

## **APPRECIATING WOMEN: ART AND BOURGEOIS LEGITIMIZATION IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY SPANISH NOVEL**

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European social reformers of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries imagined that the establishment of public museums, together with libraries, would aid in the improvement of the mental and moral health of all citizens (Bennett 18). With the advent of the art gallery as a public institution, European governments envisioned that high culture could serve as an instrument in the regulation of social behavior (Bennett 22). In Spain, it is with the foundation of the Prado by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts that we observe such an attempt at social engineering through the deployment of the artistic treasures of the empire. In 1814, some four years before the inauguration of this museum, which was to be largely composed of works loaned from the royal collection, King Ferdinand VII addressed the purpose of this new cultural institution:

Que se establezea en él una galería de pinturas, grabados, estatuas y planos arquitectónicos y demás bellezas artísticas, con la comodidad y decoro correspondiente, así para la enseñanza y aprovechamiento de los discípulos y profesores como para satisfacer la noble curiosidad de naturales y extranjeros y dar a España la gloria que tan justamente merecía. (qtd. in Rumeu de Armas, 115)

However, whereas Spanish social reformers such as Minister Mariano Luis de Urquijo and Royal Academy of Fine Arts President

Pedro Franco in the earlier half of the nineteenth century had foreseen the possibility of strengthening the moral fiber of all echelons of society through open access to a civic temple of high art, intellectuals of the latter half of the century, particularly novelists, openly questioned the democratic myth behind the museum project by exposing the almost exclusive reclamation of such spaces by the elite classes. In particular, Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco, Benito Pérez Galdós, and Leopoldo Alas "Clarín" came to utilize the narrative set-piece of the Prado visit in their fiction in order to focus on what Pierre Bourdieu would later describe as the masked function of the museum:

The museum gives to all, as a public legacy, the monuments of a splendid past, instruments of the sumptuous glorification of the great figures of bygone ages, but this is a false generosity, because free entrance is also optional entrance, reserved for those who, endowed with the ability to appropriate the works, have the privilege of using this freedom and who find themselves consequently legitimized in their privilege, that is, in the possession of the means of appropriating cultural goods or ... in the monopoly of the handling of cultural goods. (237)

For Ayguals de Izco, Galdós, and Clarín, the museum visit has become territorialized by upper classes; they seek to highlight its function as a rite of passage for the urban middle class in Spain.

Theorist Carol Duncan has likewise proposed that the transformation of the princely gallery into the public art museum in the nineteenth century served "the ideological needs of the emerging bourgeois nation states by providing them with a new kind of civic ritual" (2). The novels of Ayguals de Izco, Pérez Galdós, and Clarín, all set out to explore this new nineteenth-century ritual of the museum visit in the context of changing class dynamics — particularly the advent of the middle class in Spain. Their novels, *María, o la hija de un jornalero* (1845), *La desheredada* (1881), and *La Regenta* (1884-85), take different paths in their representations of the effects of the museum

experience on their female protagonists, but each of them ultimately upholds the power of the public gallery as a theater for the middle-class to find legitimacy through the appropriation of cultural artifacts of a once purely aristocratic patrimony. Despite the different outcomes of the museum sally in *María, La desheredada*, and *La Regenta*, each of the novels exposes the art gallery as a space that carries with it an expectation of performance, a proving ground in which possession and enactment of the artistic gaze speaks volumes as to the social climbing abilities of the characters involved. Just as Barbara Joanne Black has said of the museum in the English novel, we find in Spanish novels of the nineteenth century an assumption that “exhibited objects [will] become the gauge for sensibility and for the matching of sensibilities” (142).

The ideological importance of the museum to bourgeois self-legitimization inevitably found its manifestation in the figure of the woman, for in this era, as Michel Foucault has noted, sexuality — specifically female sexuality — became the locus of middle-class attempts to create, strengthen, protect, and defend bourgeois political and social hegemony (123). It should thus come as no surprise that in *María, La desheredada*, and *La Regenta* the museum is shown to be a space dedicated to the production of the so-called ideal woman, and it forms a context in which women, through their objectification by the male gaze, can be possessed and exhibited. In these novels we find the museum presented, not as a civic temple constructed for the social education of the whole of society, but rather as an environment where the aesthetic judgment and “natural” sensibility, and thus the class of women may be marked and judged. As Nancy Armstrong asserts, in this period, “of the female alone did [literature] presume to say that neither birth nor the accoutrements of title and status accurately represented the individual; only the more subtle nuances of behavior indicated what one was really worth” (4).

