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WOMAN'S ROLE IN THE NOVELS OF  
BENITO PEREZ GALDOS

*Thesis for the Degree of M. A.*

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Jesse M. Soriano

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OF BENITO PEREZ GALDOS

By

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## CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Introduction .....	iii
Benito Pérez Galdós .....	1
Spain in the Last Half of the Nineteenth Century .....	10
Women in Nineteenth-Century Spain .....	16
The Predominance of the Female Sense .....	22
Dominant Women and Conflict in the Male-Female Relationships .....	51
Galdosian Women and Social Conditions .....	60
Conclusion .....	69
Bibliography .....	73

## INTRODUCTION

The intent of this thesis is to examine the roles of the feminine characters in several novels by Benito Pérez Galdós and to examine how faithfully these mirror the actual roles played by women in nineteenth century Spanish society. The conclusion, based on the novels selected and on the chapter on Galdós' life, will be an attempt to arrive at how the author felt concerning the role of woman in Spain and how valid his opinions were.

Divided into six chapters and a conclusion, the first three chapters will present background material necessary to evaluate better Galdós and his work. I shall begin with a brief biography of Galdós, noting the important role played by women in Galdós' personal life, which undoubtedly affected his attitude about women and their proper roles in society. Because Galdós is primarily a product of the last half of the nineteenth century and it is this period which is covered in his novels, chapter two deals with the history of Spain from Isabel the Second to the end of the century. This chaotic period in Spain's history brought about political changes and much social unrest which was reflected in the literature of the times, especially among that group of writers labeled as the Generation of '98'. Chapter three deals specifically with the role of women in Spain. Because there is very little material of a sociological nature concerning women in nineteenth century Spain, it was necessary in part, to rely on the information found in literature concerning women.

The remaining three chapters deal directly with the novels. In chapter four the object is to show how a female sense pervades throughout the novels. This female sense is readily evident since a woman is generally the character about which the story revolves. Not only is a woman the center of action, but generally the women are drawn as the more dynamic, vital characters in contrast to their male counterparts. The following chapter concerns the antagonism present in all these novels between the male and female characters. This antagonism is seen as a logical result of the inferior positions assigned to women. Eventually, however, it is seen that in all these novels the women have, in fact exercised a certain erotic domination and emerged victorious. The sixth chapter is a view of women and their roles as portrayed in the novels and the conditions existing in nineteenth century Spain.

A total of ten novels were read, these falling into the group known as Novelas Contemporáneas. Of these, six are treated at greater length than the others: La Desheredada, Tormento, La de Bringas, La Incógnita, La Loca de La Casa, and Tristana. The others mentioned briefly are, Miau, Misericordia, and Realidad.

## CHAPTER I

### BENITO PEREZ GALDOS

Almost invariably, as one reads biographical accounts of Galdós, there appears one apparent fact: surprisingly little is known of his personal life. This man whom many considered one of Spain's greatest novelists, second only to Cervantes, was an extremely modest and reticent man. He was born at Las Palmas in the Canary Islands on May 10, 1843, the last of ten children. He demonstrated even during his early childhood the humbleness and withdrawn attitude which was to characterize his entire life. His playmates constantly victimized him.<sup>1</sup> In spite of his meekness he was an avid listener to tales of daring and heroism. He would sit for great lengths of time listening to his father or uncle recount lurid tales of the War for Independence. They had both fought in the struggle and quite valiantly.

Until Galdós went to Madrid in 1862 to study law, what information there is of his life is rather sketchy. He attended the so-called Migas school run by two spinster sisters, where he proved to be an average student. In 1857 he entered the Colegio de San Luis, a private secondary school, and completed his studies in 1862, receiving the degree of Bachiller de Artes. At this point he was an above average student, but still his interest in formal education was slight and "the years spent in the colegio were less significant educationally than artistically".<sup>2</sup>

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1 H. Chonon Berkowitz, Pérez Galdós Spanish Liberal Crusader (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1948), p. 21.

2 Ibid., p. 28.

In regard to his schooling, although many of his biographers consistently attribute to him attendance at an English school, the fact remains that no such institutions were found in Las Palmas. The one exception might have been the tutoring done by an English lady living in Las Palmas. What English he did learn probably came from Adriana Tate, American wife of Galdós' uncle José María.<sup>3</sup> Galdós was greatly attached to her. It is interesting that some biographers have even gone as far as to attribute his phlegmatic character to his English schooling, neglecting completely the great influence exerted on Galdós by his strong-willed and imperturbable mother.<sup>4</sup>

Discounting his domineering mother's wishes, Galdós had not the slightest intention to take up law seriously; instead, upon his arrival in Madrid he joined in the agitated and bohemian life of those intellectuals and students who frequented the cafes and clubs. He even acquired for obvious reasons the nickname of the "Harlot Kid".<sup>5</sup> Needless to say, following his old attitude toward formal education, he did not rank as one of the most conscientious students at the University.<sup>6</sup> Shortly after his arrival in Madrid, he began writing as a dramatic and literary critic in the newspaper La Nación. His ambition at this time being the drama, he spent much of his time working on a romantic drama entitled La Expulsión de los Moriscos. This work never saw the boards. He did continue his registration at the University through 1867,

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3 Ibd., p. 26.

