

THE ANTIFEMINIST PREMISES OF  
CLARÍN'S *SU ÚNICO HIJO*

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Although *Su único hijo*, Leopoldo Alas's second novel, has not attracted as much scholarly attention as *La Regenta*, it did give rise in the past few years to some important articles, as well as to chapters of books on the author's work.<sup>1</sup> These articles and chapters have brought out important aspects of the novel, especially with respect to characterization and the satire of Spanish society. Yet no satisfactory analysis of the novel's structure appears to have been made so far. The dearth of valid structural criticism, it seems to me, can be attributed to the failure to take into account a fundamental aspect of the author's ideology, his antifeminism.

By antifeminism, I do not mean that Clarín was a misogynist. Far from it. Nevertheless, he was a male supremacist, fervently opposed to the feminist movement. Not only can this attitude be observed in his attacks against Emilia Pardo Bazán, but even more clearly in a little-known essay, "Psicología del sexo," where he formulates an antifeminist philosophy. Consequently, it behooves us to recapitulate Clarín's ideas about the relative position of the sexes in society before we see whether *Su único hijo* does rest on an antifeminist ideological foundation.

The following excerpt from a "Palique" reveals much about our author, who was a satirist accustomed to express himself forthrightly:

*Para mí, sin ánimo de ofender a nadie, toda mujer que cree que es esclava siendo mujer como es ahora, tiene algo en el alma o en el cuerpo de marimacho. Y todo hombre que se inclina a creer a las mujeres que se quejan en tal sentido, tiene algo de afeminado en el cuerpo o en el alma.*<sup>2</sup>

Alas's ideas here are not especially original, but they are well thought-out. The possibility of effeminacy "en el alma" is not assumed just for the purpose of banter; it occurs as a corollary of a sociophilosophical system fundamental to Alas's world view, as we shall see. But Clarín did apply his theories to specific individuals; that was considered bad manners, even though it was not unusual for nineteenth-century antifeminists to use such tactics. They answered pleas for social justice with *ad hominem* insults generated by notions related to biological, naturalistic determinism. The accusation of effeminacy had already been directed at John Stuart Mill, author of *The Subjection of Women*. Clarín aimed an equivalent affront at Emilia Pardo Bazán:

*... doña Emilia se presenta a defender la enseñanza de la mujer, causa por sí nobilísima, con un radicalismo, con unos aires de fronda y con*

*un marimachismo, permítase la palabra, que hacen antipática la pretensión de esa señora, ya de suyo vaga, inoportuna, prematura y precipitada.*<sup>3</sup>

Faced with the prospect of having girls attend his classes on Roman law should the universities open their doors to women, Alas used his potential embarrassment as a reason to oppose their admission.<sup>4</sup> In doing so, moreover, he jestingly brought into his argument the relative innocuousness of Doña Emilia's novels, which others had attacked for their candor:

*Y aún más difícil, por no decir imposible, me hubiera sido explicar delante de aquellas almas puras y pudorosas la singular naturaleza de los desventurados spadones, de que habla el romano con una riqueza de detalles realistas que no he visto siquiera en Insolación y otros dechados de naturalismo contemporáneo.*<sup>5</sup>

There is more venom in this "Palique," which will not be quoted further, except to show how it ends on a note of downright meanness. After demonstrating in six paragraphs that Pardo Bazán does not understand the meaning of several Latin legal phrases found in her works, Clarín concludes:

*Yo no tengo la culpa de verme obligado a hablar de estas cosas. Tiene la culpa doña Emilia. A esto dirá ella que si en su juventud le hubieran mandado a la Universidad, sabría lo que era senado-consulta y lo que quería decir alieni juris. Es verdad; pero replico que entonces también sabría lo que eran spadones. Y más vale que no sepa.*<sup>6</sup>

As we can see, the use of patronizing banter so frequent in antifeminist polemics is not even spared by our author.

Nevertheless, this is not the tone he always adopts. Clarín was too much of a thinker to attack irrationally any idea solely with sarcasm. He did find a philosophical basis for advocating male supremacy, probably in Herbert Spencer, and sought corroboration in the science of his day for his beliefs concerning the nature of woman. This philosophical basis, we can surmise, found its way into his fiction, not explicitly perhaps, but implicitly in the ideological premises that help shape the structure of some of his works.

Alas, let us repeat, was not a misogynist. There is one trait all his biographers have assumed, a profound love for his mother.<sup>7</sup> Her understanding, maternal guidance, and affection prevented a feeling of inferiority which a tiny, diminutive creature like Leopoldo Alas might well have developed otherwise. She taught him to strive for manhood, and this he certainly did. Leopoldo had the urge to outdo his companions in everything, not only as the best student but even as the fastest runner while at play. Now, Clarín's mother was also a pious woman who respected Church and clergy and sought to instill the same views in her son. This created an emotional conflict beginning in adolescence, because an important aspect of his growing up was a break from the Church. Most likely, it was not his mother's behavior which brought about Clarín's disillusionment with organized religion. An intellectually inclined youth like Leopoldo Alas could hardly have avoided reacting adversely to the teachings of the local clergy. Clarín probably felt his attainment of ideological independence to be an expression of

virility, but on the other hand was quite worried lest his mother's religiousness be offended. The resulting psychic tension remained with him, as we can perceive from the following account by Adolfo Posada:

*Jamás olvidaré la emoción con que Alas en una discusión apasionada sobre el Origen del Lenguaje en el Ateneo viejo de Madrid, evocaba tembloroso el recuerdo de la honda y callada tristeza de su madre cuando ésta se pudo dar cuenta del rompimiento de su hijo con los sentires que ella suscitara cariñosa y cuidadosamente en los felices días de la infancia. La emoción de Alas, que turbó su voz y humedeció sus ojos, nos dominó a todos cuantos lo escuchábamos.<sup>8</sup>*

Here, then, we can witness the sentimental Alas weeping over the loss of his bonds to what seemed to him a feminine ethos. Yet we must also watch for the satirical, the caustic Clarín who laughs at his own sentimentality because he knows that, as a politically progressive male, he must cast off his mother's ideological influence. Unfortunately, Clarín projected his personal struggle into his Weltanschauung, thus identifying the feminine ethos with conservatism. It followed that, because he was a liberal, he likewise had to be a male supremacist, an attitude detectable in both his works of fiction and his essays, as I shall attempt to demonstrate.

Alas's antifeminism was probably motivated by his anticlericalism, as we can deduce from his most significant antifeminist article, where he does attempt to formulate a rational theory of sexual politics. This article, published in 1894 in *La Ilustración Ibérica*, is inspired by an essay of Alfred Fouillée's in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*. Alas's is entitled "Psicología del sexo;" Fouillée's, "Psychologie des sexes." Comparison shows that our author uses much of Fouillée's material but at a crucial point differs from his French model. Fouillée is somewhat sympathetic to the feminist cause but ends up as a mild antifeminist for pragmatic social reasons. Clarín, on the other hand, seeks to justify male supremacy biologically, even though wishing to alleviate the conditions of woman's existence (just as he fought to alleviate those of miners):

*Hay que hacer mucho, es verdad, para mejorar la condición de la mujer, para facilitarle la vida, para hacerle más respirable el ambiente de la libertad; pero no será la mujer más perfecta, más libre, más feliz, cuando sea más hombre, sino cuando sea mejor mujer.*

*M. Fouillée, partidario de esta idea, que yo siempre he defendido, censurando, verbigracia, el marimachismo que defiende en nuestro país Da. Emilia Pardo Bazán; M. Fouillée, digo, no cree que la mujer sea inferior al hombre; ni inferior, ni superior, es otra cosa.<sup>9</sup>*

Consequently, although Clarín advocates reform in female education (and is therefore highly progressive compared to many of his Spanish contemporaries), "esta reforma es harto más compleja de lo que suponen los que la hacen consistir en ir convirtiendo a las mujeres en médicas, literatas, abogadas y hasta teólogas y guerreras."<sup>10</sup> To liberate woman, in the sense given to the expression by the feminists, is, for Alas, to turn her into a shrew.

For his view that feminism is shrewishness, our author seeks biological bases in the concept of assimilation versus dissimilation. The male is built for rapid use of energy, for its sudden consumption, whereas the female normally accumulates fatty tissue to conserve energy for the growth of her offspring:

*La diferencia aparece en los fenómenos de la alimentación, que variando, determinan también distinción y oposición en las funciones de reproducción de que es base también la alimentación. En ésta hay dos elementos capitales: la asimilación, el aprovechamiento para el propio ser, y la desasimilación, el gasto, y según predomina el ahorro o el consumo se adquieren diferentes propiedades.*<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, round and passive forms, such as the egg, are as an "expresión celular del temperamento de la madre," whereas the male shows more activity and expenditure of energy. From this Alas goes on to a political generalization:

*La hembra, puede decirse, es conservadora; el hombre, liberal. La hembra, más rica, algo así . . . como capitalista que acumula con avidez sustancia, ahorra y crece, se redondea con el ahorro, mientras el género masculino dilapida lo poco que tiene, es el verdadero proletario, en el sentido etimológico de la palabra (prole y ginnere), se dedica a engendrar, sin miedo a su propia pobreza.*<sup>12</sup>

Clarín's argument, which would indicate that the meek have already inherited the earth, etymologically at least, might appear amusing to us, but there is no doubt that he was seriously carried away by his analogy. Yet it is difficult to reconcile this analogy, which deems the male a "proletarian" in comparison to the female, with another analogy, found at the beginning of his essay. There, by insinuation, he likens feminism to communism and attacks "estas reformas radicales que rompen todo lazo con la historia, que cambian, en propósito, el mundo de arriba abajo."<sup>13</sup> Even this proposition seems to involve a falsification, because, whereas the dictatorship of the proletariat might appear to turn the world upside down, feminism does not, since it seeks equality of the sexes, not female supremacy. We might well wonder whether Clarín was at all interested in differentiating between the two, because, in order to expose what he must have felt to be the root of national decadence, he used as a satirical vehicle in *Su único hijo* the marriage of a shrew and a milksop.

But before treating such possible political symbolism, let us examine other ideas of his. In "Psicología del sexo," Alas also deals with the question of altruism. Let us recall that Auguste Comte was one of the first persons to use the word **altruism** as the opposite of egoism,<sup>14</sup> and that Spencer, altering Comte's definitions, based a substantial part of his psychological theory on these sentiments.<sup>15</sup> We can also find the word **egoismo** used in crucial passages of Alas's works. Although Fouillée, in "Psychologie des sexes," makes no mention of altruism, Clarín does not hesitate to do so in "Psicología del sexo," where he states that "La mujer es más altruista porque representa mejor la especie; el hombre la personalidad individual."<sup>16</sup> Through this rather confusing sentence we can assume that Alas posits two types of altruism, a masculine and a feminine one, whereas egoism is not worthy of differentiation. This may help us to analyze certain aspects of characterization in his fictional works, especially since he looks upon sexual differentiation as absolute: "La hembra tiende a conservar; el macho a renovar, a inventar, a ensayar. En la mujer y en el hombre no se nota excepción a esta regla."<sup>17</sup>

It appears, moreover, that Clarín's naturalistic tendencies become prescriptive, with "la vida moral" becoming an ineluctable consequence of biological realities: "Todo esto, que enseña la fisiología, se ve continuado en la vida moral: las

diferencias no son históricas, pasajeras, reformables; las ha creado la naturaleza, son necesarias y no tienden a disminuir, sino a complicarse por la mayor complejidad de la vida respectiva a los sexos."<sup>18</sup>

After this moral application of biological premises, Alas is now ready to come to a political conclusion. This brings us to Alas's political ideas, especially in relation to the possible regeneration of Spain. Let us not forget that he was a liberal and a professor of law. Accordingly, he desired social progress while fearing any radical upset. While on the one hand he believed that feminism would turn the world upside down (as we saw above), on the other hand he had no doubts as to which sex must dominate in order to achieve progress, since woman, as he sees it, is not only conservative; she is misonicistic:

*El macho es reformista, innovador; las variaciones en la especie se le deben a él. La hembra es más misonicista, guarda la tradición, los rasgos adquiridos: ambos elementos son necesarios.*

*Todos estos rasgos diferenciales se acentúan en las razas humanas. La mujer tiene formas redondeadas, es más pesada, necesita comer menos, es menos activa porque lleva consigo el peso muerto de que se ha de alimentar la generación venidera. En la mujer predomina la viscera; y entre los ganglios, aquellos en que el sistema nervioso preside a la vida vegetativa y sensitiva son los más poderosos. Muestra menos vigor en los centros que dirigen el trabajo muscular y [N.B.] el cerebral. La mujer necesita ahorrar fuerzas vitales que ha de gastar al ser madre. . . . El hijo es la prolongación de la madre, no del padre.<sup>19</sup>*

The statement in the last sentence above, as we shall see, is fundamental for an understanding of *Su único hijo*, where the grotesque protagonist and putative father fantasizes a totally opposite theory.

