Bermúdez's cathedral tour in the opening chapter of Leopoldo Alas's novel *La Regenta*. Don Saturno, the local historian and scholar, has been asked by Obdulia Fandiño to give a tour of Vetusta's cathedral to two guests from out of town. He goes about providing lengthy exegeses of obscure and barely visible works of art and architecture with an air of affected solemnity. Saturno's theatrical style is most evident when he takes the group to see the Panteón de los Reyes: "[H]ubo un silencio solemne. El sabio había tosido, iba a hablar" (Alas 1: 135). Obdulia, imperceptive to the dramatic tone her guide is attempting to create, asks one of her guests for a match in order to see the inscription on the sarcophagus being shown, whereupon Saturno promptly informs the man that there is no need: "No señor, no hace falta. Yo sé las inscripciones de memoria . . . y además, no se pueden leer" (1: 135). The other guest assumes that the words must be written in Latin, and for that reason cannot be read, but Saturno clarifies the issue by explaining the true cause of their illegibility: "están borradas" (1: 135). At this point he pretends to give an improvised explanation of the pantheon when in reality he recites from memory the first four chapters of one of his many books on Vetusta. Here the performative facet of the episode is perhaps overshadowed only by the curious fact that Saturno somehow sees/knows what the inscription says despite its being erased (not unlike his earlier explanation of a painting whose details were so concealed by a dense layer of patina that only a toe and skull were visible). The motive for this ruse may be seen as ontological. Saturno has carved out a niche for himself within Vetustan society as "el primer anticuario de Vetusta" (1: 133), an identification that stems from his unique knowledge of the city's religious buildings. To deny knowledge of the cathedral's treasures would be tantamount to denying his own identity. Projecting a discernable image onto a barely visible painting or meaning onto some erased words that only he can "see" is a way of affirming his identity, an indirect way of stating "I am that."

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman argues that each time we find ourselves in the visual field of others, we necessarily engage in an unspoken but ever-present dynamic of performance and spectatorship (13-27).¹ Our surroundings, be it a house, a park, or even our workplace, become the stage; our mundane clothing becomes

the wardrobe; and we become the actors, performing the role dictated by social circumstances. Goffman's thesis certainly rings true if one considers the behavior of the characters in Alas's novel. *La Regenta* is the story of a young married woman, Ana Ozores, who finds herself torn between her affection for Víctor, her fatherly husband; her masochistic dedication to Fermín de Pas, a controlling and obsessed confessor; and the amorous pretensions of Álvaro Mesía, the local Don Juan. Ana's dilemma is complicated by the fact that her every move is scrutinized by the residents of Vetusta, a fictional provincial town where everyone constantly monitors one another and considerable effort is made to keep up social appearances. The spectacles which result from Vetusta's panoptic social dynamic are often consciously crafted, as in the case of the De Pas family, who carefully mask their sizable fortune and dubious economic enterprises so as not to appear impious. On other occasions, those who fall under the public gaze behave instinctively, though no less theatrically, as they shape their performances on unconscious desires in an attempt to fortify their rather unstable identities. Equally significant is the reaction of those watching the spectacle. Drawing on the theories of Freud, Lacan, and Laura Mulvey, this study examines three passages from *La Regenta* that expressly address the subject of seeing and being seen. In the first episode, Teresina, a servant in the De Pas home, engages Fermín de Pas in a scene of performative coquetry. The subsequent section addresses an instance of social performance on a much larger scale, an evening at the local theater in the sixteenth chapter. In this section, the role of mirroring and distortion that occurs between various members of the audience, as well as between the drama on the stage and the viewing public, will be discussed in terms of Mulvey's theory of spectatorial identification with an ideal ego. As a final example of the novel's decadent visual dynamic, I shall analyze the Easter procession from chapter 26. In addition to exploring the gendering of the gaze that occurs when Obdulia views Ana, this passage addresses the manner in which the fetishistic and voyeuristic gaze becomes a way of reconciling feelings of envy and lust, and also of dealing with sexual anxiety. As these examples suggest, Alas's portrayal of the gaze highlights the darker side of visual interactions.

What's in a Look: Psychoanalysis and the Gaze

The gaze has a well-established pedigree within the field of psychoanalysis. Drawing on mythology—Narcissus, Medusa, and the crucial Oedipus legend—as well as literature, as in the case of E. T. A. Hoffmann's story "The Sandman," Sigmund Freud's work reveals an intimate connection between vision and sexuality, especially sexual abnormalities.² According to Freud, pleasure in looking, or scopophilia, is a universal component of human sexuality. In adults it satisfies a basic need in the way of foreplay, "being preparatory to the normal sexual aim," but it can also diverge from its "normal" role to become a perversion, as he explains in "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (70). In his analysis of looking, Freud provides three examples of perverse scopophilia. The first involves the scope and object of the gaze. Typically, one derives pleasure from looking at the entire body of the sexual object, even those areas that are not directly involved in the sex act, but some individuals receive pleasure by focusing exclusively on the genitals, to the point of obsession. He identifies a second instance of perverse scopophilia in which the pleasure of looking overrides one's normal sense of disgust, as in the case of individuals who enjoy watching excretory functions. A final expression of perverse