4 Angel Valbuena Prat, Historia de la Literatura Española (Barcelona: Editorial Gastano, 1960), III, 319.

5 Berkowitz, p. 57.

6 Ibid., p. 47.

receiving his last grades in 1863-64. This was, however, merely a means for remaining in the city which he loved. In his final years at the University he failed repeatedly due to frequent absences.<sup>7</sup>

Mamá Dolores, noting his lack of interest in his studies, took the advice of Madrina Tate, wife of Benito's oldest brother, and decided to take Galdós on a trip to Paris. The bustling and historic city fascinated him. He roamed the streets endlessly and extensively, intrigued by the diversity of characters. For an acute social observer such as Galdós, this was a virtual paradise. The trip did him a great deal of good but not in the way Mamá Dolores had expected. It was here in Paris that Galdós became acquainted with Balzac's novels. He read every novel of Balzac from cover to cover. Then he decided he had found what he really wanted to do; he wanted to write, to be a novelist.<sup>8</sup> The following year, 1868, he began his Fontana de Oro. Concluding his studies at the University, he became editor of El Debate and in 1871, his second novel El Audaz appeared por entregas, as was the custom. The year 1873 saw the publication of his first four Episodios Nacionales with an "episodio" following every three months until 1876 when Dofia Perfecta came out. Galdós had arrived, he was recognized as a writer, and in 1883 a banquet was organized in his honor. The banquet, organized by Leopoldo Alas (Clarín), was attended by many prominent literary men and speeches

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>8</sup> L. B. Walton, Pérez Galdós and the Spanish Novel of the Nineteenth Century (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1927), p. 31.

were given by Cánovas del Castillo and Echegaray.<sup>9</sup> The year 1886 initiated his entry into politics as liberal deputy from Puerto Rico and in 1887 after some conflict he was admitted into the Spanish Academy.

Probably because of his intense work during these productive years, his eyesight began to fail him and he finally became totally blind in 1912. Still he continued to work until shortly before his death in January 1920. It was on a cold Sunday morning that he passed away. This man who had aroused the wrath of many and the admiration of many more in his lifetime was now in death acclaimed by all. All of Spain went into mourning. As the hearse bearing his body moved toward its destination the crowd of forty thousand mourners shouted, "Viva Galdós".<sup>10</sup>

It is generally agreed that an artist's work is greatly influenced by many factors in his early life not the least important of which are his family relationships, especially his relationship with his parents. Seemingly however, we can exclude Galdós' father from any consideration. C. H. Berkowitz states: "One might almost say that were it not for his biological indispensability, all references to the father could well be omitted. The mother on the other hand dominates the scene completely".<sup>11</sup> Perhaps further attesting to the father's lack of influence is the fact that Galdós on his death bed called for his mother and sisters but not his father. Further commenting on the mother's influence, Berkowitz states: "Her domineering nature, her strong will, her sense of profound seriousness of life, her imperious demand for an

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9 Ibid., p. 34.

10 Berkowitz, p. 457.

11 Ibid., p. 3.

ordered existence, her infinite respect for the fitness of things, and her keen perception of all basic moral values . . . **(were)** traits which her son inherited in generous measure". <sup>12</sup>

Her decision to send Benito to law school was not at all unexpected. Her favorite brother José María had been a successful lawyer in America. The thing that seemed to make it all important for Benito to be a lawyer, however, was the fact that the Galdós name had suffered a blemish. José María, the prop of Mamá Dolores' dignity and self-esteem, became the father of an illegitimate daughter named Sisita. He married the mother, Adriana Tate, an American from Charleston, South Carolina, but there was no rectifying his mistake; he had permanently vacated his spot on the pedestal. <sup>13</sup> It was Mamá Dolores' duty to place Benito on it and regain some measure of honor for the Galdós name.

