

TOPOGRAPHIES OF THE SELF: THE MAPPING OF NARRATIVE SPACE IN *LA REGENTA*

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RESUMEN

En este artículo, la autora analiza la construcción del espacio y el tiempo narrativos en *La Regenta* de Leopoldo Alas Clarín.

ABSTRACT

The author analyzes the construction of narrative time and space in Leopoldo Alas Clarín's *La Regenta*.

Since its publication in the last decade of the nineteenth century, critics have questioned the accuracy of the title of Leopold Alas' novel, *La Regenta*. Frank Durand notes in his article on the structural unity in this text that as the title indicates, Ana de Ozores is the most important character, and the story of her seduction provides the main action¹. He also observes, nonetheless, that throughout the work Alas, alias Clarín, devotes a "disproportionate amount of space" to the lengthy and detailed description of the complexity and quality of the city of Vetusta, adding to further speculation as to just whom Clarín had intended to give the leading role. Alas himself had certainly never dismissed the possibility of a city taking on the role of a novelistic character:

¿No puede estar el núcleo de una obra en una idea, representado por una colectividad, por una institución? ¿No puede ser el protagonista de un libro un pueblo entero? ²

Indeed, Vetusta does nearly acquire the status of a protagonist, in that it is largely, if not solely, responsible for the birth and propagation of the dialectic (incarnated in its numerous verosimilar inhabitants) that eventually and inevitably culminates in Ana's adultery. Nevertheless, it is Ana de Ozores who occupies center stage, as it is clearly Alas' aim to investigate and reveal the inner psychological space which motivates the protagonist's behavior and leads to her tragic fall. Given the extensive and intensive treatment of the physical (geographical, architectural, meteorological, etc.) reality of the imaginary city in

which the narrative unfolds, the notion of space, from the perspective of both structure and agency, occupies a foremost and formidable position in the overall aesthetic and ideological conception of the novel.

A detailed and colorful portraiture of society and its customs, often accompanied by a lucid gloss and caustic judgement on the contemporary state of affairs, has come to be synonymous with the long-standing Hispanic literary tradition known as *costumbrismo*, to which many nineteenth century writers of the realist tendency are indisputably indebted. Just as the *costumbrista* work strives for the portrayal of the essence or essential characteristics of a society and its "types", the narrative art grounded in the principles of realism similarly aspires toward the objective reflection of reality. Naturalism is merely an exaggeration of this mimetic subcategory, which depends upon the observation of the present in order to give an accurate representation without idealization of reality.

Among Alas' numerous elucidations with respect to the functional and artistic aspects of the novel is the following, from the critical article in which he examines Pereda's "El Buey Suelto":

...el arte exige, para merecer este nombre (el de arte bello), que la expresión del fondo, de lo esencial, de lo genérico, sea determinada, individual, pero reflejando, aun en esta última concreta representación, lo que es en el individual lo principal, lo de la esencia, lo común a todo género de que es... El realismo, el legítimo, no desconoce la necesidad de tal doctrina; retrata fielmente lo individual, sin afeites ni postizos; pero retrata aquello que es característico, representativo, típico, mejor que todo eso (Alas 1891: 244).

The *costumbrismo* that Clarín incorporates into his novel is not that which is characteristic of Mesonero Romanos: an exclusively picturesque description tinged with nostalgia. It is, rather, more akin (particularly with regard to the ideological implications) to the *artículos de costumbre* of Larra. In another of his critical essays, this one entitled "Soledad", Alas affirms:

La justicia está en decir la verdad... El que ama al pueblo de veras y ha vivido cerca de él, y le comprende, y adivina, reivindicar sus derechos, no le pinta de tal modo, sino que, sin atenuar sus vicios, su degradación, señala el origen de tales males, y enseña al mundo la llaga (aunque se tapen los ojos y las narices los clásicos de pega), para que el mundo se asuste y se horrorice de su obra... Lo bueno, lo mucho bueno que en él [el pueblo] existe, no se revela mintiendo primores y lindezas espirituales, sino estudiando, profundizando su modo de vida, el medio en que se encuentra (Alas 1891: 183).