The female protagonists in *María, La desheredada*, and *La Regenta* do not go to the museum of their own initiative; instead, men or women of higher social standing ostensibly bring them to the museum to be instructed in the arts. But in reality, the art gallery provides a narrative

space where women move from being observers and enactors of an artistic sensibility to being observed as objects that are indistinguishable from the sea of *objets d'art* in which they are placed. In the forays to the museum found in these novels, the female protagonists are visually inspected and commented upon just as much or even more than the art that surrounds them. Thus we will observe that, in the context of this fictional environment, if women prove to have the ability to understand works of art and therefore to appropriate them, they will prove their own merit as "collectibles" in the artistic and mercantile game of gender relations.

In *María, o la hija de un jornalero*, the chapter "El Museo de Pinturas", in which the Baroness takes María to the Prado, is embedded in the part of the novel which carries the noteworthy title "También la virtud es nobleza." This fourth part of *María* proclaims itself from the start to be a space where the reader should examine those virtuous characteristics of the protagonist that rightfully entitle her to form part of the upper classes despite the fact that it is not her birthright. Readers are encouraged by the title of this fourth section of the novel to disregard previous aristocratic norms such as pure blood and lineage, and to look instead to a new vocabulary of worth for deciding social position. The expectation then, at the outset of the visit to the art gallery, is that the museum will be an environment in which the virtue of María might shine beyond the limits set by the mark of birth, and thus in which she might confirm herself as a noble woman through a set of alternative criteria. After all, as the Baroness reminds María in Chapter two of this section, virtue and beauty, not wealth and a noble title, "son las mejores prendas que una mujer puede llevar á un esposo, que por otro lado ocupa en la sociedad una posición tan brillante como honrosa" (2: 20).

It is worth recalling that it is with the portrait that the Baroness paints of María for the young woman's aristocratic love, Don Luis de Mendoza, that the protagonist first shows an interest in art and through which the idea of a trip to the museum surfaces: "Acababa de pintar el (retrato) de María, y era tan perfecta la semejanza, que María le contemplaba absorta: parecía que se estaba viendo en el espejo. Era

una fineza con que la enamorada joven quería sorprender agradablemente á su digno amante” (2: 37). Furthermore, almost directly after this literal construction of María as an art object, as a painted portrait, we encounter María in the Baroness’s great hall — a mini-museum in and of itself — exclaiming: “no puede usted figurarse cuán deliciosamente se me pasa el tiempo contemplando los cuadros que tiene usted” (2: 38). In this scene, one cannot help but imagine María, framed just moments before as an artistic likeness of herself, as indistinguishable from the mass of paintings that surrounds her in the Baroness’s home.

We must keep this prelude in mind as we examine the function of the museum scene in Ayguales de Izco’s novel. Outwardly it would appear that María goes to the Prado because she is curious about painting and because the Baroness, herself an artist and thus a purveyor of aesthetic knowledge, would like to introduce her to the artistic patrimony of the nation: “¡Válgame Dios! ¡Cuánto le envidio á usted su habilidad! ¡Es tan hermosa la pintura! ... —Ya que tanto le gustan á usted los cuadros, —repuso la baronesa,—esta misma mañana ahora mismo, podemos ir á ver el Museo de Pinturas. ¡Allí sí que hay cosas admirables!” (2: 38). In responding to María’s innate interest, the Baroness speaks of course of the certain wonder and admiration that the works found in the art gallery will produce in María should she view them. But within the context of this museum visit, what turns out to be most admirable is María herself, who, “dotada de exquisita sensibilidad y comprensión, deteníase como extasiada precisamente ante los cuadros de más mérito” (2: 40). The narrator reveals through this description that the young woman does not require the Baroness’s guidance in the Prado; instead, she appears naturally predisposed to appreciate pictorial beauty and possesses as keen an aesthetic eye as the Baroness herself.