scopophilia involves the supplanting of genital intercourse with the act of looking, as occurs with the voyeur for whom looking is not merely an intermediate step toward intercourse but that which provides sexual gratification in and of itself. The significance of vision in Freud's work cannot be overlooked, for he viewed it as a key component of every individual's sexual development. He identifies scopophilia as one of the component instincts, one which bears a close link with the epistemophilic instinct, or drive for knowledge ("Three Essays" 112). Ultimately, this desire to know/see compels the child—whom Freud putatively represents as male—to confront the reality of sexual difference that the child is incapable of understanding, which results in castration anxiety. In an attempt to defer the anxiety such an encounter produces, a child may resort to voyeurism, thus reliving the original trauma, or, alternatively, he may project his desire to see the phallus onto another object, such as a foot or strand of hair, which results in fetishism.

Identifying and analyzing these aspects of visual desire in Alas's *La Regenta* is enhanced by taking into account Laura Mulvey's use of psychoanalysis in her film criticism. Since the 1970s, recourse to psychoanalytic theory has become something of an obligatory gesture for many film critics, primarily as a consequence of the legacy created by Laura Mulvey and Christian Metz, whose pioneering works—"Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and *The Imaginary Signifier*, respectively—definitively introduced Lacanian psychoanalysis into the study of cinema. In doing so, Mulvey and Metz ushered in a new era of film studies. The attraction of such an approach was that it gave the film critic new tools for discussing the sexuality of the characters as well as the psychological interaction of the spectator with the images on the screen. And while both Mulvey and Metz discuss the importance of vision, it was Mulvey who had a greater impact on gaze theory by couching her ideas in terms of gender. In her article, she argues that spectators derive pleasure from a film because they identify with the male protagonist while visually objectifying the female actress. Mulvey's argument represents the first theoretical articulation of what is by now the commonplace assumption for many that the gaze is male. She bases her claim on Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, in particular on Lacan's theory of the mirror stage.³ According to Mulvey, movie-goers (regardless of their sex) identify with the male movie star in the same way that the infant identifies with its specular image during its passage through the mirror stage:

A male movie star's glamorous characteristics are thus not those of the erotic object of the gaze, but those of the more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror. The character in the story can make things happen and control events better than the subject/spectator, just as the image in the mirror was more in control of motor coordination. (12)

A key outcome of this identification with the specular image involves the conversion of the female film star into a legitimized object of the spectatorial gaze: "By means of identification with [the male star], through participation in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too" (Mulvey 13). This satiates the spectator's scopophilic desire to a certain degree (after all, complete satisfaction is impossible) and alleviates the spectator's sexual anxiety at the prospect of castration by converting the woman on the screen into an icon, a fetish object. Mulvey here takes up the Freudian position that the two ways to

cope with unconscious castration anxiety are first, to assume the role of voyeur and re-enact the original trauma by “investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery,” and second, to disavow castration by converting the woman into a fetish object (13-14). Mulvey notes that while fetishistic scopophilia converts the object into something satisfying in itself, voyeurism, in the context of the narrative cinema, engages in a sadistic/masochistic dynamic in which pleasure lies in ascertaining the woman’s guilt and then asserting control over her. Vicarious acts of punishment or forgiveness enacted upon the female star by the male protagonist produce pleasure for the viewing subject/spectator (14). While Mulvey is concerned here with film and not literature, her explanation of the spectator’s gendered gaze as something both erotic and sadistic is particularly relevant to Alas’s novel, which contains several notable instances of spectatorship.

Seducing the Gaze

A certain sense of theatricality accompanies nearly all scenes of coquetry and seduction in *La Regenta*. From Obdulia’s over-the-top clothes in the cathedral to Petra’s lack of clothes when speaking with Víctor, or Álvaro and Fermín competing for Ana’s attention by lowering two people stuck on the Vegallana’s swing, the prospect of being seen by a potential lover seems to intensify one’s willingness to perform. When Teresina is first introduced, she converts her morning chores into a spontaneous erotic spectacle for the benefit of Fermín, and to a certain degree for the reader. The episode appears in the eleventh chapter of the novel and takes place in Fermín’s bedroom. Finding Fermín in the process of redacting a theological essay early one morning, Teresina offers to bring him breakfast. The manner in which she does so—“todo sonriendo con cierta coquetería, contenida por la expresión de piedad que allí era la librea” (Alas 1: 406)—combines the profane and the sacred in a way that is characteristic of doña Paula, Fermín, and their home. The term *librea* (official costume), which the narrator uses to describe Teresina’s expression, suggests that her actions are contrived. The combination of the sacred and the profane can be seen again in the religious language used to describe something as mundane as the tidying of a room: “puso orden en los muebles, que no *pecaban de insurrectos*, que estaban como ella los había dejado el día anterior” (1: 406, emphasis added). The pseudo-religious rhetoric, likely an echo of the clichéd rhetoric of the house, indicates the superficiality of Fermín’s piety, as well as that of his mother, and suggests the possibility that Fermín would make a good spectator for Teresina’s seductive show. Show, rather than cleaning, is clearly the better word to describe her actions. She is simply going through the motions, presumably for Fermín’s benefit, organizing things that need no organizing.