The above passage, moreover seems to corroborate the hypothesis put forward earlier in the present paper that Clarín felt his ideological liberation from his mother to be a manifestation of virility. The next step in his reasoning, of course, would be to accuse conservatives of effeminacy. But such is not Alas's preoccupation here, at least not explicitly. He seems more interested in making a point for antifeminism:

*De sacar de quicio la misión de la mujer vienen dos grandes males: que su natural misonicismo, su horror al cambio, al sacrificio de lo inmediato y próximo, condición necesaria, en cierta medida, para el progreso, impiden la invención, la reforma, el perfeccionamiento de los medios adecuados a los fines: éste es el primer mal.*

*El segundo está en que, abandonando, más o menos, la mujer su papel de elemento conservador, faltará lastre a la vida, faltará base para la reforma. La mujer política, la mujer doctora, la mujer socialista, etc., etc., vienen a establecer una competencia inútil, superflua y desmañada, y, en cambio, gastan en esfuerzo innecesario las reservas, el capital de vida acumulado por la asimilación, por la herencia, por el hábito. La mujer es rémora para el altruismo en las esferas de la abnegación abstracta, ideológica, donde este altruismo es más necesario; casi todas las madres se sacrifican por su hijo, muchas mujeres por su esposo, por sus parientes, algunas por su clase, por su pueblo, por su patria, no pocas por su religión; pero la mujer no se sacrifica por la humanidad, por una idea de universal interés, por la pura razón, por el amor a la verdad pura.<sup>20</sup>*

Such emphasis on the sexual determination of personality, seems to accord with certain aspects of characterization in Alas's fiction. His play, *Teresa*, is a case in point, as will be shown below. As for *Su único hijo*, the highly satirical nature of this work implies exaggeration in the characterization. The action revolves around the marriage of a schrew and a milksop, which Clarín must have looked upon as a reversal of roles. Thus its ideological underpinnings involve what for the author might indicate an upside-down world. Significantly enough, the likelihood of perilous social disequilibrium is predicted by Alas in "Psicología del sexo" should women begin to participate in politics:

*Harto egoísta viene siendo el mundo, harto perezoso para sacrificarse por lo desconocido, por lo futuro ideal; para perfeccionar el arte de la vida, merced a ensayos desinteresados, a tentativas que no son negocios, y no es bien que ahora vengan las mujeres a gobernar la sociedad, y hacer que el hombre sea más egoísta, el pueblo, el municipio, más localista, el patriotismo más cerrado al amor humano, la religión más exclusivista, la educación más rutinaria e interesada, la ciencia más preocupada y utilitaria, el arte más cobarde y flojo y limitado.<sup>22</sup>*

A contemporary feminist would reply, of course, that Alas takes the symptom for the cause, and that the Victorian woman was sentimental and petty because she was oppressed. Yet Clarín seems utterly oblivious of such a possible argument. His theory seems to be developed from the assumption that feminine altruism is realized only within the role assigned to a woman by her sex, and that her alienation from this sexual role brings with it a shift, not only to the opposite sexual role, but from potential altruism to its opposite, egoism. This is fundamental for an understanding of the structure of *Su único hijo*, where, moreover, an equivalent shift occurs when a man fantastically assumes a woman's role.

A careful collation of Alas's ideas with those of Comte and Spencer shows that Clarín distorts Comte's principles and goes beyond Spencerian antifeminism. His stance makes it harder to reconcile the mentalities of the sexes and thus accords with the pessimistic aspect of naturalist literature.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, it must have been induced by some irksome apprehension. Indeed, Clarín not only supposes that a shift in sexual roles involves a declination for the worse on the altruism-egoism scale; he betrays his fear of clerical influence on women, and one might wonder whether this fear is not a strong motive in the development of his theory:

*No, no hagamos de la mujer lo que no puede ser, porque haremos un reformista que no tenga el espíritu que la reforma necesita; no reformará, tenderá a la reacción. El elemento idolátrico persiste más en las religiones que parecían llamadas a perderlo pronto, por la gran influencia de la mujer en la vida religiosa moderna. Ciertos cultos se afeminan y se estancan.*

*Dentro de la misma confesión varía la intensidad del movimiento según predomina el elemento femenino o el masculino. Pío IX era un papa . . . de las mujeres; León XIII no excita, como Pío IX, la imaginación de nuestras hembras. Le veneran porque es el papa; a Pío IX le adoraban por ser Pío IX.<sup>24</sup>*

Let us note that Clarín seems to equate cultural stagnation with effemination, two themes that he treats in *Su único hijo*.

He also makes some further unflattering statements with respect to women's influence:

*En la literatura no adquirirían celebridad ciertos escritores que a falta de arte ofrecen interés (moralidad, satisfacción de la curiosidad, adulación a la ignorancia, a la vulgaridad, etc.), si no fuera por las mujeres.*

*Yo no sé de ninguna mujer que hasta ahora haya dado pruebas de haber comprendido el absoluto desinterés científico de la verdad, y sea la verdad la que sea.*<sup>25</sup>

Then he asserts, contrary to feminist ideology, that "la diferencia de los sexos no es un resultado artificial de la sociedad, sino una diferenciación natural que, una vez iniciada, debe seguir su rumbo y tiene sus armónicas funciones bien determinadas."<sup>26</sup> As we can see, Clarín accepts without previous analysis the labels *natural* and *artificial*, whereas the feminists attempt to differentiate between biological and social categories. Moreover, our author applies prescriptively what would otherwise be a pseudo-Darwinian descriptive theory, since he believes the development of the species follows a set course that must not be tampered with.

It may be fitting now to examine some of Alas's fiction where his concept of sexual roles is especially manifest. For example, much has been written about the influence of *Madame Bovary* on *La Regenta*.<sup>27</sup> Yet an important difference between the two is that Flaubert's heroine is a mother while Ana Ozores is not. Alas must have felt that this heroine's childlessness was requisite to a convincing picture of frustration. This difference of attitude between Flaubert and Clarín seems to parallel the difference between the latter and Comte with regard to which is woman's principal calling, spouse or mother.<sup>28</sup> Another comparison between the Spaniard and a French author evinces likewise Clarín's insistence on motherhood. As Phyllis Boring has demonstrated,<sup>28</sup> *Doña Berta* is influenced by *Une Vie*. In this short novel, Clarín goes as much beyond Maupassant as he goes beyond Flaubert in *La Regenta*. And, as we shall see, there is a motif in *Doña Berta* which also appears in *Su único hijo*.

Jeanne, the protagonist of *Une Vie*, is married to a man who is unfaithful and dissipates her inheritance. Years later, their son behaves toward his mother in a dastardly manner, thus repeating his father's outrage. *Doña Berta*, on the other hand, had her illegitimate new-born child taken from her. She is presented to the reader as an old woman in her almost idyllic ancestral home, *Susacasa*, which she shares with a servant and a cat. One day she meets a young artist who has ventured into her domain to paint landscapes; a friendship develops and he tells *Doña Berta* about a very large portrait he did of a captain who later died in war. The old woman persuades herself that the captain was her son, a fixation induced by the coincidence that her lover likewise had been a captain. Several months later *Berta* decides to go in search of the portrait, a quixotic quest. Accordingly, she sells her property and abandons her faithful servant for "un pedazo de lienzo."<sup>29</sup>

Throughout this short novel we can perceive the author's sentimentality concerning the role of woman. Though implicit here, it is explicitly stated in "Psicología del sexo":

*En cambio, la mujer, defendiendo el hogar, la legítima tradición de los clásicos amores humanos, el amor de los padres, el de los hijos; la mujer, afirmando la realidad, la actualidad de los grandes principios de fe, de cohesión social; afirmando con su presencia el gran principio del orden, de la armonía de las cosas, en su belleza; inspirando el amor, prueba de la divinidad latente del mundo, o en el mundo; la mujer, dando razón estética a la vida, la prueba que da el ser con ser, realiza un sublime servicio, en que es insustituible y que, si en estas cosas hubiera prioridad, sería, sin duda, lo primero. Porque si es necesario que progrese el mundo, antes es preciso que sea.<sup>30</sup>*

Let us keep in mind the type of love woman can give, according to Clarín, the type of altruism she can display and the type she cannot display, and we shall realize that the climax of *Doña Berta*, a touching scene indeed, must have been thought out by the author as an instance of feminine altruism carried to quixotic extremes. In other words, Berta does not set out to suffer for humanity or for an abstraction, or for an ideological phantom like the restoration of chivalry; her object is real, and yet the reasons for its quest, an exclusively feminine quest, are fantastic. Just as Alonso Quijano becomes a Quixote owing to maddened male altruism, so does Berta become a female Quixote through exacerbated feminine altruism. The old woman has found her way to a Madrid warehouse, where she persuades a compassionate workman to get her a ladder so she can look down on the carvas being unrolled for her on the floor:

*El mozo rubio tuvo lástima; los otros, no. Impacientes, echaron mano a la tela, en tanto que su compañero, con mucha prisa, acercaba la escalera; y mientras la sujetaba por un lado para que no se moviera, daba la mano a doña Berta, que, aprehurada y temblorosa, subía con gran trabajo uno a uno aquellos travesaños gastados y resbaladizos. Subió cinco, se agarró con toda la fuerza que tenía a la madera, y doblando el cuello, contempló el lienzo famoso . . . , que se movía, pues los obreros habían comenzado a levantarlo. Como un fantasma ondulante, como un ensueño, vio entre humo, sangre, piedras, tierra, colorines y uniformes, una figura que la miró a ella un instante con ojos de sublime espanto, de heroico terror . . . La figura de su capitán, del que ella había encontrado, manchado de sangre también, a la puerta de Posadorio. Sí, era su capitán, mezclado con ella misma, con su hermano mayor; era un Rondaliego injerto en el esposo de su alma. ¡Era su hijo! Pero, pasó como un relámpago, moviéndose en zigzag, zupino, como si le llevaran a enterrar . . . Iba con los brazos abiertos, una espada en la mano, entre piedras que se desmoronan y arena, entre cadáveres y bayonetas. No podía fijar la imagen; apenas había visto más que aquella figura que le llenó el alma de repente, tan pálida, ondulante, desvanecida entre otras manchas y figuras . . . Pero la expresión de aquel rostro, la virtud mágica de aquella mirada, eran fijas, permanecían en el cerebro . . . Y al mismo tiempo que el cuadro desaparecía, llevado por los operarios, la vista se le nublaba a doña Berta, que perdía el sentido, se desplomaba y venía a caer, deslizándose por la escalera, en los brazos del mozo compasivo que la había ayudado en su ascensión penosa.*



*Aquello también era un cuadro; parecía, a su manera, un  
Descendimiento.*

There is doubtlessly a grotesque aspect to this simile of the Descent from the Cross because, whereas in the Biblical model a mother on the ground sees her dead son being lowered, here we have a mother being lowered as she faints from looking at an image of her dead putative son on the floor. This interchange of elements in a religious metaphor involves a switch of sexual identities, a reversal of the roles of Mary and Jesus. Some parallels can likewise be drawn between **Doña Berta** and **Su único hijo**. In the first place, Emma Valcárcel, the female protagonist, also has a fixation for "un pedazo de lienzo," and we shall examine this motif below. There is moreover some resemblance between Emma's husband, Bonifacio Reyes, and Berta, because both suffer from an aberration of maternal sentiments, although Bonis is far more grotesque since he is a man.

Clarín's only play, **Teresa**, can also throw light on his attitude toward sexual roles. The heroine is a former servant girl, married to a miner who engages incompetently in radical political activity, dissipating his energy and wages on drink, while his family lives in penury. Arriving on the scene, the **señorito** in whose house Teresa had been a servant, and who always loved her, offers to take her and her child with him. She nonetheless declines the opportunity. At the play's end, as her husband, hurt in a mine accident, lies spread-eagle on the floor in a drunken stupor, and with his wound unstanched, Teresa exclaims: "¡Yo aquí! . . . ¡Siempre aquí! . . . junto al hombre de mi cruz . . .! ¡Al pie de mi cruz . . . que sangra!"<sup>31</sup> These words best express her feminine sense of mission. Roque, her husband, who has squandered his wages buying aguardiente for his companions so they would listen to his socialist harangues at the tavern, justified his behavior thus: "me debía a mis ideas."<sup>32</sup> These characters, as we can see, conform to Alas's dual concept of altruism. The man sacrifices himself, so he believes, for ideas, while the woman sees her devotion to husband and family as a sacred duty. When Teresa tries to help the bleeding Roque in his drunken stupor, he hits her with a miner's lamp. Fernando, the **señorito**, witnesses it and the following dialogue takes place:

*FERN. (Acercándose por detrás a Teresa.) Pero tú le perdonas. . . pero tú olvidas. . . ¡Oh! ¡esta sangre! (Al ver que le resbala a Teresa por la frente al inclinarse.)*

*TERESA Es la suya. . .*

*FERN. ¡No! Es tuya. . .*

*TERESA Suyas o mías. . . no importa; ¡es sangre nuestra!*<sup>33</sup>

No better metaphor could have been used for Clarín's concept of feminine altruism than this simple physical, biological reality.