While María is ostensibly taken to the museum so that she might cultivate a knowledge and appreciation of art, she is actually brought there in order to confirm a presumed aesthetic consciousness. This consciousness, or innate condition of María’s character, is what will guarantee her membership in the bourgeoisie, for, as Bourdieu has

observed, in the nineteenth-century, “culture that has become nature” has become the only possible principle for the legitimization of bourgeois privilege (235). Curiously, with the supposed empowering of María’s aesthetic gaze as she contemplates paintings such as Velázquez’s *Los borrachos* and Raphael’s *La perla*, there is a constant shift in this scene towards the Baroness’s gaze and her objectification of María. It is the noblewoman, instead of María, whose vision and perception is ultimately shown to be in control of the action taking place in this museum scene. Furthermore, the noblewoman’s gaze appears as a stand-in for that of María’s suitor Don Luis in that it possesses qualities of the masculine gaze. Her gaze, which becomes the initiator and manipulator of the scene’s action and operates from an assertive position in opposition to María’s submissive stance, dominates the museum scene, as evidenced by the numerous times in which the narrator highlights the Baroness’s vision or viewing of María. María does not become the subject in this scene as one might expect, describing the various qualities of the art from her unique perspective; instead she becomes the object observed, beholden and appreciated because she possesses an ability that does not correspond to the class into which she was born. In the museum scene, the Baroness constructs yet another “portrait” of the young woman for Don Luis, but this time she makes of María an *objet d’art* by observing her every move in and describing her every reaction to the art of the Prado.

Finally, it is no coincidence that the last painting that the Baroness watches María observe should have as its subject a marriage scene: “Es el desposorio de dos amantes felices, —dijo la baronesa en tono festivo. —Como si dijéramos, don Luis de Mendoza y cierta señorita á quien no quiero nombrar” (2: 44). Because of her intrinsic discriminating sensibility, María has proven herself, in the eyes of the Baroness, to be worthy of “collection,” that is to say, of marriage with the nobleman Don Luis. At the end of the chapter, the two women return to the Baroness’s home, “con ánimo de no salir ya en todo el día, aguardando con impaciencia la noche para entregar á don Luis el retrato de su amante, que debía ser también una memoria de la amiga que tan perfectamente había trazado” (2: 45). But when Luis arrives,

the Baroness regales him with the verbal picture of María in the museum rather than presenting him with the portrait. The noblewoman points out to Luis that “María es gran inteligente de la pintura” (2: 67) and that in their visit to the Prado, “han llamado mas la atención de [María] las composiciones de mayor mérito” (2: 68). This newly discovered talent captivates Don Luis; the young woman’s performance in the art gallery has proven her worth to this upper-class gentleman. María’s virtue in understanding “los encantos de la pintura” will soon be seen to have a direct connection to the “dichoso porvenir” that the Baroness predicts for the young lady, as Don Luis ultimately takes María in matrimony, officially making of her the bourgeois lady that her attributes have already proven her to be.

Whereas in *María, o la hija de un jornalero*, the young female protagonist passes the test that the entrance into the museum signifies for any woman, in Galdós’s *La desheredada*, an outing to the Prado serves to highlight shortcomings in the character of the protagonist, Isidora, and thus signal the condemnation of her social aspirations. As Michael Schnepf has noted, Galdós “frequently utilized specific paintings as the source for descriptions and episodes, as a means of foreshadowing subsequent events, and as a tool in the characterization process” (321). This use, projected beyond the limits of one painting toward the realm of the body of art found in a museum, is apparent in the passage that appeared in the published version of the novel in 1881, but even more so, in the extended museum scene found in *La desheredada*’s manuscript. The testing of Isidora’s aesthetic sensibility in the museum, which occurs quite early on in the novel, marks her as a woman who pales in comparison to the art that surrounds her. Furthermore, the museum scene serves to foreshadow the protagonist’s ultimate failure to be legitimized by the judicial system as a member of the aristocracy.

In the published novel, Isidora, a newcomer to Madrid, is taken to the Prado by her friend and potential suitor Miquis, as part of an itinerary that is to include all of the things worth seeing in the city: “me dijo que quería enseñarme las cosas bonitas de Madrid, el Museo, el Retiro, la Castellana” (60). From the start, we see that Isidora’s desire to visit

the Prado springs not from an interest in art *per se*, but rather from a desire to become acquainted with what would be considered the environs of status of the Spanish capital during that era. Galdós ingeniously sets the stage for the friends' sortie to the national art gallery by first describing the couple's walk to the museum along a commercial street, and highlighting Isidora's consumerist compulsion: Avanzaban poco en su paseo, porque Isidora se detenía ante los escaparates para ver y admirar lo mucho y vario que en ellos hay siempre. También era motivo de sus detenciones el deseo oculto de mirarse en los cristales, pues es costumbre de las mujeres, y aun de los hombres, echarse una ojeada en las vitrinas, para ver si van tan bien como suponen o pretenden (62).