As a naturalist writer³ Clarín does endeavor to capture a faithful and objective reflection of reality. However, he is also conscious of the fact that mere observation and experimentation do not suffice for a truly profound and exhaustive study of the totality of reality. For Clarín, the novel is multidimensional and multitudinous, going beyond the mere reflectivity associated with the Stendhalian mirror, acquiring a more refractive nature, as the author deflects from the realm of mere objectivity and delves into the private emotional worlds inhabited by many of his characters. As a result, *La Regenta* supercedes the naturalist's prototype of the novel (derived from the works of Emile Zola) as a scientific instrument of disinterested and empirical analysis of reality. The novelistic world, as it is manifested in the

Spanish provincial city of Vetusta, is not that of a simplistic *cuadro de costumbres*; rather, it is an enlarged, as if under a microscopic lens, vital space in which a multitude of individuals coexist, and in reaction to which they further reveal themselves, their personal frustrations and their intimate passions. In Clarín's own words cited from the article "Mar sin orillas":

Es lo principal el carácter, porque como el drama es la poesía plena de la humanidad, lo que interesa ante todo es la resultante de las propiedades humanas, como fuerza, en la convivencia social, influidas por el medio en que obran, y a la vez influyentes... (Alas 1891: 135)

Galdós saw the need for interaction between man and his environment in order to explain the individual as well as society. Even when his novels begin to assume a fundamentally spiritualistic view of humanity, perhaps with the publication of *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886-1887), incorporating moral and psychological aspects into his panoramic, more universal, vision of the Spanish society of the latter nineteenth century, Galdós still structures his narrative on the dialectical relationship between man and the social forces and institutions surrounding him. Clarín has taken this rigorous investigation of the dialectic between opposing forces even further, exploring not only the interrelationships at work in society, but also the interplay of spatial and temporal relationships that gives configuration to the inner essence of his novelistic characters.⁴ Just as his own Saturnino Bermúdez, "el órgano de los ultramontanos de Vetusta... el más perito en la materia de contar la historia de cada uno de aquellos caserones" has compiled a comprehensive chronicle about the city (Vetusta Romana, Vetusta Goda, Vetusta Feudal, Vetusta Cristiana y Vetusta Transformada), Clarín also provides the reader with a valid social and historical document which chronicles the lives of the inhabitants of Spain during the Restoration period, reflecting the first decade of a new regime with all its superficiality and falseness. However, as object of observation, Alas does not restrain himself to phenomena that are physically spatial (neighborhoods, houses, churches, casinos, etc.) nor temporal (the four seasons, months of the year, Christmas, the Day of the Dead, Holy Week, etc.). His incessant, obsessive probing into the nature of things takes him well beyond the boundaries of the merely and exclusively physical, into the realm of psychological time and place, which primarily accounts for the unquestionable spatial texture of his novel.

An overtly conscious utilization of space for artistic and/or ideological ends is by no means an unprecedented technique in Clarín's novel, *La Regenta*. In the earliest of Spanish literary texts one can find an overriding tendency to allegorize space, such as in the works of Berceo and countless other medieval texts. In the Renaissance, space becomes immortalized in such "common places" (*lugares comunes*) as the bucolic garden, which tends to present man in harmony with his natural surroundings. In the Baroque period⁵ the discovery of new frontiers in science and the spiritual crisis following the Council of Trent result in an even greater consciousness of the multidimensional aspect of space, which has a consequential impact upon the narrative (as well as the poetic) literary text, most particularly noteworthy in Spain's works of the picaresque and the conceptista tradition. Early in the nineteenth century, a more passionate acceptance and rejection of space is revealed, in comparison with the treatment of space by the eighteenth century rationalists, as the romantics tend to either identify emotionally with places, or seek to transcend place through imaginary flight in an attempt to find fulfillment in realms beyond the earth. Drawing on Romanticism's attachment

to place, and its respect for the coordinate of space, Realism develops the techniques of detailed and accumulative description of natural and environments, and extends the range of places treated in literature to include urbanized settings. As an exaggerated variation of realism, naturalism actually reverses the romantic feeling of endearment to one of revulsion; however, without the enormous fund of sentiment accumulated by the romantic writers, the naturalistic reaction to space would never have been so strong.