As Teresina continues her chores, the performer/spectator dynamic becomes more obvious: “Entró [Teresina] en la alcoba, dejando las puertas de cristales abiertas, y se puso a *levantar* la cama” (1: 407). Leaving the doors open is a subtle spatial indication of sexual eagerness, but it also provides an opportunity for Fermín to watch the spectacle, an invitation that he accepts: “Don Fermín volvió a sentarse en su sillón. Desde allí veía, distraído, los movimientos rápidos de la falda negra de Teresina, que apretaba las piernas contra la cama para hacer fuerza al manejar los pesados colchones” (1: 407).⁴ While Fermín, who watches motionless from his seat, is clearly positioned in a spectatorial role,

the description is ambiguous as to whether he is distracted by Teresina's movements or is too distracted to really note them. The description continues:

Ella azotaba la lana con vigor y la falda subía y bajaba a cada golpe con violenta sacudida, dejando descubiertos los bajos de las enaguas bordadas y muy limpias, y algo de la pantorrilla. El Magistral seguía con los ojos los movimientos de la faena doméstica, pero su pensamiento estaba muy lejos. (1: 407)

At this point, it becomes clear that indeed Fermín is too distracted to notice the erotic scene being performed before his eyes, and yet the narrator chooses to provide every last detail of the spectacle. But if not for Fermín, for whom? The absence of other personages would seem to indicate the possibility that the sensual description is for the reader and is an example of how the narrator functions as a pornographer for the reader's voyeuristic gaze.⁵ Having already captured the gaze of the reader, the scene that Teresina plays out on the bed (a significant stage indeed) soon gets the attention of the intended spectator:

En uno de sus movimientos, casi tendida de bruces sobre la cama, Teresina dejó ver más de media pantorrilla y mucha tela blanca. De Pas sintió en la retina toda aquella blancura, como si hubiera visto un relámpago; y discretamente, se levantó y volvió a sus paseos. La doncella jadeante, con un brazo oculto en el pliegue de un colchón doblado, se volvió de repente, casi tendida de espaldas sobre la cama. Sonreía y tenía un poco de color de rosa en las mejillas. (1: 407-08)

Teresina's position—breathing heavily, rosy checked, lying on the bed—seems to be asking Fermín the question, “What do you make of me?” But the seduction also functions on another level. The narrator seems to be asking a similar question of the reader: “Do you like what you see?”

From Mirror Stage to Center Stage

Many critics have commented on the significance of the theater episode in chapter 16 of the novel, calling the scene “decisiva” (Gullón 176), a “*leitmotif* in the struggle of the protagonists” (Sánchez 507), and even a “malevolent” drama of “patriarchal desire that subsumes the feminine” and highlights the text's undecidability (Mandrell 3-4). While critics may emphasize the passage for different reasons, all seem to concur that it is crucial to the novel as a whole. The chapter in question, strategically placed at the center of the novel, depicts a complex scene of mirroring and identifications. Imitation is portrayed as a negative and distorted form of social performance, as seen by the manner in which audience members provide reflections of intra- and inter-textual sources. The passage describes events at Vetusta's theater, where the cream of Vetustan society have gathered to watch a performance of Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio*. Narrative tone is the first in a chain of clues guiding the reader to the important points of this passage. The narrator's ironic wit varies in intensity as he describes the decaying edifice and self-absorbed spectators, proving particularly harsh as he ridicules the male characters, who imitate decadent models. At the passage's outset, the narrator draws attention to the disparity between

perception and reality by mocking comments made in Vetusta's local press: "El teatro de Vetusta, o sea nuestro *Coliseo de la plaza del Pan*, según le llamaba en elegante perífrasis el gacetillero y crítico de *El Lábaro*, era un antiguo corral de comedias que amenazaba ruina y daba entrada gratis a todos los vientos de la rosa náutica" (Alas 2: 31). This playful scorn of the reporter's exaggerated and unfounded praise continues as the narrator describes the shabby décor and props. The playfulness does not undermine the importance of the passage, but instead calls attention to the space in which the action occurs and thus prepares the reader to recognize more subtle details concerning the layout of the theater. The reader is alerted to the disparity between what one desires to see—"un *Coliseo de la plaza del Pan*"—and what is: a dilapidated building in need of repair.

As the next paragraph in the passage begins to lay out the seating arrangement, giving particular attention to the dynamics of who sits where, the concept of mirroring becomes clear. According to the narrator, the *señoras* and the *pollos elegantes* are very particular about where they sit during the performance. Not only do the members of the audience choose to interact with the actors, shattering the illusory fourth wall and blurring the dramatic frame, but the manner in which they do it is pure mimicry of what they perceive to be desirable (that is, fashionable) because it occurs in Madrid: "Se reparten por palcos y plateas donde, apenas recatados, fuman, ríen, alborotan, interrumpen la representación, por ser todo esto de muy buen tono y fiel imitación de lo que muchos de ellos han visto en algunos teatros de Madrid" (2: 32). This imitation on the part of the audience members becomes a secondary drama which is often indistinct from the primary drama onstage.