This narrative segue into the Prado scene, with its mention of the shops' glass showcases and the untouchable objects that they contain, parallels the physical space of the museum and suggests that the drive for possession found in the mercantile realm may likewise be present in a visit to such a ostensibly democratic space as that of the museum. Moreover, as it describes how Isidora constantly searches for her reflection in the shop windows, it serves to highlight the self-absorption of the protagonist and her obsession with appearances -- a trait that will be critically exposed within the context of the museum.

Once inside the museum, the reader at first might be led to believe that Isidora, like Ayguals de Izco's Maria, was gifted with some innate aesthetic sensibility with which to appropriate the culture presented to her in the museum. After all, the narrator states that she understands the superiority of what she sees "sin haber adquirido por lecturas noción alguna del verdadero arte" (62). But such a reading of Isidora's artistic perceptiveness is immediately invalidated by the fact that her judgment regarding the quality of what she sees is not purely or positively formulated. Instead, the protagonist can only interpret the art of the Prado in comparison with the "mamarrachos" that she has been exposed to previously. Isidora holds no truly qualitative criteria for the understanding and thus the appropriation of the elite culture of the museum. We see her therefore as an indiscriminating viewer wandering through the museum, lacking for words to describe what she sees or

merely falling into commonplaces: “con admiración silenciosa, su vista iba de cuadro en cuadro, hallándolos todos, o casi todos, tan acabados y perfectos” (62). Finally, it is the young protagonist’s questioning of Miquis as to whether “en aquel sitio destinado a albergar lo sublime dejaban entrar al pueblo” (62), and her shock at her companion’s affirmative response, that truly frustrates any possibility of Isidora’s cultural legitimization in the proving grounds of the museum. For Hazel Gold, “this elitist wish to exclude the more plebeian members of society is an early symptom of Isidora’s inability to distinguish between her invented ‘vida apócrifa’ as unrecognized granddaughter of the Marquesa de Aransis and her considerably more sordid ‘vida genuina’” (“A Tomb” 319). Certainly, the protagonist’s attempt to ally herself with the aristocracy at this exact moment reeks of inauthenticity when we take into account how poorly equipped she has just proven herself to be for the task of appropriating the cultural goods of the museum. In her visit to the gallery, she herself has failed to merit access to the elitist space she wishes it were.

In the manuscript version of *La desheredada*’s museum sally, there is greater description of the interaction between Isidora and Miquis, particularly of the medical student’s observation and posing of the young woman. From the beginning of the manuscript passage, it is noted that “Miquis ... conocía bien el Museo” (qtd. in Schnepf 322) and that he would choreograph the tour of the museum without any input from Isidora: “la hacía fijarse en lo más notable del gran salón y de la rotunda” (qtd. in Schnepf 322). Miquis is shown to be constantly repositioning Isidora in relation to the different works of art in the Prado, as if he were trying to find a spot where she herself might fit into the collection:

el estudiante *la detenía ante aquellos gigantes más [illegible] del arte, y le hacía notar, ya majestad melancólica del Emperador, jinete en el caballo negro, obra de Tiziano, ya la gracia infinita de la Perla de Rafael, ó la grandiosa expresión santa y maniática del Pasmó, ora la verdad terrible de los ascetos de Ribera ora la amplitud risueña y fresco de la Andromeda de Rubens.* (qtd. in Schnepf 322)

In this way, Miquis underlines the way in which Isidora is a social question mark, an in-between figure. This middle-class gentleman is searching Isidora for some value that might legitimize her as a member of his own class. Curiously, one of the paintings before which Miquis places Isidora, at first far away and later up close, implicates the reversal of gazes that has taken place within the space of the museum — the shift from Isidora’s perspective to Miquis’s observation of her. *Las Meninas*, a painting in which a mirror and the rearrangement of perspective play such an integral part, is the work of art that the couple spends the most time admiring. In *Las Meninas*, Velázquez as painter is transformed into Velázquez as artistic subject, just as, in the gallery, Isidora moves from being an observer of art to being observed by Miquis (and the narrator) in relation to the works of art. However, even though the male gaze objectifies Isidora within the context of the museum, she does not prove herself worthy of membership in the collection. The protagonist’s failure to demonstrate aesthetic sensibility is more expressly noted in the manuscript than in the published version, for it is here that the narrator observes that, “Isidora se rió delante de *Los Borrachos*, no acertando a comprender la verdad de aquella ficción del arte” and that ultimately “nada de lo que expresaban aquellos pedazos de mármol le interesaba” (qtd. in Schnepf 322).