In the early *costumbrista* works, often times there is little, if any, detailed description of place, although some select places, in their deliberated association with certain social "types", are charged with a gratuitous symbolic significance. The repeated association of some places with specific experiences and values in works of the realist tendency results in a system of archetypal place symbolism: mountains represent aspirations or trials; forests and swamps, peril and entrapment; meadows and gardens, pleasure and comfort (though a garden can also signify suffering); deserts, deprivation; houses, stability and a sense of community; roads and paths, adventure and change. As with all literary elements, place, as an artistic component of the text, has both a formal and a figurative value, a function serving both geographical (topographical) and metaphorical ends. As literature in the Spanish peninsula begins to evolve and the spatial dimension acquires a more rich and detailed treatment, as occurs in the realistic novel which evolved out the *costumbrista* works, greater significance is bestowed upon the spatial dimension of the text, particularly with regard to its functionality in the narrative.

Before considering in greater detail the spatial aspects of *La Regenta*, operable and observable on such levels as the linguistic, the thematic and the structural, it would be worthwhile to define some of the terminology as it is applied here in this analysis of Clarín's most important novel. Although literature, like music, has been considered primordially a temporal art form, its relationship with the spatial arts has been recognized since Aristotle: as Horace in his *Ars Poetica* noted that both painters and poets were entitled to liberty, curbed by discretion, probability and congruity.⁶

It wasn't until the mid-eighteenth century publication of *Laocoon* by Lessing that the distinction was made between the temporal arts (music, dance, and novel) and the spatial arts (painting, sculpture, and architecture), the one category of art being based on consecutiveness in time and the other on coexistence in space. Nonetheless, throughout the last two centuries many writers and literary critics have unhesitatingly recognized that numerous novelistic techniques are borrowed directly from the spatial arts, and that as the novel evolves and modernizes, it becomes more "spatialized", and hence, less dependent upon pure causality and temporality as structuring devices.

Since Joseph Frank first published his article entitled "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (Frank, Joseph 1963) in 1945, the notions of spatiality and spatial form have attained unprecedented consideration in the analysis of literary works. According to Frank, by undermining the inherent consecutiveness in language through the suppression of causal/temporal connectives, those words and words groups by which a literary work is tied to external reality and to the tradition of mimesis, the reader is forced to perceive the elements of the literary composition not as unrolling in time but as juxtaposed in space. He also finds a striking analogy between Proust's narrative method and the Impressionist painters:

The Impressionist painters juxtaposed pure tones on the canvas, instead of mixing them on the palette, in order to leave the blending of colors to the eye of the spectator. Similarly, Proust gives us what might be called pure views of his characters –views of them “motionless in a moment of vision” in various phases of their lives– and allow the sensibility of the reader to fuse these views into a unity. Each view must be apprehended by the reader as a unit; and Proust’s purpose is achieved only when these units of meaning are referred to each other reflexively in a moment of time (Frank 1963: 25).

Alas indeed devotes to a considerate amount of space to the mapping of space –both the objective, physical phenomena of external reality and the subjective, psychological domain of the interior being–, due in large part to his organic conception of the novel, with its indiscriminate selection of events as random (and at times, simultaneous) occurrences in a seamless web. The notion and function of spatiality in the literary text, as it was conceived by Frank, then, seems not only justifiable, but, in fact, appropriate in terms of the overall comprehension of *La Regenta*.