Moreover, in the heroine's crucifixion metaphor there is no shift of sexual roles. Therefore it is neither grotesque nor comic. Yet the cross has no material existence; it is merely a pattern; besides, it is not upright but prone. Perhaps the latter symbolizes defeat and helps maintain the drama's tragic proportions to offset the melodramatic ingredient. Another feature of this play is its treatment of the honor theme in a manner remindful of Echegaray, but applied to the lower rather than the middle class. Enough traditional values are present in this work to elicit from a conservative audience sympathy

for the miner's plight. Nevertheless, it was considered too old-fashioned by leftist thinkers,<sup>34</sup> perhaps primarily because in it revolutionary ideas are spoken hyperebolically under the influence of alcohol. Moreover, Roque's political radicalism is balanced by Teresa's matrimonial conservatism. A literary work predicated on the fulfillment of sexual roles could hardly be revolutionary, or even liberal, since both the liberal John Stuart Mill and the radical Friedrich Engels insisted that the subjugation of women by men is the prototype for all other forms of oppression.<sup>35</sup>

Now that Leopoldo Alas's preoccupation with sexual role has been analyzed in two other works, let us turn to *Su único hijo*. As Baquero Goyanes has so aptly demonstrated, this novel is a thorough satire of Spanish society, left without ideals after the demise of the Romantic era. Yet there is much more to this novel, for its plot centers on the marriage of a shrew and a milksop. The presentation of such types in literature usually involves comical, even farcical, treatment, owing to the reversal of what is generally considered the normal order of things. Such a reversal, in the form it customarily takes within our literary tradition, does not appear to transcend the individual level; it fails to attain meaning on a universal or even a sociopolitical plane. Accordingly, the validity of this humorous inversion can go unquestioned when it forms the basis of light comedy or slapstick. However, when it is treated in psychological depth to serve as a metaphorical vehicle for irony within a significant social satire, then the assumption of what should be the normal order of things becomes an ideological premise, and the author can be accused of having written a tendentious work, perhaps without even fully understanding the consequences. This seems to be the case with *Su único hijo*, one of the best-structured, most brilliant and stylistically flawless novels in the Spanish language, whose excellence is somehow vitiated by what must be deemed a certain tendentiousness, an implied assumption that male supremacy is indisputably the proper and rightful social pattern.

Let us begin by analyzing the two main characters. Significantly, the first sentence of *Su único hijo* is: "Emma Valcárcel fue una hija única, mimada."<sup>36</sup> It is as if Clarín were saying to his detractors, who accused him of plagiarizing Flaubert in *La Regenta*, that if they thought Ana Ozores was meant to be a Spanish Emma Bovary, he would now give them a real Spanish Emma; and if they thought something bovine was implied about provincial society by the French heroine's name, then Valcárcel would do quite well for the Spanish equivalent. Perhaps something of the sort passed through Alas's mind; and perhaps much more. For example, if the pícaro can be called an antihero because in all respects he is the opposite of the caballero (the ideal man), then Emma Valcárcel, in her creator's view, must be an antiheroine, because he has made her into a sort of antimother. For one thing, we are told that, after a miscarriage, she became thin and bony. Consequently, she is quite unlike the plump woman assumed as a feminine model in "Psicología del sexo":

*Emma, que tuvo un mal parto, salió de una crisis de la vida lisiada de las entrañas, con el estómago muy débil, y perdió carnes y ocultó prematuras arrugas. Mas no podía esconder un brillo frío y siniestro de la mirada, antipático como el sol; en aquel brillo y en la expresión repulsiva que le acompañaba, se había convertido el misterioso fulgor de aquellos ojos que habían cantado, a la guitarra, varios parientes de la*

*enfermucha mujer, nerviosa, irascible. De aquellos parientes, enamorados los más en secreto tiempo atrás, cada cual según su temperamento, hizo su corte Emma, que cada día despreciaba más a su marido, a quien sólo estimaba como físico, y sentía más vivo el cariño por los de su raza. (pp. 561-2; cf. 2)*

We should note that, deprived of the opportunity to apply her potential feminine altruism on its natural primary object, a child, Emma bypasses the possible secondary object, her milksop husband, and bestows it on her kinsmen. After a while, however, even this racial altruism<sup>37</sup> fades and she reaches an almost total egotistic state:

*En los días en que sus aprensiones, mezcladas con su positiva enfermedad nerviosa, la habían puesto en verdadero peligro, camino de la muerte, por la debilidad no combatida, había llegado a sentir una soledad terrible, la de todo egoísta que presiente el fin de su vida; todas las cosas y todos los hombres la dejaban morirse sola, irse con Dios; y con doble vista de enferma adivinaba el fondo de la indiferencia general, la proximidad del peligro. (p. 612; ch. 9)*

The following is even more significant, owing to the close link between the protagonist's character and her environment:

*Ni una vez sola se le ocurrió encomendarse a ningún santo, ni ofreció nada a la Virgen ni a Jesús por sí sanaba; la primera energía que tuvo al convalecer la empleó en sonreír, con terrible sonrisa de resucitada, a un propósito firme y endiablado: su tremendo egoísmo de convaleciente, mundano, prosaico y rastrero, se agarró a la resolución inmovible de vengarse de los miserables parientes que la iban a dejar morirse sola.*

*Emma, como la mayor parte de las criaturas del siglo, no tenía vigor intelectual ni voluntario más que para los intereses inmediatos y mezquinos de la prosa ordinaria de la vida; llamaba poesía a todo lo demás, y sólo tenía por serio en resumidas cuentas lo bajo, el egoísmo diario, y sólo para esto sabía querer y pensar con alguna fuerza. Tal espíritu era más compatible con aquel romanticismo falso y aquellas extravagancias fantásticas de su juventud, de lo que ella misma hubiera podido figurarse, a ser capaz de comparar el fondo de su alma mezquina con el fondo de los ensueños de sus días de primavera.*

*El renacimiento de su carne lo guardaba como un secreto; era una hipócrita de la salud; seguía fingiendo achaques corporales como si fuese virtud el tenerlos. Eufemia, su doncella, era confidente parcial de sus engaños: como una trampa que hiciera a todos los suyos, Emma saboreaba a solas con su criada los pormenores de aquel fingimiento. La hija de Valcárcel se robaba a sí misma por mano de Eufemia que, de tapadillo, traía de tiendas y plazas los mejores bocados y las chuchertas más caras de la moda en materia de ropa interior, perfumes y manjares. En todos los comercios y puestos de comestibles principales, llegó a tener Emma cuentas enormes. "Ni el tío Nepomuceno, ni Bonts, ni Sebastián, sospechaban que existiera aquel agujero que ella iba haciendo con las uñas en el fortunón que ellos tal vez habían creído heredar de un día a otro" (pp. 612-3).*

*"Sí, la vida todavía guardaba un porvenir sustancioso; ahora caía en la cuenta de que no había sido antes bastante egoísta. Mortificar*

*a los demás y divertirse ella, de mil maneras desconocidas, todo lo posible, estas eran las dos fuentes de placer que quería agotar a grandes tragos; dos fuentes que venían a ser una misma" (p. 615; ch. 9).*

These passages reveal a great deal about the thought of Leopoldo Alas. The noble, generous, forgiving mind is altruistic, whereas vindictiveness is an attribute of egoism. In fact, at one point our author uses a meaningful word from Greek mythology to describe Emma's vindictive nature:

*No hay para qué seguir a Bonis en sus demás conjeturas, sino irse a lo cierto directamente. Cierto era, muy cierto, que Emma había amenazado ruina, que sus carnes se habían derretido entre desarreglos originados de sus malandanzas de madre frustrada, influencias nerviosas, aprensiones pseudohigiénicas medidas y cavilaciones, rabieta y falta de luz y de aire libre; pero también era verdad que no faltaba fibra al cuerpo eléctrico de aquella Euménide, que sus nervios se agarraban furiosos a la vida, enroscándose en ella . . .<sup>38</sup>*

Since the heroine is labeled a Eumenide, it behooves the reader to ponder the possible influence of Aeschylus's *Furies* on *Su único hijo*. It may well be that Alas intended more than a casual reference to these goddesses of vindictive pursuit who represent, in the Greek play, the feminine principle of the unconscious. This frustrated mother shows a self-destructive vengefulness that appears conceived according to an idea of the female psyche closely akin to Aeschylus's. We begin to perceive this in chapter X:

*Los planes [de Emma] eran burlarse de una manera feroz de su tío y de su marido, jugar con ellos como el gato con el ratón, descubrir medios de engañarlos y perderlos, que fuesen para ella muy divertidos. Contra el tío ya sabía de tiempo atrás qué armas emplear; echar la casa por la ventana, gastar mucho en el regalo de su propia personilla. (p. 629, ch. 10)*

And yet Bonifacio, in his ludicrous manner indicative of the switch in sexual roles, intuited his wife's vindictive nature long beforehand:

*Al acercarse a su mujer se le ocurrió recordar al moro de Venecia, de cuya historia sabía por la ópera de Rossini; sí, él era Otello y su mujer Desdémón . . . sólo que al revés, es decir, él venía a ser un Desdémón y su esposa podía muy bien ser una Otela, que genio para ello no le faltaba. (p. 606; ch. 8)*

To be sure, men too can be vindictive. Witness Emma's uncle in the last chapter: "Don Nepo sintió una ola de cólera subirle al rostro. Y recurrió a su venganza suprema" (p. 701; ch. 16). Nevertheless, his revenge is not self-destructive but carefully planned to his own advantage.

In one of the passages quoted above, we saw that it never occurred to Emma to seek divine protection during her illness. Alas, in a previous paragraph, had explained her attitude thus:

*Emma era una atea perfecta. Jamás había pensado en Dios, ni para negarlo; no creía ni dejaba de creer en la religión; cumplía con la Iglesia malamente, y eso por máquina. En su tiempo no se solía discutir*

*asuntos religiosos en su tierra; los que no eran devotos gozaban de una tolerancia completa; como tampoco eran descreídos, ni faltaban a las costumbres piadosas y guardaban las principales apariencias, por nadie eran molestados. (p. 612; ch. 9)*

There is, of course, a certain irony in the adjective **perfecta** which modifies **atea**. What probably underlies Clarín's irony is a belief that a virile man might come to be an atheist by conviction attained through ratiocination, and that it could be a manifestation of altruism. Emma's atheism, on the other hand, is but thoughtless egoism, and the society that harbors it deserves adverse criticism indeed.

Emma's own egoism impedes her from seeing anything beyond egoism in others, and, not surprisingly, Alas uses another classical reference to explain it:

*Porque, en efecto, [a Bonis] le suponía infiel mucho tiempo hacía; sin contar con que Emma, en las meditaciones de sus soledades de alcoba, con el histérico por Sibila, había llegado a concebir al hombre, a todos los hombres, como el animal egoísta y de instintos crueles y groseros por excelencia, no creía en el marido rigurosamente fiel a su esposa; más era, tal ente de razón la parecía ridículo, y se confesaba que ella, en el caso de cualquier hombre casado, no se contentaría con su mujer. (p. 630; ch. 10)*

Her attitude in this respect, however, appears rather banal, like her enjoyment of the stares she gets when making her sumptuous entrée at the opera: "Sobre todo, lo que más saboreaba, y lo que tenía por más seguro, era la envidia" (p. 627).

By chapter XV, Emma has become the antimother **par excellence**. Even though in an advanced stage of pregnancy, she is delighted at the idea of travelling to bathe in the sea:

*Emma quería sentir algo extraño con el movimiento del coche; esperaba de aquel viaje imprudente una especie de milagro . . . natural. Que el hijo se le deshiciera en las entrañas sin culpa de ella. Gaetano había dicho que el viaje podría hacer fracasar el temido parto. La Valcárcel deseaba abortar, sin ningún remordimiento. No era ella; era el traqueo, el vaivén, las leyes de la naturaleza, de que tanto hablaba Bonis. (p. 686; ch. 15)*

Nevertheless, an important factor had not entered her mind:

*Llegaron sin novedad a la costa. Emma se bañó al día siguiente, con los cuidados que el médico del pueblo, consultado por Bonis, aconsejó. Por aquel doctor supo la Valcárcel, horrorizada, cuando se trató de dar la vuelta a la ciudad, que lo que ella creía aborto, en aquellas circunstancias podía ser mucho más peligroso que el parto en su día . . . , porque ya sería otra cosa: un verdadero parto antes de la cuenta, pero no aborto en rigor. Un sietemesino de vida precaria, y gran peligro y grandes pérdidas de la madre . . . , eso era lo que podía producir el viaje a la ciudad si no se tomaban grandes precauciones. Emma chilló, cogió el cielo con las manos, insultó a Bonis, y a Minghetti, y a don Basilio, ausentes. ¡Ella que creía engañar a la naturaleza! ¡Huía de un peligro y buscaba otro mayor! Pero, ¿por qué no me lo han dicho en casa?*

— Pero, mujer, no te advertimos Aguado y yo? . . .

— Aguado hablaba de perder la criatura, no de perderme yo. ¡Dios mío! Yo no me muevo; pariré aquí, en esta aldea . . .; me moriré aquí . . . Yo no doy un paso más . . . (pp. 686-7)

Who but an antifeminist writer, in a characterization of an antiheroine, would dream up an attempted abortion scene so as to cast it in a ridiculous light?<sup>39</sup> Is it not also possible that Alas viewed the whole feminist movement as an attempt to “engañar a la naturaleza”?

Yet the author does not even relent at this point. After the birth of her child, “Emma lloraba, con algún rencor todavía contra el peligro pasado, pero más enternecida por el placer de vivir, de haber salvado, con el alma llena de un sentimiento que debía ser de gratitud a Dios y no lo era, porque ella no pensaba en Dios; pensaba en sí misma” (p. 697; ch. 16). There is neither love for the child nor love for God, so that feminine altruism is utterly absent from her mind.