Whereas *María* demonstrated that the museum could clearly serve as a legitimizing space for social climbers who were effective in their display of cultural knowledge, and *La desheredada* critiqued this process through the description of Isidora’s shortcomings in the museum context, *La Regenta* sets up an outright parody of the social legitimization that is inherent in the appropriation of the space and the artifacts of the museum. Clarín’s adaptation of the museum scene can be seen as parody because it is, to use Linda Hutecheon’s terms, a “critical act of reassessment and acclimatization” (4). In *La Regenta*, Clarín seeks to revisit and affirm the legitimizing forces behind the museum at the same time that he looks to mock the late nineteenth-century bourgeoisie’s distanced relationship from the class-confirming function of this space.

Specifically, Clarín portrays Ana, the bourgeois woman at the heart

of this novel, as having a distorted and overwhelmingly negative relationship with the museum. At a very young age, she fails to show herself in possession of any of the qualities that would mark her as deserving of the social station to which she was born. Ana is no María. Because she was born into the bourgeoisie, she has no need to prove herself worthy of inclusion in this class. From a very young age she distains the plastic arts and demonstrates no aesthetic consciousness. This is clearly demonstrated during Ana's adolescence, when the young woman's father takes her to Madrid to visit the Prado, among other cultural landmarks. Here, the narrator emphasizes that the father's efforts to baptize his daughter in the symbolic consumption of art were futile because "la pobre muchacha se aburría mucho" (1: 263). Furthermore, with regard to the museum, Ana is distinct from her provincial counterpart Isidora. Unlike Isidora, she does not even attempt to be an art appreciator when she is brought to the metropolis, and she openly resists her father's insistence that she partake in the middle class ritual of the museum visit. Later in life and once a married woman, Ana's lack of aesthetic consciousness, and therefore her incompetence as a proper bourgeois wife, is also plainly apparent in her decoration of her bedroom. Obdulia highlights Ana's shortcomings in this regard, noting that this room, "parece el cuarto de un estudiante. Ni un objeto de arte. Ni un mal *bibelot*; nada de lo que piden el *confort* y el buen gusto. La alcoba es la mujer como el estilo es el hombre. Dime cómo duermes y te diré quién eres" (1: 215). Obdulia's words make apparent the importance of art and good taste to the definition of the middle class woman in this period, at the same time that they underscore Ana's indifference to such codes as are necessitated by her class.

Ana's inadequacies as a symbolic and literal consumer of art, and thus as an acceptable bourgeois female, are nowhere more apparent than in her relationship with her husband Victor's domestic museum. According to Ana, Victor's collection has little to do with an appreciation of aesthetics and everything to do with his compulsive pseudo-scientific interests. To the Regent's wife, even the title of "museo" seems questionable in its application to her husband's collection of objects, as it was merely filled with. "su herbario, ... sus

tiestos, ... su colección de mariposas, ... una docena de aparatos delicados que le servían en sus variadas industrias de fabricante de jaulas y grilleras, artista en marquetería, coleccionador, entomólogo y botánico" (1: 470). While critic Hazel Gold would seem to confirm this disapproval of Víctor's gallery, arguing that what is most noteworthy of his museum is its "insólito anacronismo" (*De paso* 1291), I would maintain that, despite the Regent's inadequacies with relation to the processes of the museum, Ana's shortcomings with relation to the domestic collection are what receive the greatest scrutiny in *La Regenta*.

In this novel, Quintanar's domestic gallery functions primarily as a refuge and bastion for him when he is faced with any difficulty regarding Ana. This woman, who by all accounts should be the retired Regent's most prized possession, is largely neglected by her husband and so does not figure in his collection. Ana recognizes early on in their marriage that, "su marido era botánico, ornitólogo, floricultor, arboricultor, cazador, crítico de comedias, cómico, jurisconsulto; todo menos un marido" (458-59). Her failings are most apparent in a pivotal scene in which, reeling after her first close encounter with Don Álvaro, she stumbles and "accidentally" destroys most of her husband's collection of curiosities. Ana's physical fall and the havoc wreaked on Víctor's collection prelude her eventual moral fall and underline her failure to become a productive middle class wife. Her disinterest in her husband's collection, her inability to appropriate that collection, and ultimately, her destruction of the domestic museum: all of these actions highlight Ana's resistance to the bourgeois female mold.