Clarín departs from a strict sense of the realistic novel, whose ultimate form is the “slice of life”, and turns unprecedented attention to the exploration and artistic expression of the character’s mental and emotional states in an attempt to achieve a more richly complex and profound characterization, previously impeded by the realistic novel’s emphasis on linear structure, empirical observation, and external point of view. The truly spatial consciousness which is behind Alas’ conception and creation of the novel is perhaps best evident in his effort to construct a novelistic space constituted by means of the characters that dwell within it and by the spatial and temporal coordinates that link the one to the other, relationships which, Bakhtin argues, are fused into one carefully drawn cartography, whole in the literary artistic chronotope⁷. *La Regenta* projects a predominantly mental space and psychological time, a realm to which memories, affective life, dreams, etc. belong, without an overt preoccupation for an absolute sense of sequential progression in the narrative.

The novel begins on an unequivocally spatial note. The reader is immediately immersed into the protagonistic city of Vetusta during naptime, a desolate, seemingly uninhabited (nor inhabitable) place which strikes him as being the quintessence of vacuousness and atrophy. The entire opening paragraph is exclusively dedicated to conjuring up the morbid physical reality of this provincial Spanish city which forms the locus of narrative, enveloping and smothering nearly all forms of material and spiritual life struggling to survive within it. The “heroic” myth about the city (“La heroica ciudad dormía la siesta.”) is quickly dispelled as Alas masterfully employs an adjectivization which serves to heighten the deplorable state of decadence, deterioration and obsolescence which prevails in the atmosphere and penetrates the edifices as well as the spirit of its inhabitants:

El viento sur, caliente y perezoso, empujaba las nubes blanquecinas que se rasgaban al correr hacia el norte. En las calles no había más ruido que el rumor estridente de los remolinos de polvo, trapos, pajas y papeles, que iban de arroyo en arroyo, de acera en acera, de esquina en esquina, revolando y persiguiéndose, como mariposas que se buscan y huyen y que el aire envuelve en sus pliegues invisibles. Cual turbas de pilluelos, aquellas migajas de la basura, aquellas sobras de todo, se juntaban en un montón, parábanse como dormidos un momento y brincaban de nuevo sobresaltadas, dispersándose, trepando unas por las paredes hasta los cristales temblorosos de los faroles, otras hasta los carteles de papel malpegados a las esquinas, y había pluma que llegaba a un tercer piso, y arenilla que se incrustaba para días, o para años, en la vidriera de un escaparate, agarrada a un plomo.

The complex and comprehensive interest in spatiality is already operative in the first paragraph of the novel on both the thematic and the stylistic levels, as the recently cited narrative passage well illustrates. Clarín reveals both a keen reaction to space in certain patterns of expression, and a cognizance of spatial concepts such as direction (“El viento sur... hacia el norte...”), distance (“...otras hasta los carteles de papel...”, “la campana de coro, que retumbaba allá en lo alto de la esbelta torre...”), height (“...pluma que llegaba a un tercer piso,”), depth (“...mariposas... que el aire envuelve en sus pliegues invisibles), perspective (“Que allá, allá abajo, en el ancho mundo, muy lejos, había una ciudad inmensa...”), polarity, etc. By means of a barrage of specific dimensional details, Alas delineates the boundaries of physical reality which constitute the city of Vetusta. There abounds in the novel a tendency to describe and secure the position or locale of material objects and other not so tangible phenomena, thereby establishing distinct planes in space equivalent to foreground and background, as observed in the frequent use of adverbs of localization (cerca, hacia, al lado de, etc.), prepositions and other indicators of ordination (desde, detrás, delante, etc), and verbs that either describe a movement restricted or circumscribed in space or trace directional movement (ir, dirigir, encaminar, aproximarse, subir, bajar, etc.)