Emma’s egotistic drive is all-pervading. As we saw, the book begins with the heroine’s name. Moreover, the second chapter’s first sentence is: “Emma era el jefe de la familia; era más, según ya se ha dicho, su tirano”. (p. 560) More attention gets paid to Bonifacio in the third chapter, which begins with words that emphasize his subordination: “El buen esposo, durante mucho tiempo, no paró mientes en tales injurias” (p. 565) The reversal of sexual roles is set forth most humorously through Bonifacio’s own cogitation, quoted above, where he sees his wife as an *Otela* and himself as a *Desdémono*. This operative metaphor leaves no doubt that Bonis is a milksop.

In his case, the question of egoism comes up in connection with pangs of conscience or pleasurable reminiscences. Unlike Emma, Bonifacio is aware of his possible egoism and ponders it, though he later rationalizes his behavior. For example, after Serafina, his mistress, has left town, he contemplates the dissolution besetting his household, begins to inveigh in his own mind against those who brought about such a state of affairs, but then vacillates and admits to himself: “¡Egoísta! Como se fue tu pareja, *moralizas* contra los demás” (p. 671; ch. 14) (As always, the italics — which are Clarín’s — indicate the author’s ironic view of his character). Another time, Bonis weighs his incipient paternal love for his yet unborn child against love of his mistress, and says to himself in a moment of doubt about fatherhood: “¡Ca! No se parecía a las grandes pasiones ni con cien leguas. ¿Dónde estaba aquella íntima satisfacción egoísta que acompaña a los placeres del amor y de la vida halagada?” (p. 695; ch. 16) The words “las grandes pasiones” indicate, of course, that such egoism was rationalized through a degenerate form of romanticism, “romanticismo al por menor, ya moribundo” (p. 570; ch. 4).

This romantically rationalized egoism, which only deserves to be called pseudo-altruism, is akin to the false romanticism of Emma’s youth; for as we saw in a previous quotation from Alas, her romanticism was compatible with her egoism. In Bonis, it accompanies an increasing preoccupation with his lineage, past and future, brought on by the prospect of fatherhood.

When we speak of lineage, we cannot avoid touching upon a related topic, honor; and Alas, like almost all the other nineteenth-century Spanish novelists, could

hardly avoid the old theme. In *La Regenta*, an unrealistic and anachronistic sense of honor is presented through the figure of Don Víctor, an old gentleman who is unable to maintain his erotic interest toward his young wife and who declaims Calderón plays in bed before going to sleep. If we looked for a similar parodic treatment of the honor theme in *Su único hijo*, we might conclude that Clarín assigns its ideological aspect to Reyes and the theatrical one to the opera company.

Nevertheless, to speak of the honor theme in this novel is probably misleading. Rather, we should take into account the theme of racism. Although our contemporary definitions of racism tend to consider it as a hostile preoccupation centered only on anthropologically categorized physical differentiations, racism is, broadly speaking, an attitude that arises wherever special consideration is given to any degree of consanguinity. Racism has, to be sure, a Hispanic variant, historically founded on pseudoreligious ideas and an authorized heresy ("limpieza de sangre"), which can explain partially the Spanish concept of honor. And one can also define racism as the use of genealogical vanities for the purpose of limiting disinterested love. It is thus one type of barrier against total altruism; it aids us in containing our charity, which might threaten to become overdiluted to the detriment of self-preservation. Racism is materialistic because its bases are physiological, and accordingly it constitutes an impediment to the enhancement of spiritually developed values.

If I may be allowed to reinterpret Alas's antifeminist theory in terms of racism, I propose that he perhaps views racism as understandably more pronounced and less avoidable in woman than in man, because she is closely bound to the process of perpetuating the race (in general; that is, the species) by bringing forth her own race (in particular). Her activities are much more related than the man's to the phenomenon of consanguinity. Man, more detached from this physical, material process, should be able to pay less attention to kinship, to family ties, in order to create a better society on spiritual foundations, in order to replace an aristocracy of blood by an aristocracy of talent. (Or, to state it cynically, to create a social system by means of parchments inscribed with diplomas rather than those inscribed with pedigrees).

Furthermore, the Spain of Clarín's day was losing the models that served as a source of its peculiar type of racism. Ever since the demise of the Inquisition at the beginning of the century, "limpieza de sangre" had been almost forgotten, and now, thanks to a new class mobility, the concept of "nobleza de sangre" could not be taken too seriously. The ideological supports of Spanish racism were crumbling, but racism itself seemed to endure, through social prejudices, family alliances, and so forth. The racist values on which this society had founded its organizational structure were disappearing, but no other values were taking their place. New, meaningful spiritual values were prevented from coming to the fore by this petty racism, which, in Clarín's novel, is put into play with petty romanticism, as we shall see.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that, in *Su único hijo*, the author implies that racism is closely linked to feminine altruism. Let us see what he writes about the heroine after she becomes disillusioned with her husband:

*A los dos meses de matrimonio Emma sintió que en ella se despertaba un intenso, poderosísimo cariño a todos los de su raza, vivos y muertos; se rodeó de parientes, hizo restaurar, por un dineral, multitud de cuadros viejos, retratos de sus antepasados; y sin decirlo a nadie, se enamoró, a su vez, en secreto y también sin esperanza, del insigne don Antonio Diego Valcárcel Meras, fundador de las casa de Valcárcel, famoso guerrero que hizo y deshizo en la guerra de las Alpujarras. Armado de punta en blanco, avellanado y cejijunto, de mirada penetrante, y brillando como un sol, gracias al barniz reciente, el misterioso personaje del lienzo se ofrecía, a los ojos señadores de Emma como el tipo ideal de grandezas muertas, irremplazables. Estar enamorada de un su abuelo, que era el símbolo de toda la vida caballeresca que ella se figuraba a su modo, era digna pasión de una mujer que ponía todos sus conatos en distinguirse de las demás. Este afán de separarse de la corriente, de romper toda regla, de desafiar murmuraciones y vencer imposibles y provocar escándalos, no era en ella alarde frío, pedantesca vanidad de mujer extraviada por lecturas disparatadas; era espontánea perversión del espíritu, prurito de enferma. Mucho perdió el primo Sebastián con aquella restauración de la iconoteca familiar. Si Emma había estado a tres dedos del abismo, que no se sabe, su enamoramiento secreto y puramente ideal la libró de todo peligro positivo; entre Sebastián y su prima se había atravesado un pedazo de lienzo viejo. (pp. 558-9; ch. 1)*

We should note especially the phrase, "espontánea perversión del espíritu," which seems to indicate the assumption of a natural connection between racism and the female mentality. As Clarín states in "Psicología del sexo," self-sacrifice for child or husband, even for kinsmen, is a normal manifestation of feminine altruism. Here, in *Su único hijo*, he describes falling in love with a dead ancestor as a perversion of the spirit; in other words, as we might reinterpret it, it is a perversion of feminine altruism. Just as Doña Berta's maternal feelings are channeled into a quest for "un pedazo de lienzo," so are Emma's erotic instincts focused on "un pedazo de lienzo viejo." In both women, imbued with a quixotic attraction for a dead military past, there is apparent a process of devitalization; they have invested an image, an inanimate object, with their love. Perhaps Alas even regarded this fixation on a totally material object, endowed by fantasy with sentimental significance, as a sort of metaphysical masturbation.<sup>40</sup>

In the above passage, the author has also touched upon two other important themes. Emma Valcárcel is shown as spending a fortune on restoration. When we recall that, in "Psicología del sexo," Alas looks upon liberality, even squandering ("dilapidar") as a masculine trait, and conservation as feminine, then we must conclude that he views Emma's activity as self-contradictory, androgynous, and spiritually hermaphroditic. The same would perhaps apply to her money-consuming entertainmet of her kinsmen, a mélange of liberality and racism. This confusion of masculine and feminine traits may be taken as an indication that Emma is on her way to being a shrew.

An analogous process occurs in the husband. He confuses the virile altruism that perceives a spiritual bond between all mankind with the feminine altruism centered on the affinity between parent and child:



*¡La cadena de los padres y los hijos! . . . Cadena que, remontándose por sus eslabones hacia el pasado, sería toda amor, abnegación, la unidad sincera, real, caritativa, de la pobre raza humana, pero la cadena venía de lo pasado a lo presente, a lo futuro . . . , y era cadena que la muerte rompía en cada eslabón; era el olvido, la indiferencia. Le parecía estar solo en el mundo, sin lazo de amor con algo que fuese un amparo . . . , y comprendía, sin embargo, que él era el producto de la abnegación ajena, del sacrificio amoroso en indefinida serie. ¡Oh infinito consuelo! El origen debía de ser también acto de amor; no había motivo racional para suponer un momento en que los ascendientes amaran menos al hijo que éste al suyo . . . Bonifacio se había vuelto un poco hacia la pared; la luz, colocada en la mesilla de noche, pintaba el perfil de su rostro en la sombra sobre el estuco blanco. Su sombra, ya lo había notado otras veces con melancólico consuelo, se parecía a la de su padre, tal como la veía en sus recuerdos lejanos. Pero aquella noche era mucho más clara y acentuada la semejanza. "¡Cosa extraña! Yo no me parecía apenas nada a mi padre, y nuestras sombras sí, muchísimo . . . (p. 678; ch. 14)*

We should be able to perceive the author's fine irony behind the character's fantasy. For Bonifacio, the greatest spiritual virtue, charity, depends on the material bond of consanguinity. Nonetheless, we can see that his metaphor of a chain shattered at each link is self-contradictory. Such a chain is not a chain, and consequently, as a metaphor, it manifests the ridiculous sentimentality which sought expression by creating it. Racism, Clarín must have felt, is a rationalization of a type of feminine altruism, and cannot form the basis for the kind of Weltanschauung held by a virile mind to work for a better society.

But the fallacy of Reyes's thinking does not consist merely in the fact that the chain metaphor is self-contradictory. The truth is that every parent-child relationship is not always one of love and abnegation. Accordingly, from a spiritual viewpoint, it is not just that death might break the links; parental egoism might prevent the effectuation of the linkage (if I may be allowed to whip a dead chain). Of course, the nature of the problem is implied by Clarín when he has his protagonist derive "infinito consuelo" from an "indefinida serie."

In chapter XVI, when our hero looks at the new-born child, he says to himself: "¡Oh, como mi padre! ¡Como yo en la sombra!" (p. 697). This shadow, which Cesáreo Bandera recognized as the key concept in the novel,<sup>41</sup> is Clarín's symbol for the false spiritualization of material realities, for the sentimentalization of biological paternity, for the idealization of physical heredity. It is on this shadow that Bonifacio Reyes fixes his gaze and from which he derives his intellectual hallucination. And so, what is Alas's literary filiation here? Where can we find the equation of matter with shadow if not in the Spanish classics, in Quevedo, in the Stoic and didactic satirical tradition of the Golden Age?

Certainly the author does not desist at this point from exposing Reyes's ludicrous mentality. In the last chapter our hero decides to go on a trip to confront Lobato, the manager of one of the Valcárcel estates. A former Carlist guerrilla leader, Lobato has been pocketing much more than his rightful commission on the rents. It is

almost superfluous to add that Bonifacio will get nowhere with the fellow. He has, however, decided to make the trip serve two purposes, and the second one is to bring back a choice of wet-nurses for his son: ". . . voy a Cabruñana, le pongo las peras a cuarto a Lobato . . ., y me vuelvo pasado mañana con dos o tres nodrizas, a escoger, que por ahí las hay buenas. Emma no querrá, y en rigor no puede criar. Así como así, cuanto menos sangre de Valcárcel, mejor" (p. 703; ch. 16). During the journey, though, Bonis makes a side trip for sentimental reasons to Raíces, historical place of origin of the Reyes family. When he gets there, he realizes that ". . . Antonio, su hijo, necesitaba nodriza, y él había olvidado que había venido a Cabruñana a buscarla. ¡Mejor aquí! Sí; no me iré de Raíces sin buscar ama de cría para mi hijo. ¡Es una inspiración! ¡Quién sabe! Tal vez se nutra con leche de su propia raza, con sangre de su sangre . . ." (p. 705). What we have here is a sentimental rationalization of one of the most odious forms of human exploitation before the invention of the rubber nipple, the starvation of poor women's children for the benefit of upper-income babies. Then, when we witness Bonifacio fantasize in chapter XIV that his son should be named Manolín or Jesús (p. 677), we know that the protagonist's sentiments have been turned into a pseudo-altruistic cult. As Frances Weber has remarked, "The cult of a son is a true religion for Bonis; . . . the family is the only source of meaning and immortality . . . . Al previous generations and the past and future of each individual exist simultaneously in the intuition of familial eternity."<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, the familiar eternity is perceived only in the male line:

. . . su deseo tenía la forma plástica, constante, fija, de un recuerdo intenso. Siempre era el hijo; varón y uno solo; su único hijo.