The seating arrangement in particular highlights the issue of imitation. To the stage's left is Mesía's box, and in the box next to his sits Obdulia, a young, beautiful widow who enjoys being the center of attention. Directly opposite them, to the right of the stage, are the occupants of Pepe Ronzal's box—disrespectfully called "la otra bolsa" to distinguish it from Mesía's group and to highlight the idea of "otherness"—and that of the Vegallana family, where Ana is seated. The spatial configuration makes the visual dimension of the scene especially acute and invites comparison of the various parties. Far from implying symmetry, this mirroring of space and characters offers a distorted reflection. Both Obdulia and Ronzal, as we know from previous chapters, are envious of Ana and Álvaro, respectively. Obdulia goes to great lengths to stand out in a crowd and begrudges the fact that Ana does so without trying. Ronzal, a leader in the Conservative party and thus a political rival to Álvaro, publicly criticizes Mesía, but in actuality he is as captivated by the local Don Juan as everyone else in Vetusta. He observes the way Álvaro speaks, dresses, and acts, yet his attempts at emulation are always inadequate (he turns the most simple sayings into comical phrases, and his wardrobe is always a season behind Álvaro's). Obdulia gazes at Ana in order to compare, while Ronzal gazes with the goal of imitation. Both feel admiration coupled with a sense of resentment—as shown by the fact that Álvaro is called Ronzal's "aborrecido y admirado modelo" (2: 45)—similar to the alienation experienced by the infant who, when confronted by its specular image during the mirror stage, wants to identify with the image and yet begrudges its very otherness. The mirroring effect of those seated in the facing boxes does not represent identical reflection, but inferior and exaggerated imitation.

Ronzal along with the other members of “la otra bolsa” provide a particularly extreme case of distorted mirroring, for they imitate Álvaro’s group, who are themselves a distorted reflection of composite sources. The narrator uses the verb *imitar* on three occasions to describe the comportment of Álvaro’s group (2: 32, 38, 39). To imitate is to “hacer una cosa copiando de otra o inspirándose en otra, o hacer algo del mismo modo que lo hace otro,” and as the words *falsificar*, *parodiar*, *plagiar*, and *robar* that Moliner associates with *imitar* indicate, the imitation is almost always perceived as inferior to the original (Moliner 2: 19). All of the group of men in Álvaro’s box imitate “costumbres, modales y gestos que habían observado [en Madrid],” while Don Frutos (a wealthy *americano* who wants to buy his way into Vetusta’s high society) in particular attempts rather unsuccessfully to duplicate the discourse from “artículos de fondo de un periódico serio” in order to appear more intelligent (Alas 2: 38). No aspect of their imitative behavior is immune to the narrator’s ridicule, and this is especially true as he mocks their twisted *donjuanismo*:

[C]reían que un hombre de mundo no puede vivir sin querida, y todos la tenían, más o menos barata; las cómicas eran la carnaza que preferían para tragar el anzuelo de la lujuria rebozado con la vanidad de imitar costumbres corrompidas de pueblos grandes. Bailarinas de desecho, cantatrices inválidas, matronas del género serio demasiado sentimentales en su juventud pretérita, eran perseguidas, obsequiadas, regaladas y hasta aburridas por aquellos seductores de campanario.... (2: 39)

The vocabulary used to describe their trysts exemplifies the narrator’s acerbic irony. Their actions are not sincere, but based on “costumbres corrompidas” and carried out almost by rote. They do not come across as seductive Don Juans, but pathetic decadents (“seductores de campanario”) preying on undesirable flesh. Even Mesía—“El único conquistador serio del bando” (2: 39)—bases his actions on a literary archetype and in so doing becomes a caricature of Zorrilla’s protagonist, with whom he is often compared (Hart 289; Sánchez 491). The myriad reflections are seemingly endless—Ronzal imitates Mesía, who imitates Zorrilla’s protagonist, who, it could be argued, is an imitation of Tirso’s *burlador*. To this relationship are added others that further immerse the reader into a labyrinth of endless deferment where everyone is merely a copy of a copy. The text even refers to the actor playing the part of Don Juan as an “imitador” because he imitates the well-known actor Calvo. The distorted mirroring of this passage magnifies the characters’ undesirable attributes and makes it difficult for the reader to identify with them, especially with Álvaro, in the manner described by Mulvey. To do so would be to situate oneself near the end of a chain of copies, a *mise-en-abyme* in which each new reflection is more corrupt than the last.