Vetusta, as presented in the introductory paragraphs, is the symbolic representation of inertness that prevails in the Spanish society of the times. The cathedral tower, which according to J. E. Cirlot symbolizes elevation and ascent and links man to heaven through the consequently implied notions of transformation and evolution (Cirlot 1962: 326), stands ironically in diametrical opposition to the horizontal, pleasure-motivated activity in the city, which in turn manifests the indisposition to progressive motion or change. As hinted at in the descriptive passage cited above, Vetusta acquires an ominous presence: the whirlwinds of dust, rags and discarded papers move merely from stream to stream, sidewalk to sidewalk, streetcorner to streetcorner, chasing each other... like butterflies that look for each other, only to be enveloped by the invisible folds of the atmosphere. There is very little, if any, advancement or forward movement, and any attempt at a collective effort is even unsuccessful: even the meager crumbs from the garbage cannot remain together for long before being dispersed throughout various sectors of the city. The only sound to be heard throughout the streets is the strident murmur of the whirlwinds which have collected the vestiges of neglected rubbish. It is perhaps this visual image, that of the “remolino”, which best characterizes Vetusta. Upon first impression, the city gives the appearance of meaning no harm to anyone: “Vetusta... hacía la digestión del cocido y de la olla podrida, y descansaba...” However, it’s not long before it is revealed as a powerful gravitational force, a turbinal, destructive agent which exerts a kind of suction force upon all that resides within its limits, arresting all individual efforts at forward, progressive movement by means of her inward, spiral motion. For Ana de Ozores:

Vetusta era un lodazal de vulgaridades. Vetusta era su cárcel, la necia rutina, un mar de hielo que le tenía sujeta, inmóvil.

The pervasive vulgarity and the monotonous existence in Vetusta eliminate virtually all possibility of freedom and potential for growth for the individual, and any nonconformist attempt to protest or rebel against the societal mediocrity and hypocrisy irrevocably and

irremediably results in the absorption of the individual into overwhelming density enshrouding the city with no means of escape. A victim of circumstance, and of the pervasive and threatening forces at large in society, “muriéndose de hastío”, Ana seeks refuge and consolation through the other, alternative, imaginary worlds, in the creation of a space of her own, a lifelong habit of hers which afforded her the possibility of forging new identities:

Ana que jamás encontraba alegría, risas y besos en la vida, se dio a soñar todo eso desde los cuatro años. En el momento de perder la libertad se desesperaba, pero sus lágrimas se iban secando al fuego de la imaginación, que le caldeaba el cerebro y las mejillas. La niña fantaseaba primero milagros que le salvaban de sus prisiones que eran una muerte, figurábase vuelos imposibles.

Ana envies her husband “...la dicha de huir de Vetusta, de ir a mojarse a los montes y a las marismas, en la soledad...”. Mother Nature had often afforded her a means of escape, a comforting retreat from the disagreeable realities confronting her in barren existence without a mother and with a mere semblance of a father. Passing through the garden gate behind the house in Loreto (symbolic of the pearly gates granting access to paradise), she would ascend the mountain to the aromatic thyme-beds, “... subía con una ansiedad apasionada, como si fuera camino del cielo por la cuesta arriba.” Always moved by a pseudomystic inclination throughout her life, Ana looked to her faith as a means of transcending the miserably unbearable existence which life in Vetusta with a token husband and no children signified: “...había pensado que el Magistral iba a sacarla de aquel hastío, llevándola consigo sin salir de la catedral, *a regiones superiores, llenas de luz* [my underlining].” The fulfillment of her most intimate needs and passions, so desperately sought in the natural, the spiritual and the literary worlds is absolutely an illusion, an impossibility in Vetusta:

...¿para qué engañarse a sí misma? No estaba en Vetusta, no podía estar en aquel pobre rincón la realidad del sueño, el héroe del poema, que primero se había llamado Germán, después San Agustín, Obispo de Hípona, después Chateaubriand y después con cien nombres, todo grandeza, esplendor, dulzura delicada, rara y escogida... Y ahora estaba casada... Don Víctor era la muralla de la China de sus ensueños. Toda fantástica aparición que rebasara de aquellos cinco pies y varias pulgadas de hombre que tenía al lado, era un delito. Todo había concluido... sin haber empezado.