*Una mujer . . . no podía continuarle a él; él no se concebía femenino en el ser que heredara su sangre, su espíritu. Tenía que ser hombre. Y uno solo, porque aquel amor que había de consagrar al hijo tenía que ser absoluto, sin rival. Amar a varios hijos le parecía a Bonis una infidelidad respecto del primero. Sin saber lo que hacía, comparaba el cariño e mucha prole con el politeísmo. Muchos hijos era como muchos dioses. No, uno solo . . ., aquel, aquel de que le hablaban las entrañas . . . (pp. 665-66; ch. 13).*

This fantastic comparison made by the henpecked husband, in his androgynous pseudo-altruism, between many gods and many children can only be interpreted as the result of his confusing the virile, spiritual order with the feminine, material order. This confusion is figured in the word *materialmente* that Bonis uses in his mental wanderings in the previous chapter, when he hears Serafina at the casino concert singing "una plegaria a la Virgen, de un maestro italiano" (p. 650; ch. 12). Reyes believes that this religious song narrates the mystery of the Annunciation, and the following idea, among other things, passes through his mind:

*". . . la voz de esa mujer, de mi querida, me anuncia que voy a ser una especie de virgen madre . . ., es decir, un padre . . . madre; que voy a tener un hijo, legítimo por supuesto, que aunque me le paras tú, materialmente va a ser todo cosa mía." No, no pensaba él que el hijo fuese de la querida, eso no; que Serafina perdonase, pero eso no; de la mujer, de la mujer . . ., pero de cierta manera, sin que la impureza de las*

*entrañas de Emma manchase al que había de nacer; todo suyo, de Bonis, de su raza, de los suyos . . . , un hijo suyo y de la voz aunque para el mundo le pariese la Valcárcel, como estaba en el orden. (p. 651)*

Behind the protagonist's exposition of this absurd theory of metaphysical male parthenogenesis, we can perceive the author's fine irony through the italicized words. **Materialmente** can be translated as "literally" or "really", according to the protagonist's intent, but, by means of its literal denotation, Clarín, who believed that hackneyed expressions are indicators of muddled thinking, shows us that the racist cult is merely a sentimentalization of material values, without spiritual transcendence.

In fact, the two themes of false idealization and of maternal hereditary non-participation are also combined very nicely in chapter XIV, when Reyes rejects the name Isaac, which had previously occurred to him as a possible one for his son:

*¡Isaac! No; no sería Isaac. Además, Isaac no había sido único hijo de su padre. Aunque parecía irreverencia, en rigor . . . , en rigor . . . , lo que correspondía era llamar a la criatura Manolín . . . o Jesús. No que él se comparase con Dios Padre, ni siquiera con San José.*

*La idea de San José le hizo incorporarse en la cama, donde ya se había tendido, sin desnudarse. Como Bonis no era creyente, en el sentido riguroso de la palabra, y sus dudas le habían llevado muchas veces a las cuestiones exegéticas, según él podía entenderlas, pensó en la posibilidad de que a San José le hubiese hecho la historia un flaco servicio, con la mejor intención, pero muy flaco. Sintió una lástima inmensa por San José. "Supongamos, se decía, que él, y nadie más que él, fuera el padre de su hijo putativo; que fuese el padre . . . , sin perjuicio de todas las relaciones misteriosas, sublimes, extranaturales, pero no milagrosas, que podía haber entre la Divinidad y el Hijo del hombre . . . ; supongamos esto por un momento. ¡Qué horror! ¡Arrancarle a San José la gloria . . . , el amor . . . de su hijo! . . . ¡Todo para la madre! Y el padre? ¿Y el padre?" (pp. 677-8)*

Since the Abraham-Isaac myth is adaptable to racist interpretation, to pass from it to the idea of Jesus might evince a spiritual progression from a primitive idea of the eternal seed. Except for one thing. It is all based on a figment of Bonifacio's imagination, for, in an early fantasy, he had compared himself to the Virgin Mary. Consequently, instead of a sublimation, we are faced with its reverse: a materialization of the Virgin Birth and a Judaization of Christian sentiment.

To be sure, in this vacillation between Mary and Joseph, his potential self-identification with Joseph might be simply relevant to the apparently cuckolded Bonifacio. Perhaps, then, his fantasizing about the non-existence of maternal heredity is merely Bonis's way of compensating for the tyranny exercised over him by his wife. Yet this is only a psychological interpretation. A philosophical interpretation, it seems to me, can be attained by remembering that Clarín has referred to Emma as a Eumenide. The fact is that Bonifacio's fantasy is perfectly in accord with Apollo's pronouncement in Aeschylus's *The Furies*.

When the Eumenides, daughters of the earth goddess, representing the voices of instinct and the unconscious, and Apollo, representing consciousness and reason, seek

a judgment from Pallas Athena concerning the legality of Orestes's matricide, the sun god claims that this was certainly no greater crime than Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon, since the mother is not really the parent of the child but only the incubator of the seed sown by the true parent, the man. Pallas Athena, who, though female, tends to think like a male because, motherless, she issued from Zeus's head, tips the scales in Orestes's – and Apollo's – favor. Nevertheless, she gives the Eumenides a place of honor in the new scheme of things.

Although Alas could hardly have believed in the totally expropriating patrilineality<sup>43</sup> expounded by Apollo and fancied by Bonifacio, he probably admired Aeschylus for balancing feminine and masculine principles, though tipping the scales in favor of the latter in order to teach how the ingredients should be mixed for a prosperous Greek state. It is quite possible that Clarín was influenced by Aeschylus's vision in integrating the concept of a healthy nation with that of modified equilibrium of male and female forces. If so, Alas sought to use for his presentation of social decadence the metaphor of matrimony with confused sexual principles.

Be that as it may, *Su único hijo* is not the Oresteia. Alas's problem is not to show how a land wracked by blood feuds can be transformed into a modern state by pacifying the goddesses of vengeance and balancing reason and the unconscious. It is, rather, to see noble goals replace sentimentality, and spirituality overcome crass materialism. Accordingly, in *Su único hijo*, totally expropriating patrilineality is posited as the nadir of sentimental nonsense. It is presented as effeminate; not as masculine in the manner of Aeschylus.

Finally, the social emphasis placed on lineage itself is ironically balanced by the specter of illegitimacy, as in chapter II:

*Ya se ha dicho que Emma era hija única, y, por tanto, heredera universal del abogado romántico y flautista. Pero los ahorros del aprovechado jurisperito llegaron a su hija un tanto mermados. Parece ser que la castidad de don Diego Valcárcel no era tan extremada como se creía; su verdadera virtud había consistido siempre en la prudencia y el sigilo. . . . fuera del pueblo, en las aldeas vecinas adonde le llevaban a meruado los cuidados de la hacienda propia y negocios ajenos, llegó a ser, valga la verdad, el Abraham – Pater Orchamus – de un gran pueblo de hijos naturales, muchos adulterinos. (p. 561; ch. 2)*

The apparent soleness of the spoiled Emma as Don Diego's legitimate child and heir serves to point out the absence of paternal affection for the bastards. Thus, Bonifacio's ideas on the "cadena de los padres y los hijos" as the key to human love are implicitly and ironically refuted by the fact that his father-in-law had so many illegitimate children.

Although some critics have been touched by what they must have considered the tragic aspect of the male protagonist, a close analysis of the novel can only lead to the conclusion that Bonis is consistently at the service of the burlesque aspect of Clarín's art. Not even in chapter IV, during the conversation at the dry goods store, when Don Crispulo recounts the tragic local passions and tuberculosis cases of the Romantic period, does Clarín abandon the comic vein:

*A Bonifacio aquella narración le había hecho recordar el espectáculo tristísimo de las ruinas de la casa donde él había nacido; sí, él había visto desprenderse las paredes pintadas de amarillo y otras cubiertas de papel de ramos verdes; él había visto como en un plano vertical la chimenea despedazada, al amor de cuya lumbre su madre le había dormido con maravillosos cuentos; allá arriba, en un tercer piso . . . sin piso, quedaba de todo aquel calor del hogar el hueco de una hornilla en una medianería agrietada, sucia y poborienta. Al aire libre, siempre expuesta a las miradas indiferentes del público, estaba la alcoba en que había muerto su padre. Sí; él había visto en lo alto los restos miserables, la pared manchada por las expectoraciones del enfermo, las señales del hierro de la cama humilde en la grasa de aquella pared . . . ¿Qué quedaba de toda aquella vivienda, de aquella familia pobre, pero feliz por el cariño? Quedaba él, un aficionado a la flauta, en poder de su Emma, una furia, sí, una furia, no había para qué negárselo a sí mismo. (pp. 571-2; ch. 4)*

This *ubi sunt*, as Frances Weber identifies it,<sup>44</sup> in which Cesáreo Bandera might have seen "el pathos de lo cómico"<sup>45</sup>, already points to two important themes. The repetition of "furia" by Reyes will be echoed by the author himself, in chapter IX, when he refers to Emma as a Eumenide, as we have noticed above. This seems to be the first hint of Aeschylus's influence. The other theme is figured in the words, "un tercer piso . . . sin piso." Aposiopesis is frequently used by Clarín for humorous effect, especially in *Su único hijo*. Here it is combined with equivoque. The floorless upper floor probably symbolized the mentality of the protagonist, the "soñador soñoliento" (p. 559) whose pseudomystic ascent is nothing but a materialistic illusion ruinously hovering over a spiritual vacuum.

Although Bonifacio will not do as a vehicle for a tragic sense of life,<sup>46</sup> this does not necessarily mean that Clarín avoided including a tragic note in his work. Quite the contrary, the balancing of the tragic with the burlesque by our caustic yet compassionate Asturian has been commented upon by not a few scholars. In the work under consideration, the tragic role is assigned neither to Reyes nor to his wife Emma, but to his mistress Serafina Gorgheggi (unless we perceive her as Clarín's parody of a Romantic cliché — again, "el pathos de lo cómico"). In fact, the shifting relation between Serafina and Bonifacio depends artistically not only on the antithesis of the tragic and the comic but also of the bohemian and the bourgeois. This is of primary importance in explaining the novel's structure.

It is true that the soprano's Italian pseudonym sounds ridiculous — Emma once refers to her as "la Gorgoritos" —, but Clarín is wont to give such significant names to tragic types, which often aids in obtaining the reader's pity for them. We know that she has been trained by the tenor and impresario Julio Mochi, who took sexual advantage of his pupil early in her career. Mochi believed at first that Serafina would become a great singer, but he soon realized that her voice was "pastosa," and, to compensate for his disillusionment as an impresario, became her procurer. It is interesting to note how the soprano, believing she was wreaking vengeance on the tenor, really inflicted the punishment on herself:

*Lo cierto era que la Gorgheggi no amaba a su tirano y le había sido infiel de todo corazón desde la primera vez; pero al verse vendida, le dolió el orgullo; creía que Mochi estaba loco por ella, y cuando advirtió que era cómplice de sus extravíos, lo cual demostraba que no había tal pasión, se sintió más sola en el mundo, más desgraciada, y experimentó el desprecio de la mujer coqueta que, sin querer ella, desea que la adoren . . . . "me echa en brazos de los que debiera considerar como rivales. . . ." . . . Suponía la Gorgheggi que aunque él no estuviera enamorado, se creía querido todavía; y engañarle, arrojarse con ardor al vicio, al amor lucrativo, remachar los besos que vendía, era su venganza. (p. 597; ch. 7)*

Serafina's self-defeating revengefulness seems to accord with Alas's interpretation of Aeschylus's concept of a feminine principle of the unconscious as personified by the vindictive Furies, which was also pointed out in Emma's case.

Nevertheless, what makes Serafina a tragic figure is that, while assuming the supposedly normal female role with respect to Mochi, she is tyrannized and ultimately abandoned by him. Conversely, what makes Emma Valcárcel a grotesque figure is that the potentially tragic aspect of her vindictive self-destruction is overshadowed by her relationship with a man where the supposedly normal order of things is ludicrously reversed and she is the tyrant. Perhaps, owing to this, *Su único hijo* can be regarded as a combination of Greek tragedy (Eumenides) and Roman comedy (e.g., Plautus's *Amphytrion*).<sup>47</sup>

There is little doubt about Serafina's submissiveness. She has even managed to fall in love with our milksop hero, as we finally ascertain in chapter XIV when she has to leave town:

*Serafina dejaba con pena el pueblo, en que había llegado casi a olvidar que era una actriz y una aventurera, para creerse una dama honrada que tenía buenas relaciones con la mejor sociedad de una capital de provincia, y un amante fiel, dulce, manso y guapo. A Bonis le había llegado a querer de veras, con un cariño que tenía algo de fraternal, que era a ratos lujuria y que se convertía en pasión celosa cuando sospechaba que el tonto de Reyes podía cansarse de ella y querer a otra. (p. 669; ch. 14)*

The relationship between the two will unavoidably involve some psychological interpenetration. First of all, we are told that, long before meeting Serafina, the Romantic Bonifacio felt great admiration – from afar – for bohemian life and for artists, provided he could observe all this without participating. It is the great problem of the lute and the bedroom slippers, which most critics of the novel have emphasized:

*Hasta para ser romántico de altos vuelos, con la imaginación completamente libre, le parecía indispensable, a lo menos para él, tener bien arreglada la satisfacción de las necesidades físicas, que tantas y tan complicadas son. El símbolo de estos sentimientos eran, como va indicado más atrás, las zapatillas. Cuando en sus ensueños juveniles había ideado un castillo roquero, una hermosa nazarena asomada a la ojival ventana, una escala de seda, un laúd y un galán, que era él, que robaba a la virgen del castillo, siempre había tropezado con la*

*inverosimilitud de huir a lejanos climas sin las babuchas. Y en claro que las babuchas eran incompatibles con el laúd. Además, no todo eran las zapatillas; había algo más en su cariño al hogar templado, dulce, sereno . . . la familia. ¡Oh, la familia honrada, sin adulteraciones, sin disturbios ni mezclas, era también su encanto! Sería la familia incompatible con la pasión, como las babuchas con el laúd? (pp. 636-7; ch. 11)*

As we can perceive in this last question, Bonifacio's formulation of his attempt to grasp reality evinces his tendency to rely first on symbols and then to wonder whether reality accords with the symbols he has chosen to represent it. Yet it is this personage, so akin to the little philosophers of some of Clarín's short stories, who impresses his ideas on the soprano. Eventually, the bohemian Serafina is affected by the bourgeois side of her lover's mentality, though this *aburguesamiento* can exist only as a desire, since she does not possess the means to live a bourgeois existence. It is clearly stated by the author: "Serafina se había acostumbrado a su inocente Reyes y a la vida provinciana de burguesa sedentaria a que él la inclinaba . . ." (p. 637). This process is highly important for the structure of the novel because a corresponding shift to bohemianism takes place, not in Reyes, who never forgets his bedroom slippers, but in Emma, who becomes attracted to the musicians.