One might soon forget that in addition to the spectatorial mirroring just described, there is a drama being acted out on the stage, Zorrilla’s *Don Juan Tenorio*. As mentioned above, the public’s actions and attitudes constitute a secondary drama that at times becomes indistinguishable from the stage action. This is especially true of those passages focalized through Ana Ozores. With Ana’s arrival in the Vegallana’s theater box, the secondary drama begins. Ana sits in the “sitio de preferencia” and in so doing reveals herself as the leading lady of this secondary drama. Her arrival causes a stir in the audience as all focus

their collective gaze upon her, something which draws criticism from Obdulia, who insists that all the women in Vetusta are not that different, but are instead indistinguishable reflections of one another: “¡La Regenta, bah! La Regenta será como todas Las demás somos tan buenas como ella . . .” (Alas 2: 34). Unlike most of the spectators, who “no oyen, ni ven ni entienden lo que pasa en el escenario” (2: 32) because they are too caught up looking at one another, Ana soon finds herself drawn into the action on stage: “Ana se sentía transportada a la época de don Juan, que se figuraba como el vago romanticismo arqueológico quiere que haya sido” (2: 46). At this point, Ana begins to lose herself as she projects her desires onto the drama. The fact that the actress playing the part of Inés is named Ana and bears an uncanny resemblance to Alas’s heroine facilitates her identification with the character. Her identification with Inés is not so much her way of stating “I am that,” but rather, “I want to be that.” Yet it is an identification that seems to contradict Mulvey’s hypothesis that spectators, regardless of their sex, identify with the more powerful male lead. Indeed, for someone who begrudged the domination of her governess and aunts, the prospect of identifying with a free and daring character like Don Juan would be understandably appealing. However, Ana’s choice of specular identification is less surprising if one bears in mind her masochistic nature and her tendency to submit to male authoritative figures (e.g., a Regent, a *Magistral*, and the leader of the local Liberal party). She not only identifies an ideal ego for herself, but distinguishes specular others for her husband and potential suitor, equating Víctor with the *Comendador* and visualizing Álvaro’s face on the actor playing Don Juan, thereby providing a clear foreshadowing of the novel’s outcome. But just as the Lacanian subject can never achieve the wholeness observed during the mirror stage, Ana’s desires will inevitably remain unsatisfied, as her real-life drama is destined to unfold in a manner quite unlike Zorrilla’s play. Álvaro’s devotion, like his sexual energy, is short lived. Víctor’s death from a bullet to his full bladder is protracted, painful, and decidedly unromantic. And this Don Álvaro, unlike his literary model, Don Juan Tenorio, or even his literary namesake, Rivas’s Don Álvaro, who both die dramatically, displays no courage and flees to Madrid in what Stephen Hart has called an ironic “anti-climax” (289). Ana’s fantasy highlights an inter-textual mirroring that parallels the intra-textual mirroring of the characters, both of which fail to offer a faithful likeness to the original models. Instead, *La Regenta* becomes a distorted reflection of Zorrilla’s *Don Juan Tenorio* (Durand 91), and the characters grotesque parodies on every level.

The Procession as a Scene of Visual Objectification

Like the theater scene, the seeing/being seen dynamic dominates the striking description of Ana’s barefoot walk through the streets of Vetusta during the Easter Procession in the twenty-sixth chapter. Among the details of this chapter is a telling account—comprising a single paragraph—of how the crowd, and specifically Obdulia, reacts to the spectacle. Desire would be the most accurate way to describe the effect Ana has on those who see her, and this dynamic of desire is triangular, with Ana, the crowd, and Obdulia occupying the angles. The crowd and Obdulia both view Ana as an object of desire, but this case differs from more common instances of triangular desire—for instance, when two individuals want the same object because they are motivated by competition or when one person imitates the desires of another in order to be like that person—in that Obdulia does not want to compete with the crowd, nor does she want to be like them. If anything,

she would prefer being in Ana's place. After examining the structure and tone of the passage, I shall examine the two vectors of desire which are both directed at Ana. Although these vectors are at first distinct from one another, lust in the case of the crowd and envy in the case of Obdulia, they quickly fall in line when Obdulia's envy gives way to sexual desire. This change makes the triangle even more atypical in that the object of desire and the desiring subject are both of the same sex, a detail having less to do with homosexuality and more to do with the relationship between envy and possession, as well as the male/female, active/passive paradigm associated with the gaze.

Differences in focalization, structure, and tone allow the paragraph to be arbitrarily divided into two parts. The first half of the paragraph reads like a fairly straight-forward description or report of the crowd as they await Ana's arrival. The narrator's view into the collective psyche of the group is minimal, especially compared to the focalization in the latter half of the paragraph. Sentence length remains relatively uniform throughout this portion of the paragraph, and the punctuation is unremarkable, both of which provide a sense of calm that contrasts with the building excitement later:

Como una ola de admiración precedía al fúnebre cortejo; antes de llegar la procesión a una calle, ya se sabía en ella, por las apretadas filas de las aceras, por la muchedumbre asomada a ventanas y balcones que 'la Regenta venía guapísima, pálida, como la Virgen a cuyos pies caminaba.'
(Alas 2: 360)

What stands out is the type of words used by the narrator to describe the scene. Compared to the accumulation of nouns and adjectives, the passage contains a paucity of verbs, an imbalance that creates a sense of hesitation analogous to the growing anticipation of the crowd, and later, of Obdulia. This imbalance increases throughout the passage so that, as with the "apretadas filas" and "muchedumbre" at the windows, there is a sense of turgidity, of building pressure that will soon erupt.