As the last sentence in the above quote clearly illustrates, time is minimized, essentially rendered meaningless in *La Regenta*, as a direct consequence of Alas' gain in immediacy and the excessive confinement of attention to the perspective of the experiencing self of his characters. The refinement or fragmentation of the narrative, through deliberated, detailed descriptions, presents the reader with a predominantly static portrait of reality, and forces him to lose track of the inherent linear progression in the novel. The notion of temporality, while by no means completely eliminated from this naturalistic novel, is subordinated to the fundamental spatiality, and the only sense of time in the novel is at best vague and confused (“...arenilla que se incrustaba para días, o para años,...”), or belonging to the realm of mythical reality, as observed in the tight cyclical structure which encases the narrative (the cycle which begins in the cathedral in the Volume I is completed three years later, to the exact month (October), when Ana returns to the cathedral at the end of the novel.

Alas' awareness of spatial form is evidenced in the development of a cyclical external structure and also in the internal ordering of the novel's events. The delayed and dispersed disclosure of expositional material breaks the novel's linear pattern of progressive development and contradicts the precept of a unidirectional, irreversible flow of time. The cyclic nature of time with its emphasis on the simultaneity of past, present and future is conveyed through a consciously deliberate, nonetheless artistic, arrangement of the novelistic components according to the fundamental structuring and thematic principle of spatiality, further strengthened by the geometric form of the novelistic intrigue: an amorous triangle.

The attenuation of the inherent temporality of the novel is further achieved through the individual's search and subsequent attempt at reconstructing the past. In a sort of pre-Proustian fashion, present sensations and experiences felt by the characters serve as the basis for the conjuring up and further elaboration of the reminiscences of their childhood, in the author's effort to recuperate those elements of the interior landscape of the individual which will assist the reader in comprehending the spiritual or psychic state motivating the character's actions. While the reader is introduced indirectly to the protagonist in the opening chapters through other character's dialogues and through pointed references made by the omniscient narrator, it is not until the third and fourth chapters of the novel, which sever the temporal linearity of the narrative and consequently suspend and retard its progressive action, that Ana is formally introduced; primarily through the technique of flashbacks, a systematic account of Ana's childhood background is presented which, in the naturalist's mentality, has played a decisive role in her formation. Throughout the novel, when overcome with abhorrence for all that existence in *Vetusta* signifies for her:

Sin que ella los provocase, acudían a su memoria recuerdos de la niñez, fragmentos de las conversaciones de su padre, el filósofo, sentencias de escéptico, paradojas de pesimista, que en los tiempos lejanos en que las había oído no tenían sentido claro para ella, mas que ahora le parecían materia digna de atención.

Many of the characters that populate the pages of *La Regenta*, finding life in *Vetusta* tedious and unbearable, if not resorting to dwell in their past, simply transport themselves to another space in time or period in history, through literature, in order to realize their most secret, unfulfilled passions. An exemplary case is that of Don Víctor Quintanar, who, in the private space of his bedroom, during the evening hours when fantasies often become realities, "...deliraba por las costumbres de aquel tiempo en que se sabía lo que era honor y mantenerlo. Según él, nadie como Calderón entendía en achaques del puntillo de honor." As an adolescent, Ana is so moved by the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine that in that instant of time, she is at once simultaneously transported to the imaginary world of primordial infantile instinct ("...lloró sobre las *Confesiones*... , como sobre el seno de una madre.") and to that of feminine maturity ("Su alma se hacía mujer en aquel momento."). Mesías truly believes that he is the *Vetustan* reincarnated Don Juan, and always deliberates over his lines and actions in order to achieve convincing authenticity ("Se creía hombre de talento... ; se confiaba en su experiencia de hombre de mundo, y en su arte de Tenorio..."). Bermúdez, not highly successful in the realm of amorous adventures, easily resolves the dilemma by escaping into the realm of the imaginary ("...¿para qué amar a las mujeres vivas, de carne y hueso? Mejor era soñar, seguir soñando."). For countless other characters in the novel, the monotonous and life-threatening

existence that they find in Vetusta is decidedly a less attractive alternative to the fabulous places that they encounter during their quotidian flights of fantasy.