This is especially evident when Reyes ponders the relative effect he has on his wife and his mistress:

*Se le figuraba a Reyes tener dos casas, la de su mujer y la de su querida; y así como él mismo, sin pensarlo ni quererlo, había introducido en el caserón de los Valcárcel aires de libertinaje, semilla de corrupciones que tan bien preparado tenían el terreno en el alma de Emma; del propio modo irreflexivo, por instinto, había ido poco a poco sembrando gérmenes de costumbres sedentarias, de orden provinciano, de disciplina doméstica, en la intimidad de su trato con los cantantes. (p. 636)*

We could illustrate this shift in attitudes by the flip of a seesaw on which the two women would be seated, one of whose ends rests on the solid ground of bourgeois existence and whose other end is in the atmosphere of bohemian life.

Serafina herself, in a letter to Reyes not long before the end, comments on her *aburguesamiento*:

*El maestro [Mochi] . . . ha prometido volver a buscarme en cuanto haya una contrata aceptable; pero el tiempo vuela, yo me desespero. Mochi no viene y estoy delicada, nerviosa, muy triste . . . y muy pobre. La voz, además, se me va a escape; el teatro empieza a darme miedo; he recibido ciertos desaires, disimulados, del público, que me han sabido al hambre futura, al hospital en lontananza. No te pido un asilo, no te pido una limosna. Pero me voy cerca de ti. Quiero ser burguesa . . . Yo antes no pensaba así. Pero tú, tus manías de moral estrecha, hasta tu caserón vetusto con sus aires tradicionales, señoriles, todo eso se me ha metido por el alma. Algunas veces te oí decir que nosotros, los pobres cómicos, os habíamos pegado a tí y a los tuyos nuestras costumbres alegres, despreocupadas. Todo se pega. También a*

*mi me habéis pegado vosotras, tú, tú, Bonis, sobre todo, vuestras preocupaciones y vuestro temor de la vida incierta, peregrina.*  
(p. 690; ch. 15)

As for the other side of Bonis's life, the dangers he imagines menacing his household do materialize, and the Valcárcel fortune is squandered on maintaining an artistic salon. But this is not all. Whereas Bonifacio's and Serafina's initial passionate lovemaking has turned into a consuetudinary but tender one, the sickly Emma's long dormant eroticism has awakened with a vengeance. Reyes's thoughts concerning this new development are described thus by the author: "Su mujer era su tirano, y en sus veleidades de amor embrujado, carnal y enfermizo, corrompida por él mismo, sin saberlo, era una concubina, una odalisca loca . . ." (p. 637) Meanwhile, he forebodes the loss of "su pasión, el único refugio de su alma dolorida, necesitada de cariño, de caricias castas (como habían acabado por ser las de Serafina) . . ." (ibid.). Finally, after romantically idealizing the bonds between Serafina and himself, Reyes gets to imagine that he commits adultery with his own wife: "Su gran pasión disculpaba a los ojos de Bonis aquellas relaciones ilícitas con la cómica; pero desde el momento en que él faltaba a Serafina, dejándose interesar endiablamente por los encantos marchitos, pero expresivos y melancólicos, llenos de fuego reconcentrado, de su legítima esposa, quedaba probado que la gran pasión pretendida no era tan grande, y, en otro tanto, era menos disculpable" (p. 631; ch. 10). This is another instance of the reversal of values in Bonis's mind.

So far, we have seen the antithesis of tragic and grotesque in the couples formed by Julio and Serafina on the one hand, and Bonifacio and Emma on the other. We have also noticed the "seesaw effect" between bourgeois and bohemian existence in relation to changes of attitude in the wife and the mistress. Now let us turn to another extremely important factor in the structure of *Su único hijo*, the relationship between Emma and Minghetti, the operatic baritone rumored to be her lover.

If we believe that Emma actually copulated with Minghetti, then it does not behoove us to determine whether the husband or the lover is Antofito's biological father. It could be either, since Emma was having marital relations with Bonis during the period that Minghetti would have impregnated her. Obviously, without the benefit of modern science, how can we know which of two possible men sired a baby? Granted, the novelist's art requires omniscience, but he may exercise it only to a certain point, if he is a realist. He cannot go beyond the limits of that knowledge which it is within human capacity to acquire. In this case, to decide between Bonifacio and Minghetti would be to overstep the canons of the nineteenth-century novel.

Besides, the reader cannot know whether Emma and Minghetti consummated their apparently amorous relation. The author seems intentionally vague about the matter. So let us look at the most significant passages.

During the casino concert we learn who is Cayetano Domínguez, alias Gaetano Minghetti, and that he was wont to speak about the part of his youth spent in a seminary as a servant:

*. . . y como no hubiera damas delante, su narración, probablemente exagerada, ponía espanto verdaderamente, por lo que toca a determinadas violaciones del orden natural de los instintos. De esta*



*clase de aventuras es claro que no le habló a Emma aquella noche; fue más adelante, cuando su trato llegó a ser más íntimo, cuando ella supo de esta clase de tormentas por que también había pasado la juventud pintoresca de su amigo. (p. 659; ch. 13)*

The precise degree of intimacy is, of course, not specified. Neither is it clear whether these particular adventures are included in "la mayor parte del repertorio" as stated in the following passage:

*Pocos días después de oír las aventuras del barítono en aquella noche solemne del baile, Emma ya le había tenido muy cerca, cantándole al oído, pero sólo en calidad de amigo íntimo, la mayor parte del repertorio. Lo del piano se llevó a efecto; Minghetti fue maestro de la Valcárcel, pero es claro que las lecciones se convirtieron poco a poco en pura fórmula, un pretexto para que el profesor cantase romanzas, acompañándose él mismo, mientras la discípula, sentada junto a él, admirándole, pasaba las hojas, cuando el cantante lo indicaba con la cabeza. (p. 660)*

Two chapters later, when Emma and Bonis return home from the baths and Emma climbs the stairs leaning on Minghetti's arm, their words and actions are utterly ambiguous. Earlier in this same chapter XV, Emma, rebelling at the thought of pregnancy, thinks to herself, as narrated through indirect discourse: "Las mujeres felices, las mujeres entregadas a la alegría, al arte . . . , a . . . los barítonos . . . , las mujeres superiores no parían, o parían cuando les convenía y nada más" (p. 682). This is more revealing, of course, and yet the fact that the baritones are plural, that they are separated by other words from *entregadas*, and that this is indirect discourse, all adds to the ambiguity. It is likely that Emma is doing no more than having Minghetti excite her with the kinds of games suggested by her future aunt by marriage, Marta Körner. Even the respectful looks that Minghetti casts at Bonifacio in chapter XV can be taken either as sincere or as an act of discretion.

The reader will never know who is the real father, or even whether adultery was committed more than in the soul, because the author has been purposely ambiguous. And his ambiguity serves to express his probable belief that it makes no difference. Our author is not concerned with the material, non-transcendental possibility of adulterous impregnation, but rather with the spiritual implications of such concern among men. This is why the last indication of bastardy in chapter XVI pertains totally to the realm of allegory. It is the baptismal scene where Bonifacio looks at the child in the arms of the midwife Doña Celestina: "Las notas del órgano, bajando a hacer cosquillas al recién nacido, al que venía de los cielos del misterio, metiéndosele por las carnicitas que dejaban al aire los dedos discretos y expertos de doña Celestina, al descubrir la espalda de la criatura; las notas, aladas y revoltosas, eran angelillos que retozaban con su compañero humano, menos feliz que ellos, pero no menos puro, no menos inocente" (p. 710). Then Bonis notices that the music being played is an air from *La Traviata* and Minghetti is the organist. All this, added to the book's title, suggests a parody of a religious painting of the Birth of Christ, a logical consequence of the parody of the Annunciation in chapter XII.<sup>48</sup> Since it was God who sent angels to His son, the angelic notes sent to this child

might also come, by analogy, from his father's hand. Nevertheless, this is not only metaphorical, but needs to be intuited through subtle means.

Clarín, it seems to me, would not have used such a religious parody to reveal a biological accident. After all, the allegory is made possible by Bonifacio's ludicrous fantasies, which have no basis in fact.<sup>49</sup> To use it for an interpretation of the author's thinking is therefore highly problematical. Moreover, we might remember that in chapter XIV Reyes was on the verge of identifying himself with Saint Joseph but then recoiled from the thought. The final irony occurs in the last scene of the book, when Serafina resumes her annunciatory role. Ironically, however, her role as messenger is now no longer mystical (and the message accurate) but direct (and the message moot). In chapter XIV she was the angel of the Annunciation who communicated to Bonis that he would have a child, and this turned out to be true. Now she tells Bonifacio that Antoñito's real father is Minghetti, thus changing Bonis's fantastic allegorical role from that of the Virgin Mary to that of Saint Joseph. It is at this point that he thinks of the soprano as a serpent. But this is no reason for the reader to accept literary interpretations that satanize her, because all this symbolism shifts according to Bonifacio's vacillation. In chapter VII he sees Serafina as mother, in chapter XII as an angel and then as Hagar, and in chapter XVI as a serpent. The child is first compared to Isaac, then to Jesus. These alterations in the symbolism worked out by the protagonist should be a sufficient indication of its falsity. Let us examine the passage that describes Bonis's momentary impression of Serafina:

*Mas el rostro de Serafina volvió a asustarle. Aquella mujer tan hermosa, que era la belleza con cara de bondad para Bonis . . . , le pareció de repente una culebra . . . La vio mirarle con ojos de acero, con miradas puntiagudas; le vio arrugar las comisuras de la boca de un modo que era símbolo de crueldad infinita; le vio pasar por los labios rojos la punta finísima de una lengua jugosa y muy aguda . . . , y, con el presentimiento de una herida envenenada, esperó las palabras pausadas de la mujer que le había hecho feliz hasta la locura. (pp. 712-13)*

Bonifacio sees this beautiful woman sticking out her tongue, and she looks to him like a serpent, symbolic of infinite cruelty. Considering the absurdity of Reyes's fantasies ever since the casino concert, considering that an outlandishly symbolic world view stands between him and reality, whatever meaning Serafina's behavior holds for him at this point can hardly be accepted by the judicious reader as significant symbolism for the novel's interpretation.<sup>50</sup> On the contrary, we are tempted to take the words, "hasta la locura," literally. The truth is that Serafina has feelings of guilt at one point about her influence on Reyes. In chapter XIV she says to herself about him: "A éste se le ablanda la mollera por culpa mía" (p. 699).

Before taking up the relation between Emma and Minghetti, we examined the shift in erotic tendencies between the wife and the mistress, as if it were a flip of a seesaw. This illustrative comparison can also be used to explain the novel's main structural element, the shift between Bonifacio and Emma with respect to romanticism and racism. Both spouses possess these traits, but in the beginning it is the wife who tends toward racism with her infatuation for her dead ancestor and attachment to all her kinsmen, while the husband is the romantic dreamer and flutist. In the second half of the

novel, however, Emma stops entertaining her relatives, except for cousin Sebastián. It is the opera singers and music lovers who now have entrée in her home, and Minghetti's music lessons turn her into a romantic. Meanwhile, Bonifacio, hoping for the birth of a son, becomes obsessed with racial ideas and feels revulsion at what has occurred to his household, which now seems to him "un burdel" (p. 664); "él no estaba ya por el romanticismo" (p. 665). Where then, we might ask, is the center of the seesaw, its fulcrum? Precisely at the very center of the book, at the famous final scene of chapter X, where, after the couple has returned from the opera, Emma wants to imagine that she and her husband are the soprano and the baritone:

— *Mira, mira, yo soy la Gorgheggi o la Gorgoritos, esa que cantaba hace poco, la reina Micomicona; sí, hombre, esa que a ti te gusta tanto; y para hacerte la ilusión, mírame, aquí, aquí, aquí tontín; granuja, aquí te digo . . . , las botas lo mismo que las de ella; cógele un pie a la Gorgoritos, anda, cógeselo; las medias no serán del mismo color, pero éstas son bien bonitas; anda, ahora canta, díla que sí, que la quieres, que olvidas a la de Francia y que te casa con ella . . . Tú te llamas, ¿cómo te llamas tú? . . . Sí, hombre, el baritono te digo.*

— *¿Minghetti?*

— *Eso, Minghetti, tú eres Minghetti y yo la Gorgoritos . . . Minghetti de mi alma, aquí tienes a tu reina de tu corazón, a tu reinecita; toma, toma, quírela, mímla; Minghetti de mi vida, Bonis, Minghetti de mis entrañas . . . (p. 632)*

Emma, it appears, possessed the ability to separate physical sensation from affection, as we saw in a previous quotation, from chapter II, where her love for her kinsmen grows while she retains only physical interest in her husband. The erotic role-playing she now desires demonstrates the power of her imagination for the attainment of pleasure. Indeed, her imagination once allowed her to fall in love with a dead ancestor and will soon develop superlatively, with the help of Marta Körner, who stuffs Emma's head with an aura of vicarious German romantic erotica.