Ana takes on a useless and purely ornamental quality within Víctor's home; her tremendous beauty, however, coupled with her decorative quality — that is to say, her lack of productivity as a wife and her inability to become a mother, nevertheless make of Ana an *objet d'art* admired by all of Vetusta. The powerful gaze of Vetusta's townspeople and their troublesome objectification of Ana becomes one of the recurring themes of Clarín's novel. Obdulia's gaze, for example, seems to follow Ana; she carefully inspects Ana's boudoir on a handful of occasions and, after one such inspection, underscores Ana's refusal to

connect with Victor's home, exclaiming: "¡Lástima — concluía . . . , sin sentir lastima — que un *bijou* tan precioso se guarde en tan miserable joyero!" (1: 216). Ana, like María and Isidora, is referred to as an art object, and yet, unlike her predecessors, she will not stand still or allow herself to be positioned within the order of the domestic museum. Even the narrator's gaze, describing Ana alone in her bedroom, makes of the protagonist a *maja desnuda*:

quedó sobre la piel de tigre, hundiendo los pies desnudos, pequeños y rollizos en la espesura de las manchas pardas. Un brazo desnudo se apoyaba en la cabeza algo inclinada, y el otro pendía a lo largo del cuerpo, siguiendo la curva graciosa de la robusta cadera. Parecía una impúdica modelo olvidada de sí misma en una postura académica impuesta por el artista. (1: 217)

This brief piece of erotica, an artistic nude that could easily form part of a museum, here significantly remains beyond Víctor's gaze, and therefore beyond the confines of his domestic museum. Ultimately, Ana's inability as an artistic object to meld with her husband's collection reflects the larger problem of Víctor and Ana's marriage: a lack of modernity and productivity. In addition, Ana's resistance to the objectification of the middle class rituals produced through the space of the museum stands in contrast to the depiction of María and Isidora in the novels of Ayguals de Izco and Galdós. Ana represents a particular moment in the evolution of the bourgeois woman in Spain, specifically the decadence of an already established class and the beginning of the circulation of feminist ideas and values among the nation's educated urban population. In due course, Ana rejects the larger role that modern bourgeois society expects of her. She has married but proves herself to be inept at even the most basic tasks of running a middle class household. Her marriage produces no children and she will eventually be unfaithful. In the Spain of the first half of the nineteenth century, the public art collection known as the Prado was born out of a democratizing goal: to elevate the moral and cultural level of all Spanish citizens. But by

the second half of the century, novelists had begun to critically examine the status of this museum as a truly egalitarian civic institution. Ayguals de Izco, Pérez Galdós, and Clarín in particular portrayed the museum as a space that had been territorialized by the elite classes. Thus in *María, o la hija de un jornalero* the plebeian María does not visit the Prado of her own volition but must be introduced to the museum only under the guidance of the Baroness, a member of the aristocracy. And so also in *La desheredada*, Isidora believes, as claimant to a noble title, that the sublime art gallery she has seen is deserving of only the highest ranks of society. Moreover, the fictions of these authors unveiled the gender-differentiated functioning of the museum as a legitimizing space for women, and related this to the changing class dynamics in Spain during the second half of the nineteenth century. Ayguals de Izco, Pérez Galdós and Clarín portrayed the museum as a stage for female performance under the objectifying gaze of men whereby women might display their social worth. In this context of the demythologizing of the museum as public space and its reconfiguration as a middle class proving ground, we can understand María's construction as *objet d'art* and worthy bride of the aristocrat Don Luis. In *La desheredada*, through this same context, we may preview, only some fifty pages into this lengthy tome, the ultimate unraveling of Isidora as an aspirant to the nobility. Finally in *La Regenta*, the portrayal of Ana's lack of an aesthetic sensibility, seen in her visit to the Prado during her adolescence and in the dearth of bourgeois taste she displays in the decoration of her bedroom, establishes her shortcomings as a modern middle class wife, albeit the continual suggestion throughout the novel that no woman could possibly succeed as a paragon of her class in an environment as backward and repressive as Vetusta. Additionally, Ana's clash with Víctor's domestic museum becomes a metaphor for her own resistance to be "collected" by her husband and foreshadows the crumbling of her marriage.

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