As a consequence of the frequent suppression of causality in the narrative, the shift is directed away from the progressive linearity of the action and the reader is forced to perceive the components of the novelistic reality as juxtaposed in space. The erosion of temporal progress is heightened by the juxtaposition of coexistent and simultaneous realities in the Vetustan society which is characterized by its fundamental hypocrisy and preoccupation for appearance, which coupled with the desire to reside in an imaginary world more suited to their individual needs and passions, accounts for the predilection of the city's inhabitants for the theater: "Las gentes entraban y salían en una alcoba como en el escenario de un teatro, hablaba allí con afectado interés y pensaba en lo de fuera: su realidad era otra, aquello la máscara." Underneath the apparent cordiality and neighborliness of the inhabitants there is a hidden rancor and envy, which heightens Ana's sensation of isolation and fuels her desire, like that of many other characters, to seek refuge in the imaginary realization of her passions:

Todas aquellas necedades ensartadas en lugares comunes; aquella retórica fiambre, sin pizca de sinceridad, aumentó la tristeza de la Regenta; esto era peor que las campanas, más mecánico, más fatal; era la fatalidad de la estupidez ... Aquello era también un símbolo del mundo; las cosas grandes, las ideas puras y bellas, andaban confundidas con la prosa y la falsedad y la maldad, y no había modo de separarlas!

The simultaneous exploration of diametrically opposed planes in space, particularly those of interiority and exteriority, is further developed by the repetition of certain images or motifs which assist in expanding the spatial quality of the narrative and in the examination of the multifaceted reality as it's presented in the novel, while serving to reinforce the overall structural and thematic unity among seemingly fragmented components of the novel. Whereas the realists depend upon the camera as the indispensable tool for the photographic reflection of reality, the naturalists resort to other instruments of observation as a means of enlarging the perspective to give them a more panoramic, as well as microscopic, view of reality. Hence the significance of the Magistral's spyglass, which enables him to scrutinize every inch of Vetusta from the advantageous position of a higher, symbolically more superior, position in space: "La conocía palmo a palmo, por dentro y por fuera, por el alma y por el cuerpo, había escudriñado los rincones de las conciencias y los rincones de las casas." Likewise, the recurrent appearance of the mirror throughout the novel enhances the spatial dimension by duplicating reality. But more importantly, it serves to reflect the inner psychological being of the characters. The mirroring technique aids the author in presenting the more subjective character's view of himself (as opposed to the views held by other characters and by those pertaining to the narrator), and triggers the introspective examinations of self which will ultimately bring about certain revelations indispensable in the development of the characters. While contemplating himself in front of the mirror Fermín gradually comes to realize his internal transformation:

...el mozo fuerte y velludo, que tenía enfrente, en el espejo, le parecía un otro yo, que se había perdido, que había quedado en los montes, desnudo.

The multiple references, direct or indirect, to phenomena derived from the spatial arts (painting, sculpture, architecture) is another technique employed by Clarín to amplify the non-temporal dimension of his work and emphasize the multidimensionality of reality. The watercolors and medallions which decorate the rooms of the houses of the Vetustans heighten the predominately spatial aspect of the work, as do certain physical descriptions of the characters which acquire the semblance of classic Renaissance sculptures (as in that of the Magistral). As the action moves inward, often times the author focuses on the description of a character as an intensive, atemporal, static portrait. An impressionistic description of the character is attained by means of the artistic, emphatically visual, portrayal of the forces of mobility and the internal agitations motivating the behavior, the insertion of the "I" into the action:

De Pas había soñado con más altos destinos, y aún no renunciaba a ellos. Como recuerdos de un poema heroico leído en la juventud con entusiasmo, guardaba en la memoria brillantes cuadros que la ambición había pintado en su fantasía.