This role-playing does more than herald the exchange of romantic and racist attitudes between the spouses. It also anticipates, ironically enough, a real erotic shift, because Bonifacio will lose his mistress while Emma apparently acquires a lover. (If Minghetti does not become her lover totally on a physical level, at least he does so in her musings, and the erotic procedure is vicariously finalized, on this physical level, by her husband). The seesaw that can represent the romantic-racist switch can therefore also serve as a sliding board for Cupid, who glides down as Bonifacio's imagination rises to the heights of his racist world view and Emma sinks to the delectation of sensual experiences.

Needless to say, it is Serafina who is the great loser in these games. At the end, like Ana Ozores in Clarín's other novel, abandoned by everyone, she takes refuge in the cathedral. And like Ana, it is there that she encounters the last affront, rejection by her male friend. The soprano, who is now penniless and hungry, tells Reyes:

— *Estoy aquí . . . por no estar en casa; por huir del amo de la posada. Estoy aquí . . . porque me voy haciendo beata. No es broma. O rezar, o . . . una caja de fósforos. ¿Sabes? Mochi no vuelve. ¿Sabes? ¡He perdido la voz! Sí, perdida por completo. El día que te*

*escribí . . . , y que no me contestaste; ya sabes, cuando te pedía aquellos reales para pagar la fonda . . . Bueno, pues aquel día . . . , aquella noche . . . , como había ofrecido pagar, y no pagué . . . porque no contestaste, tuve una batalla de improperios con don Carlos . . . ¡el infame!*

*La Gorgheggi calló un momento, porque la ahogaba la emoción; ira, pena vergüenza . . . Dos lágrimas, que debían saber a vinagre, se le asomaron a los ojos. (p. 711)<sup>51</sup>*

Reyes, after listening to more of her misfortunes, tells Serafina he is ruined and has decided to sacrifice his passion for her to his only son.

These events occurring in the cathedral seem utterly devoid of a sense of spiritual love, of charity, on the protagonist's part. Racist sentimentality has replaced erotic sentimentality; that is all. Whereas, in *La Regenta*, Clarín had presented the ecclesiastical question with a tone of reproof, here he purposely ignores it, and within the walls of a cathedral at that. Just as he treats as irrelevant the physical basis of bastardy, so does he merely disregard the Church's spiritual dimension.

Serafina, though tragic and discarded, remains in the cathedral, having said to Reyes: "Me meto en la iglesia. Esto es mío, como de todos. Tú me enseñaste a sentir así, a querer paz . . . , a soñar . . . , a desear imposibles . . . Aquí estoy tranquila . . . , y rezo a mi modo. No tengo fe, lo que se llama fe . . . Pero quisiera tenerla" (p. 712). Serafina has not encountered the only-begotten Son of God, but she has come up against the only-begotten son of who knows whom.

Although the foregoing analysis of the novel's structure has perhaps taken us far afield from Alas's antifeminism, it was necessary nonetheless to show how the author sought to link two of his concepts, spiritual androgyny and spiritual bankruptcy, as we might call them. Accordingly, we must recognize Alas's attitude as highly tendentious. Early in the present paper, a certain self contradiction was noted. It involves assertions in "Psicología del sexo" about the supposedly conservative nature of plump woman and the liberal nature of lean man. She is like the rich capitalist and he like the poor proletarian loser. This view, however, is hard to reconcile with the fact that men are usually the dominant sex, and even more with Alas's own comparison of feminism with radical political movements that would turn the world upside down.

A feminist could also point to apparent incongruities among the ideological elements that enter into the structure of *Su único hijo*. For one thing, the two people who have androgynous mental tendencies are totally incommunicative about their feelings, which they keep to themselves. Consequently, it could be suggested that better intellectual communication between spouses, between the sexes, is precisely what was needed to overcome Bonifacio's absurd, unhealthy fantasies, as well as the egotistical instinct for vengeance in Emma which partly occasions the ruin of her house. A feminist would thereupon put forward the proposition that, in order to attain maximum communication and put an end to destructive cogitations hatched in monosexual isolation, women must be educated for full participation in all possible spheres of life. Now it is true that Clarín recognized how badly women were reared, as evidenced by his description of Emma as a spoiled and capricious child brought up during the late

Romantic period. He probably looked upon a better education for women as necessary to hold egotistical instinct in check in case their potential altruism could not be realized by motherhood, and felt that for the purpose of communication about matrimonial matters, it was not necessary for woman to enter man's world. A feminist could rebut him by arguing that, if a balance of masculine and feminine principles is effected only in a limited sphere of human existence such as that determined by Alas's concept of matrimony, then marriage will not serve as a metaphor for society. And Clarín seems to have attempted the establishment of this metaphor in *Su único hijo*.

It should also be pointed out that Alas's works do not lack examples of male vindictiveness, as in the case of Don Juan Nepomuceno. Yet, in these works, male, unlike female, vindictiveness is not self-destructive. Quite the contrary, it is often consistent with individual ambition. Now Clarín seems to have overlooked the possibility that this difference is not necessarily due to a biological cause. Emma's vindictiveness, in *Su único hijo*, is mostly the result of maternal frustration, whereas in *La Regenta* Fermín de Pas's is due in large part to erotic frustration. This treatment of the subject evinces Alas's possible belief that the dissimilar nature of vindictiveness in the sexes may be due to biological difference. Did he dismiss the thought, if it even occurred to him, that those who dominate have the opportunity to channel the instincts to their own benefit, in a manner unattainable by persons forced by social custom to be subservient?

Psychological novelists, like other novelists, are creators of microcosms and thus must be omniscient concerning the minds of their characters. Clarín, fascinated as he was with motherhood, as can be ascertained from his writings, must have striven to intuit the "maternal" mind in order to give verisimilitude to his fictional omniscience. Yet he was also a man of action, a labor arbitrator, a newspaper writer, a professor of law whose work is pregnant with ideological references; and so he must have felt it necessary at times to react against the introspective aspect of his nature involved in the creative process. Would he then have also feared that society might be plagued by moral monstrosities if the "maternal" thought processes he believed he intuited were to be applied to its governance?

The highly logical Clarín may have been apprehensive lest there develop in his own mind a self-identification with the maternal, or female, mentality. The ideological break with his mother had already been painful enough. Was the creation of that ludicrous personage, Bonifacio Reyes, inspired by Clarín's anxiety regarding what might happen to himself if he maintained, to the point of identification, the introspective process required for the purpose of creative intuition?

Leopoldo Alas may have aspired to the inner circle of Pallas Athena, but, despite his mockery of exclusive patrilineality, he was inextricably tied to Apollo, the god of reason who litigated against the unconscious.

To sum up, the present paper is an attempt to discover the structure of *Su único hijo* and, to a lesser extent, of *Doña Berta*, *Teresa*, and *La Regenta*, by positing as their ideological foundation the author's antifeminism. This antifeminism, far from being a manifestation of misogyny, is based on the premise that there exist two types of altruism, masculine and feminine (which is a distortion of positivist principles). Whereas the highest type of male altruism is a universal humanitarian idealism, female altruism

expresses itself best as woman's total devotion to her children. A diminution of such altruism constitutes a displacement of the mentality toward egoism; and such dilution of altruism, if rationalized, leads to what might be termed pseudo-altruism, exemplified by racism and degenerate romanticism. Since egoism is but selfish enjoyment, it need not be sexually differentiated, and thus pseudo-altruism can be treated as a regression toward mental androgyny. This is what Clarín appears to do in *Su único hijo*, where the exchange of racist and romantic attitudes between a shrewish wife and milksop husband constitutes the novel's main structural element. Other themes are evident: the influence of Aeschylus, especially the Greek playwright's identification of both vindictiveness and the unconscious with feminine principles, the antithesis of bohemian and bourgeois life, honor and bastardy, spiritual and materialistic notions, the moral bankruptcy of the Church, the irrelevancy of traditional national values, and the symbolization of the universe as a barrier to the realistic evaluation of events.

Because all these themes imply social criticism, and because in "Psicología del sexo" Alas associates liberalism with masculine principles and conservatism with feminine principles, we can only conclude that the author means to link social degeneration and national decadence with mental androgyny. Yet we must by no means assume from his male supremacist attitude that Clarín was a militarist. One theme not treated in the present paper concerns the illegal shifting of the Valcárcel fortune from a fertilizer to a gunpowder factory. For Alas, Spain's regeneration would depend on the constructive development of her human and natural resources, not on military domination.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cesáreo Bandera-Gómez, "La sombra de Bonifacio Reyes en *Su único hijo*," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 46 (1969), 201-25; Frances Wyers Weber, "Ideology and Religious Parody in the Novels of Leopoldo Alas," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 43 (1966), 197-208; Eduardo Gramberg, "Su único hijo, novela incomprendida de Leopoldo Alas," *Hispania*, 45 (1962), 194-9; Antonio Comas, intro. to *Su único hijo* (Barcelona: Taber, 1968); Mariano Baquero Goyanes, "Una novela de Clarín: *Su único hijo*," in *Prosistas españoles contemporáneos* (Madrid: RIALP, 1956), pp. 33-125; Emilio Clocchiatti, Leopoldo Alas, "Clarín," su crítica y estética (Québec: Ediciones 'La Crítica', 1949).

<sup>2</sup> Review of Adolfo Posada and Urbano González Serrano, *La amistad y el sexo* (April 9, 1893) in Leopoldo Alas, *Palique* (Madrid: Victoriano Suárez, 1894), pp. 85-86.

<sup>3</sup> "Congreso pedagógico," in *Palique*, p. 176. See also Gifford Davis, "The Literary Relations of Clarín and Emilia Pardo Bazán" *Hispanic Review*, 49 (1971), 378-94.

<sup>4</sup> *Palique*, p. 178.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>7</sup> V. Juan Antonio Cabezas, *Clarín, el provinciano universal* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1936); and Adolfo Posada, *Leopoldo Alas* (Oviedo: La Cruz, 1946).

<sup>8</sup> Adolfo Posada, *Leopoldo Alas*, p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Leopoldo Alas, "Psicología del sexo," in *La Ilustración Ibérica* (Barcelona), 12 (1894), 3, 6, 38, 231, 259, 262, and 343. The present quotation is from p. 6. Although *Su único hijo* appeared in 1890, thus three and four years before the articles in question, Alas makes it clear that he has always held these ideas on the rôles of the sexes. Thus, in *Palique*, p. 83, n. 1: "Abundando en el sentido del Sr. González Serrano y en el que yo he defendido siempre, publica un admirable artículo en *La Revue des Deux-Mondes* Mr. Fouillée (15 Septiembre 1893) que pide educación diferente por razón de las cualidades naturales de los sexos." The same phrase, "que yo siempre he defendido," likewise appears in the present quotation from the *Revista Ibérica*, as we can see. For other little-known articles by Clarín, see Sergio Beser and Luis Bonet, "Índice de colaboraciones de Leopoldo Alas en la prensa barcelonesa," *Archivum* (Oviedo), 16 (1966), 157-211.

<sup>10</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Although Joaquín Ferrater Mora, *Diccionario de filosofía*, 5th ed. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1965), s.v. *altruismo*, states that Comte coined the word, Professor Joaquín Casaldueño has pointed out to me that this is a moot point. Auguste Comte, *Système de politique positive ou Traité de sociologie instituant la religion de l'humanité*, reprint of 1851-1881 ed. (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 694-703, lists the ten "moteurs affectifs" which constitute a scale of values going from egoism to altruism. An illustrative schematic table summing up those pages has been appended by Comte at the end of the volume. Clifford Thomson, "Egoism and Alienation in the Works of Leopoldo Alas," *Romanische Forschungen*, 81 (1969), 193-203, though an interesting attempt to deal with the topic of egoism, does not place it in the proper historical and philosophical perspective. Egoism was a widely accepted concept at the time. Let us note that George Meredith's novel, *The Egoist*, has recently attracted the attention of feminist critics like Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics*.

<sup>15</sup> Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Appleton, 1902), Vol. 2, pp. 578-648, reduces Comte's scale considerably. He lists (1) egotistic sentiments, (2) ego-altruistic sentiments; (3) altruistic sentiments, and (4) aesthetic sentiments. Comte on the other hand, had seven personal affects, the first five relating to interest, the next two to ambition; of the interest affects, the first three are instincts of conservation, while the fourth and fifth are instincts of "perfectionnement":

(1) de l'individu, ou instinct nutritif; (2) de l'espèce, instinct sexuel; (3) de l'espèce, instinct maternel; (4) par destruction, ou instinct militaire; (5) par construction, ou instinct industriel; (6) ambition temporelle, ou orgueil, besoin de domination; (7) ambition spirituelle, ou vanité, besoin d'approbation. These seven affects come under the heading of egoism. The three social affects, the first two being special and the last general, are classed under altruism: (8) Attachement; (9) vénération; (10) bonté, ou amour universel (*sympatie*), humanité. Note that Comte's theory was published in 1851, and Spencer's in 1872.