Overall, the tone of the opening half of the passage is relatively tame in comparison to the subsequent section, in which Obdulia serves as focalizer. In the second part of the passage, the use of interior monologue and *style indirecte libre* gives the narrator a more penetrating perspective than that seen earlier. A change in the structure of the text completes this shift in focalization. The sentences are no longer uniform in length with inconspicuous punctuation, but become irregular and choppy, giving the passage an erratic and erotic rhythm. Following a string of lengthy sentences, two short sentences abruptly alter the tempo of the text: "Obdulia estaba pálida de emoción. Se moría de envidia" (2: 361). These short utterances are followed by three consecutive interjections of variable length. The ratio of verbs to total number of words increases near the end of the paragraph, where the anticipation of Ana's arrival has reached a climax. The final pair of sentences contains erotically charged language and is fragmented by a series of commas and ellipses, emulating a sort of rhythmic panting: "¿Cuándo llegará?" preguntaba la viuda, lamiéndose los labios, invadida de una envidia admiradora, y, sintiendo extraños dejos de una especie de lujuria bestial, disparatada, inexplicable por lo absurda. Sentía Obdulia en aquel momento así . . . un deseo vago . . . de . . . de . . . ser hombre" (Alas 2: 361). The striking image of Obdulia licking her lips with bestial lust, combined with the text's

pulsating rhythm arouse the reader in a way that captures the sense of excitement and erotic overtones surrounding the spectacle of Ana's barefoot parade. Additionally, the static qualities of the paragraph arrest its narrative flow and lend it a visual quality similar to a word-picture. The reader is invited to evaluate the scene visually, not unlike the characters involved. This sensuality complements the dynamic of desire that runs throughout the passage, transforming the reading process into an act of voyeurism.

Lust and envy are the principal manifestations of desire in this account. Both the crowd and Obdulia experience sexual desire upon seeing Ana—expressed in terms of appetite. However, in Obdulia's case, lust is a secondary form of desire born from envy. Envy, or the desire to do or have what another does or has, implies lack, and while Obdulia certainly possesses material goods and physical beauty, she does not have what Ana does, the attention of the entire town: “Jamás sus [Obdulia's] desnudos hombros, sus brazos de marfil . . . jamás su espalda de curvas vertiginosas, su pecho alto y formido, y exuberante y tentadora, habían atraído así, ni con cien leguas, la atención y la admiración de un pueblo entero” (2: 361). This citation indicates that, like Ana on this occasion, Obdulia has previously been viewed as a fragmented and fetishized object, but without managing to attract the gaze of the entire town. Her naked shoulders, shapely back, and ample bosom, though described with very sensual detail, do not achieve the same effect on others as Ana's naked feet. It is not Ana's physical beauty that makes Obdulia envious, but the fact that she completely captivates everyone's attention: “¡El pueblo entero [está] pendiente de los pasos, de los movimientos, del traje de Ana, de su color, de sus gestos . . . !” (2: 361). Obdulia's emphasis on gestures, costume, etc., rather than physical beauty, signals the importance of theatricality or spectacle in attracting the gaze. As Obdulia notes: “esto es cuestión de *escenario*” (2: 361). As a result Obdulia is filled with “una envidia admiradora.” Here the etymology of *envidia*—from the Latin *invidare*, which means to look askance or longingly at the possessions or position of another—combined with the visually charged adjective *admiradora* recalls the link between vision and envy and situates Obdulia on the giving rather than the receiving end of the gaze. Because the original object of her desire (the dynamic between Ana and the crowd) remains out of reach, she compensates for this lack by replacing envy with a substitute desire, lust. It is not that Obdulia experiences a “lujuria bestial” in addition to *envidia*, but that this envy turns into lust. Finding an alternative expression and object of desire thus satiates, at least in part, the original feeling of envy. Furthermore, lust implies the possibility of possession and the fulfillment of desire, while envy does not. In aligning herself with the crowd, Obdulia objectifies Ana in an attempt to possess her, if not physically, then at least visually. Like the crowd, who “la devoraba con los ojos” (2: 360), Obdulia waits hungrily for Ana to arrive, licking her lips as she hopes to catch a glimpse of the ex-Regent's wife (2: 361). In both cases, the language connotes sexual voracity and highlights the link between appetite, lust, and vision. In this instance, the image of hunger or appetite is not synonymous with *envidia*, but is a way of dealing with it—if she cannot have what Ana has, she will have Ana.