In an attempt to gain greater insight into the psychological mechanizations at work within his characters, Clarín devotes equal, if not greater, attention to the detailed description of interior landscapes which provides the elements necessary for a thorough character analysis; yet because of his naturalist tendency, he can in no way do away with descriptions of external reality, given the deterministic relationship of the environment to the individual. On the contrary, description is essential to Alas' novel, in its affinity with the spatial arts, and as an integral component of the realist narrative work.

Description takes on a greater importance in *La Regenta*, as it did for other writers of the realist tradition, in that its function becomes explicative and symbolic, no longer merely decorative. As Gerard Genette has pointed out in his *Figures II*, the evolution of the novel has witnessed an increasing liberation of description from its subordination to narration, becoming, unlike in the classical period, a major element of the exposition:

The physical portraits, the descriptions of clothes and furniture, tends, in Balzac and his realist successors, to reveal and, at the same time, to justify the psychology of the characters, of which they are at once the sign, the cause and the effect ... Narration attaches itself to actions and events considered as pure processes, and thus it puts the emphasis on the temporal and dramatic aspect of the récit ; description on the contrary, because it lingers on objects and things considered in their simultaneity, and because it envisages processes themselves as spectacles, seems to suspend the course of time and contributes to spread the récit in space (Genette 1969: 59).

As a result of the increasing importance and attention given to the seemingly insignificant particulars of everyday existence, a new narrative space and time emerge in Clarín's text, in which self and identity are mapped into existence by means of an ongoing dialogic relationship between social structures and human agency. It is the coalescence of the vertical time of interior, human subjectivity and the horizontal time of causality, which further enables Alas to construct a narrative reality that is at once particular and universal. Reaching into the margins beyond the limits of narrative "masculine" time, which according to Kristeva is "...project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding; time as departure, progression and arrival—in other words, the time of history,"⁸ the author constructs a space that is simultaneously feminine, rhythmic, an ever-unfolding present characterized by a fusion of the processes of

generating and becoming. Time and space flow into each other in *La Regenta*, in a crystallized moment of narrative art. The expansive treatment of both the physical reality of the imaginary city in which the narrative unfolds and the psychic landscapes inhabited by the characters, illustrate, above all, the significance of both time and space in the overall aesthetic and ideological conception of *La Regenta*.

Notes

1. Frank Durand (1963), B. Pérez Galdós (1901), which lends a symbolic interpretation to Clarín's novel; and Gonzalo Sobejano (1981). The most tentative of bibliographies must include Albert Brent (1951).
2. Leopoldo Alas (1885: 62), cited in Mariano Baquero Goyanes (1956: 138).
3. See W. E. Bull (1942: 537-551) and (1948: 321-334).
4. According to Galdós in his "Prólogo" to *La Regenta*, the importance of Clarín's contribution to the novel is "la significativa dualidad que también establece siempre (en sus manifestaciones teóricas), muy significativamente, entre materia y espíritu, en desacuerdo con el consistente materialismo que presta su base intelectual a la escuela naturalista y al propio positivismo ... la realidad sensible está preñada de significaciones trascendentes, y que la misión del artista consiste en detectarlas y exponerlas incorporadas en su obra."
5. See Guillermo Díaz-Plaja (1983); Helmut Hatzfeld (1964); José Antonio Maravall (1980); and Severo Sarduy (1974).
6. Horace (1977): "A poem is like a painting [ut pictura poesis]: the closer you stand to this one the more it will impress you; this one demands a rather dark corner, but that one needs to be seen in full light, and will stand up to the keen scrutiny of the art critic."
7. M. M. Bakhtin (1981: 84-85). *Chronotope* (literally, "time space") is the term employed by Bakhtin to designate the "intrinsic interconnectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature."
8. Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time" (1979) in *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. T. Moi. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987: 192).

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