<sup>16</sup> "Psicología del sexo," p. 262.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>19</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>21</sup> Clarín's conservative attitude toward woman's rôle in *Teresa* has been pointed out by Fernando Ibarra, "Clarín y Azorín: el matrimonio y el papel de la mujer española," *Hispania*, 55 (1972), 45-54.

<sup>22</sup> "Psicología del sexo," p. 343.

<sup>23</sup> Auguste Comte does not figure among the several philosophers and biologists mentioned by Alas in "Psicología del sexo," but Herbert Spencer does (p. 231), and in a manner indicating that Alas was familiar with his works. Both Comte and Spencer are antifeminists, but in very different ways, because the Frenchman is a visionary and the Englishman is down-to-earth. Let us deal first with Clarín's distortion of the Comtian concept of altruism. As we saw, Clarín seems to posit two types of altruism, one masculine and the other feminine, the latter based on motherhood. Comte, however, classifies "l'instinct maternel" among the egoist sentiments (see note 15 above). Therefore, by calling motherhood altruistic, Clarín radically alters the positivist scheme, since in the latter the ultimate degree of altruism, toward which there is but a single affective path, is the highest form of social awareness, an empathy for all mankind. Altruism is thus the social virtue par excellence. Consequently, to call love for one's child "feminine altruism," as Clarín does, is to imply an ineluctable and eternal tension between different values separately cherished by each sex. Such an outlook would tend to support a kind of naturalist pessimism quite unlike Comte's utopian view of a new, positivistic society. It is very note-worthy that, whereas the Spaniards looks upon women primarily as mothers, the Frenchman sees them primarily as companions. He expounds his views in the fourth part ("Influence féminine du positivisme") of the "Discours préliminaire" to the *Système de politique positive*, Vol. I, pp. 204-73. "La théorie du mariage et de la famille consiste surtout à rendre le principal office féminin pleinement indépendant de toute fonction propagatrice pour le fonder directement sur les plus éminents attributs de notre nature. Malgré l'importance de la maternité, une équivoque décisive témoigne que l'instinct public regarde la femme comme essentiellement caractérisée par sa vocation d'épouse. Outre que le mariage humain est souvent stérile, une indigne épouse ne peut être presque jamais une bonne mère. C'est donc, à tous égards, comme simple compagne de l'homme, que le positivisme doit surtout apprécier la femme, en écartant d'abord toute fonction maternelle" (p. 234). "Après avoir ainsi apprécié la destination propre du mariage, indépendamment de toute maternité, la théorie sociologique de la femme doit se compléter en concevant l'office maternel comme une extension nécessaire de la mission morale que caractérise l'épouse" (p. 241). The three elements of the new positivist society will be (1) philosophers, (2) proletarians, and (3) women. Since women are superior to men insofar as they tend to make sociability prevail over personality (p. 210), and since their natural condition prescribes a domestic existence (p. 231), one of their functions will be to organize "salons positivistes" (p. 232). Comte looks upon feminism as a sophistical aberration: "Tous les âges de transition ont suscité, comme le nôtre, des aberrations sophistiques sur la condition sociale des femmes. Mais la loi naturelle qui assigne au sexe affectif une existence essentiellement domestique n'a jamais été gravement altérée" (p. 244). While expressing a strong belief that feminism is anarchistic (p. 245) and calling its aims "ces rêves subversifs" (p. 248), Comte argues, on the other hand, that, since power corrupts, women, being more impressionable than men, would be more easily corruptible than they (see also "Statique sociale," *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 375-7). Consequently, the new society must demand of women "une stricte renonciation à l'activité habituelle du sexe dirigeant. . . . L'exercice de l'autorité pratique ne peut se concilier avec l'essor habituel de l'esprit d'ensemble, parce qu'il préoccupe l'intelligence de questions spéciales. Mais il nuit beaucoup plus à la pureté des affections en développant les impulsions égoïstes. Ce danger serait d'autant moins évitable pour les femmes, que leur âme éminemment tendre manque ordinairement d'énergie, de manière à ne pouvoir lutter assez contre les influences corruptrices" (*ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 246). Comte, like Clarín, looks askance at the prospect of female competition: "la rivalité pratique corromperait les principales sources de l'affection mutuelle" (p. 248). Although Comte is willing to glorify the anomaly, for example, Joan of Arc (p. 265), women should be relegated more and more to domestic life and prevented from exercising power, even to the point of excluding them from inheritance: "il suffira de réaliser une dernière conséquence de la théorie sociologique du sexe affectif, en interdisant aux final de la vraie monogamie" (p. 238). Divorce is a temporary aberration among Protestants (p. 238), who, moreover, being less influenced by women, are more likely to be tempted by communism (p. 229).



Whereas Comte posits that human progress tends to differentiate the sexes (p. 247), Spencer believes the very opposite. In his *Principles of Sociology*, 3rd ed. (New York and London: D. Appleton, 1925), p. 767, we read: "If still guiding ourselves by observing the course of past evolution, we ask what changes in the status of women may be anticipated, the answer must be that a further approach toward equality of position between the sexes may take place. With decline of militancy and rise of industrialism - with decrease of compulsory co-operation and increase of voluntary co-operation - with strengthening sense of personal rights and accompanying sympathetic regard for the personal rights of others; must go a diminution of the political and domestic disabilities of women, until there remain only such as differences of constitution entail." Nevertheless, the ensuing qualifications of this general principle are patently antifeminist, and could easily have influenced Clarín: "At the same time it must be concluded that no considerable alteration in the careers of women in general, can be, or should be, so produced; and further, that any extensive change in the education of women, made with the view of fitting them for businesses and professions, would be mischievous. If women comprehended all that is contained in the domestic sphere, they would ask no other. If they could see everything which is implied in the right education of children, to a full conception of which no man has yet risen, much less any woman, they would seek no higher function" (p. 769) Spencer also examines the prospect of "giving to men and women equal amounts of political power . . . Several influences would conduce to retrogression. The greater respect for authority and weaker sentiment of individual freedom characterizing the feminine nature, would tend towards the maintenance and multiplication of restraints. Eagerness for special and immediate results, joined with inability to appreciate general and remote results, characterizing the majority of men and still more characterizing women, would, if women had power, entail increase of coercive measures for achieving present good, at the cost of future evil caused by excess of control" (p. 769). "Now the ethics of the family are upheld by the parental instincts and sentiments, which, in the female, are qualified, in a smaller degree by other feelings than in the male. Already these emotions proper to parenthood as they exist in men, lead them to carry the ethics of the Family into the policy of the State; and the mischief resulting would be increased were these emotions as existing in women, directly to influence that policy. The progress towards justice in social arrangements would be retarded; and demerit would be fostered at the expense of merit still more than now" (p. 770). Spencer then proceeds to admit that his own views would become obsolete with the further evolution of industrialism. Leopoldo Alas, however, has decided to choose from Spencer what suits his own purposes. We can speculate, of course, that he believed such a stage of industrialism in Spain would occur in too distant a future to even consider it in his article. Or we can speculate that he dismissed it altogether. Yet we cannot deny that he may have had reason, as a Spanish liberal, to feel that Spain was far from ready for feminism.

<sup>24</sup> "Psicología del sexo," p. 343.

<sup>25</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>27</sup> E.g., Carlos Clavería, "Flaubert y La Regenta de Clarín," *Romantic Review*, 10 (1942), 116-25, reprinted *Cinco estudios de literatura española moderna* (Salamanca: C.S.I.C., 1945), pp. 11-45; G. Laffitte, "Madame Bovary et La Regenta," *Bulletin Hispanique*, 45 (1943), 157-63; and Sherman Eoff, *The Modern Spanish Novel* (N. Y.: New York University Press, 1961), pp. 67-84.

<sup>28</sup> Phyllis Z. Boring, "Some Reflections on Clarín's Doña Berta," *Romance Notes*, 9 (1969), 322-5. Baquero Goyanes, *Prosistas Españoles contemporáneos*, pp. 89-93, also finds similarities between Doña Berta and Su único hijo.

<sup>29</sup> Leopoldo Alas, *Obras selectas* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1947), p. 751. All page references in the text are to this edition.

<sup>30</sup> "Psicología del sexo," p. 343. This can be considered a sentimental restatement of some of Comte's ideas.

<sup>31</sup> Leopoldo Alas, *Teresa*, (Mexico: Eusebio Sánchez, 1895), p. 50.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>34</sup> See the article by Fernando Ibarra mentioned in note 21 above. See also José María Martínez Cachero, "Noticia del estreno de *Teresa* y de algunas críticas periodísticas," *Archivum* (Oviedo), 19 (1969), 243-73.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Avon, 1971), *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> *Obras selectas*, p. 557. The comma present in our quotation is missing from this edition, but it is found, and correctly so, in that of Alianza Editorial (Madrid, 1966).

<sup>37</sup> Comte might classify it as "moteur affectif spécial - vénération."

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 611. The first sentence of this quotation makes it clear that the author is no longer describing Bonifacio's mental wanderings through indirect discourse, but is giving his own opinion.

<sup>39</sup> The relevance of this attempted abortion was brought to my attention by my very gifted student, Miss Brenda Bravo-Fernández.

<sup>40</sup> In using the phrase "metaphysical masturbation," I would give to the word *metaphysical* the significance established by Eduard von Hartmann in his *Philosophie der Unbewusst*. We should remember that Sherman Eoff mentions von Hartmann as a possible influence on Clarín (*The Modern Spanish Novel*, p. 81). Clarín does use the word *masturbation* devoid of erotic implications, in one instance: "a estas hora [está] el pobre Clarín entregado a la peor de las masturbaciones, que es la de la vanidad gozándose a sí misma" (*Cartas a Galdós*, ed. Soledad Ortega [Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1964], p. 227). Accordingly, the concept of masturbation had a transcendental value for Alas and, in creating *Doña Berta*, he perhaps sought to apply it to motherhood, which, being a male supremacist, he viewed as instinctive.

<sup>41</sup> Cesáreo Bandera Gómez, "La sombra de Bonifacio Reyes en Su único hijo," *BHS*, 46 (1969), 201-25. Bandera, to be sure, comes to a different conclusion from mine, since for him the shadow symbolizes Bonis's family memories.

<sup>42</sup> Frances Wyers Weber, "Ideology and Religious Parody in the Novels of Leopoldo Alas," *BHS*, 43 (1966), 206.

<sup>43</sup> Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, p. 114, refers to it as "total expropriation of fertility."

<sup>44</sup> Frances Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

<sup>45</sup> Cesáreo Bandera, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

<sup>46</sup> See Charles A. McBride, "Afinidades espirituales y estilísticas entre Unamuno y 'Clarín,'" *CCMU*, 19 (1969), 5-15; Emilio Clocchiatti, "Miguel de Unamuno y sus cartas a Clarín," *MLJ*, 34 (1950), 646-9; and Manuel García Blanco, "Clarín y Unamuno," *Archivum*, 2 (1951), 113-39.

<sup>47</sup> The possible influence of Roman comedy was suggested to me by Professor Joseph Snow. Yet we must not look upon Bonis as a mere comic puppet. He does have a sense of guilt, as Mrs. Norma Rusch has pointed out to me.

<sup>48</sup> This is only one instance of religious parody connected with Bonifacio. Chapter V ends when he revives from a faint resulting from the first kiss given him by Serafina. Here the narration appears to contain elements of apocalyptic description: "Cuando volvió en sí se encontró tendido en un banco de madera, a su lado había tres sombras, tres fantasmas, y del vientre de uno de ellos brotaba la luz de un sol que le cegaba con sus llamaradas rojizas. El sol era la linterna del sereno, las dos sombras restantes la Gorgheggi y Mochi que rociaban el rostro de su amigo con agua del pilón de la fuente vecina . . ." (p. 585).

<sup>49</sup> Our author indicates more than once that Reyes's symbolism must not be taken seriously. E.g. "Sí, señora, sí - decía Emma en la hipótesis absurda de su marido - . . ." (p. 654; ch. 12). The fact that *hipótesis* is in italics suggests ironically that it should really be called *lucubración*.

<sup>50</sup> Some of the critics who have made important contributions to the understanding of this novel have also misunderstood Clarín at this point. Eduard Grumberg, noting that the last scenes of *Su único hijo* and *La Regenta* take place in the cathedral, seeks to establish a relation between the two novels and compares Bonifacio with Ana Ozores ("*Su único hijo*, novela incomprendida de Leopoldo Alas," *Hispania*, 45 [1962], 194-9). Nonetheless, it is not Bonis but the abandoned Serafina who is most akin to Ana in this scene.

<sup>51</sup> For the topos of the kind of suicide contemplated by Serafina, see Robert Ricard, "En Marge de Galdós: 'Révolution des allumettes' et clichés romanesques," *Bulletin Hispanique*, 72 (1970), 148-51. Consequently, this suicide threat could be seen as evidence that Clarín used the figure of Serafina to parody a Romantic stereotype. Baquero Goyanes speaks of "romanticismo literaturizado," though not in this case (*Prosistas españoles contemporáneos*, p. 70).