As an object of the gaze, Ana is firmly located in a position of passivity, and the fact that she is only present on an extradiegetic level (that is, physically absent from this passage) only enhances her passivity. The crowd and Obdulia, on the other hand, enjoy the privileged role of subjects, directing their gaze toward the objectified Ana. I might add

that Ana is not only objectified, but metonymically reduced to a fetish. In psychoanalytic terms, this collective fascination surrounding the procession, as well as the fixation on Ana's feet, speaks not only to sexual pleasure, but also to sexual anxiety, and more specifically castration anxiety. The narrator ironically refers to the crowd as a "pueblo devoto" who reject spiritual edification in favor of physical gratification: "Cristo tendido en su lecho, bajo cristales, su Madre de negro, atravesada por siete espadas, que venía detrás, no merecían la atención del pueblo devoto; se esperaba a la Regenta" (*Alas* 2: 360). The religious analogy provides a contrast to, indeed a corruption of, the traditional image of the devout kneeling before the feet of a religious icon in worship. Instead, the "pueblo devoto" approaches Ana's feet not as objects of religious desire to be knelt before, but as objects of sexual desire to be seen.

This desire to see Ana, and in particular her feet, is not simply a matter of rebellion, of violating religious or social taboos on sexuality in a religious and social setting. It enters into the very psyche of each individual, for as Freud contends, the desire to see/know leads to castration anxiety:

Before the child comes under the dominance of the castration complex—at a time when he still holds women at full value—he begins to display an intense desire to look, as an erotic instinctual activity. He wants to see other people's genitals, at first in all probability to compare them with his own. The erotic attraction that comes from his mother soon culminates in a longing for her genital organ, which he takes to be a penis. With the discovery, which is not made till later, that women do not have a penis, this longing often turns into its opposite and gives place to a feeling of disgust which in the years of puberty can become the cause of psychical impotence, misogyny and permanent homosexuality. But the fixation on the object that was once strongly desired, the woman's penis, leaves indelible traces on the mental life of the child, who has pursued that portion of his infantile sexual researches with particular thoroughness. Fetishistic reverence for a woman's foot and shoe appears to take the foot merely as a substitutive symbol for the woman's penis which was once revered and later missed. (Freud, "Leonardo" 187)

Both voyeurism and fetishism are avenues for escaping castration anxiety, either through the overvaluation of a particular body part, as Freud indicates here, or by re-enacting the original trauma and demystifying the female body via the gaze (Mulvey 13). The foot is not only a popular symbol of eroticism, but one whose status as a fetish object associates Ana with lack, shame, and inferiority. By converting Ana into a fetishistic object of desire to be voyeuristically observed from a distance, the crowd exhibits a male desire which reinforces the male-subject/female-object binary. It is from this position of subject/gazer that Obdulia's "deseo de ser hombre" originates. The sentiment does not appear to be a typical one for Obdulia, but simply a "deseo vago" stimulated by the context and limited to "aquel momento." Gazing voyeuristically from behind balcony curtains, Obdulia, like the crowd as a whole, adopts a masculinized viewing position which subscribes to the notion of a male/female, active/passive paradigm. Contrary to Mandrell's statement that "*all* desire in the novel is masculine" (21), it is perhaps more accurate to say that all active

forms of desire are masculine. Passive forms, such as envy, are represented in the novel as decidedly feminine (Sinclair 68-69). This distinction explains Obdulia's rejection of envy in favor of lust at seeing Ana in the Easter procession and her striking desire to be a man.

According to Mulvey's paradigm of visual pleasure, there are three central components: the spectator who occupies a masculine viewing position, a female character who is the objectified by the gaze, and a male character who controls the female character and with whom the spectator identifies. Each of these facets is clearly identifiable in the procession scene. Obdulia acts as gazer, Ana as the passive object of the gaze, and Fermín as the active ideal ego. As I have previously indicated, Mulvey signals a sadistic/masochistic dynamic between the male and female characters in narrative cinema that can also be applied here. Because "the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification," he seeks a woman to control and objectify (Mulvey 12). Fermín is unable or unwilling to have the town's gaze upon him, and so he seeks a mediating object in the form of Ana. For Fermín, who remains trapped in an Oedipal relationship at home, Ana provides the perfect avenue of escape. Ana's masochistic character makes her an ideal passive counterpart to Fermín's active sadistic voyeurism (one only need recall the scene with the spyglass on the tower to appreciate his role as a sadistic voyeur).⁶ This dynamic is magnified in the procession scene, where Don Víctor notes, "La lleva ahí como un triunfador romano a una esclava" (Alas 2: 364). Fermín himself makes a similar observation: "él llevaba allí, a su lado, prisionera con cadenas invisibles a la señora más admirada por su hermosura y grandeza de alma en toda Vetusta" (2: 367). Like Fermín, who takes pleasure in subjecting Ana through punishment and forgiveness, those who watch the Regenta march down the street affirm their own subjectivity through the power of their gaze, but do so only at the price of objectifying Ana.

To conclude, in *La Regenta* Alas rejects the traditional ideal of vision as the most objective of the senses and opts instead for a representation of vision as something inseparably tied up with desire.⁷ Freud saw vision as part of our inherent drive for knowledge and as a common part of sexuality, but he also looked at examples of perverse sexuality where vision exceeds its normal role and becomes the principal vehicle of pleasure, as in the case of the voyeur. Seizing on this and other troubling features of vision in psychoanalytic theory, film critic Laura Mulvey developed a widely accepted analysis of the voyeuristic and fetishistic structures organizing the gaze. Mulvey's gendering of the gaze, that is, her theory that a spectator adopts a masculine viewpoint which objectifies the female actress as a way of dealing with castration anxiety, is very useful in examining several instances of spectatorship and performance in *La Regenta*. Teresina turns her morning chores into an erotic spectacle while Fermín looks on. In the process, Alas's reader becomes a secondary spectator or voyeur. The events of the sixteenth chapter, which occur in a theater house, depict a mirroring, albeit in a distorted fashion, between the show on stage and the actions of the audience members. By identifying with the protagonists of Zorilla's play, Ana and Don Álvaro highlight the parodic nature of their budding romance while other members of the audience, most notably Ronzal and Obdulia, imitate Álvaro and Ana, respectively. Finally, during Ana's participation in the Easter procession, a religious ritual is transformed into a case of perverse voyeurism. In the process, Ana is objectified by the town's collective gaze, and her bare feet become fetish objects. The scene also depicts a unique instance of masculinized gazing by a female character. In each instance, the

seeing/being seen dynamic exposes the darkest desires of the spectators. Inasmuch as desire is a fundamental component of seeing, the gaze is rarely, if ever, innocent.

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Notes

- ¹ Goffman is primarily interested in behavior at the modern workplace (e.g., how one acts in front of a supervisor versus how one acts around coworkers), but, as he suggests, the notion of social performance can be applied to any comparable scenario. It could be argued that in nineteenth-century Spain, preoccupations with social performance would have been particularly acute. The latter half of the century witnessed massive migrations from rural Spain to the large cities and provincial capitals. This migratory invasion marked a new period for cities like Madrid, for which social order, and the best ways to defend it, would become a major issue. One of the consequences of Madrid's rapid and uneven urban growth was a physical context in which the issues of social disorder and visibility were of paramount importance. By rendering the city and its residents visible—through physiognomy, gender discourse, and conduct manuals—society was systematically divided according to middle-class standards of class, gender, and ethnicity.
- ² See Freud's essays "On Narcissism," "The Uncanny," and "Medusa's Head," though it should be noted that Freud's analysis of vision is not limited to these works. For a brief overview of Freud's interest in all things visual, see Jay (329-37) and Brooks (98-106).
- ³ Lacan's famous formulation of the mirror stage describes the formation of the subject via a process of visual identification. While the human infant still lacks motor coordination (typically between six and eighteen months) it will identify with its own mirror reflection, its specular image. Malcolm Bowie describes the situation thus: "This is the moment at which the child seems suddenly to have a discovery to celebrate, and to be able to formulate, however roughly, the propositions 'I am that' and 'That is me'" (21-22). Despite the jubilant tone of this statement, the experience is not without a snag (and a major one at that). The baby sees its body as a whole, yet experiences its body as fragmented. This contrast between what it sees and what it feels produces an inner conflict between the subject and the specular image. In order to allay this conflict, the baby identifies with the image, and by so doing "situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction" (Lacan 2). Because of this misrecognition (*méconnaissance*), the subject undergoes a type of self-alienation, identifying with the ideal ego and yet resenting it for being external and other. The end result of this passage through the mirror stage is that the child enters into a "world of his own making" in which "he tends to find completion" (3).
- ⁴ The spatial arrangement of the home should, according to middle-class norms, dictate where sexual activities can take place by partitioning and erecting physical boundaries, which then represent moral boundaries. The bedroom is designated as the appropriate place for sexual relations, and only between the people who share that space: husband and wife. In this context, an open door suggests sexual promiscuity and/or infidelity. Thus, the setting of Juanito's first encounter with Fortunata through an open doorway in Galdós's *Fortunata y Jacinta* could be read as a sign of their future affairs. In the same novel, the open door reappears as a symbol of sexual immorality just after Fortunata's marriage to Maxi: "Fortunata se levantó y saliendo de la sala, se acercó a la puerta. En aquel acto, todo lo que constituye la entidad moral había desaparecido" (1: 679). That same night, she has a dream in which she sees the unlocking and opening of doors. As Tsuchiya observes: "One need not have read Freud to discern the sexual symbolism of this dream" (69).

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- ⁵ For a discussion of the narrator's role as pornographer, see Charnon-Deutsch (94, 99).
- ⁶ While the example of Fermín spying on Vetusta's residents from the cathedral tower certainly coincides with other instances of voyeurism mentioned above, it does not share the characteristic of performance because Ana and the others do not realize they are being watched. There is a fundamental difference in the way people behave when they are alone (or believe they are alone) and when they know they are being watched. See Martínez-Carazo, Richmond, and Turner for in-depth analyses of Fermín and his spyglass.
- ⁷ For an overview of vision's status as the "noblest" and most objective of the senses, see Jay (21-82).

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