Adriana Tate and family, an older daughter and son, took the Galdós by storm. She and her baby daughter came to represent a great defeat for Mamá Dolores. Not only did Adriana marry José María, but her older daughter by a former marriage, Magdalena, married Benito's oldest brother Domingo, while her son José married Benito's oldest sister Carmen. To make matters still worse Benito not only showed a more than adolescent infatuation for Sisita but, in later years after Domingo's death, there developed an indissoluble bond between him and Magdalena. She was a domineering woman who took it upon herself to adopt Benito during his years in Madrid. <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

No doubt this internal conflict in the family helped Galdós formulate some of his later thinking. Mamá Dolores came to represent to him an intolerance and lack of generosity while the Tates represented a compassion "which placed nobility of character above all other considerations".<sup>15</sup> This situation also helped color Galdós' treatment of illegitimacy and illicit love in his works and surely even influenced his personal life. He never married but he did have affairs from which resulted a daughter, and so he managed after all to emulate his uncle.

It was not on his treatment of sex that Galdós drew his greatest number of critics. Even though to Galdós sex and religion were merely parts of the same over-all problem of intolerance, it was his anti-clericalism that aroused the greatest amount of criticism. What many misunderstood was that in the face of it all Galdós was a religious man. Even González Blanco in his Historia de La Novela Española states:

Hasta religiosamente, Galdós es más español de lo que se cree comúnmente. Su actitud es la del liberalismo español que reclama las prerrogativas del poder civil y se mantiene tieso ante Roma, sin perjuicio de atacar la suprema infalibilidad del Pontífice, y reconocer que la Iglesia Católica es la maestra y doctora de nuestra vida . . . . .<sup>16</sup>

Galdós was a man who had transcended the bounds of his Faith:

Su cristianismo no está en lo que declaramos creer sino en la conducta, en los hechos, en el modo de llevar a la práctica el ideal

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.339.

<sup>16</sup> A. González Blanco, Historia de La Novela Española (Madrid: Sainz de Jubera Hermanos, 1909), p. 428.

de Jesús sintiendo en la conciencia y en los  
actos las virtudes del Divino Maestro. <sup>17</sup>

Dofia Perfecta, his most controversial book on a religious theme, was a condemnation not of doctrine but rather of the interference of the church with civil life. Not only was the city of Orbajosa dominated physically by the massive structure of the cathedral but also mentally and spiritually by all that the building represented. Perhaps in another time Dofia Perfecta would have drawn less notice, for as Menéndez y Pelayo says, "When Dofia Perfecta appeared, Spaniards had begun to waver in their faith." <sup>18</sup>

The didactic element prevalent in his work demonstrates Galdós' disapproval of art for art's sake and it often led to mediocre work, yet many continue to consider him as one of the world's greatest writers. Madariaga writes, "Why Europe and America should remain ignorant of one of the greatest creative artists the white race has produced is a mystery . . ." <sup>19</sup> Gerald Brenan echoes the same sentiments and adds an explanation: "He is a writer of the first order, comparable to Balzac, Dickens and Tolstoy, and it is only the strange neglect in which nineteenth-century Spanish literature has been held by the rest of Europe, and one must add, the narrowly aesthetic views of some Spanish critics and intellectuals that have failed to give him that place that is due him as one of the great European novelists." <sup>20</sup>

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17 José A. Balseiro, Novelistas Españoles Modernos (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 253.

18 Walton, p. 67.

19 Salvador de Madariaga, Spain, 3rd edition (New York: Creative Age Press, 1943), p. 78.

20 Gerald Brenan, The Literature of the Spanish People (New York: Meridian Books 1957), p. 386.

But there were some who refused to accord him any such great distinction. Valbuena Pratt considers him, "Uno de los autores más pobres de expresión externa. Su carácter, su gesto eran también pobres como su estilo." <sup>21</sup>

In La Revista de Occidente, Antonio Espina wrote:

Galdós en la literatura fue ... una enorme medianía, como dijo Clarín de Cánovas del Castillo ... La menudencia cotidiana no lo dejó desplazarse a la universalidad del sentimiento o de las ideas; cuando quiso dibujar caracteres extremos los hizo en línea recta, despegándolos del suelo y rodeándolos de falsas atmósferas pseudofilosóficas o históricas ... <sup>22</sup>

Leaving aside then the artistic evaluations of his work, let us turn to the content and purpose and place of his writing in this part of the nineteenth century. With the ebb of the Romantic tide at approximately mid-century, there began the expansion of the bourgeois novel. This was the entrance of realism. The writers, as mirrors of society, began to point to the individual as seen against the background of society. <sup>23</sup> It was above all a Spanish realism, unlike that of France and Russia which was given to an almost abject pessimism. In his introduction to Doña Perfecta, Max Aub writes:

Mientras los extranjeros se dejaban llevar por el pesimismo que en ellos fatalmente había de engendrar tanta miseria, pústulas, roñas mugres; los anexados españoles haciendo quizá de tripa más corazón sacaban optimismo del más lúgubre cuadro de la peor pocilga. <sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Valbuena Pratt, p. 319.

<sup>22</sup> Balseiro, p. 151.

<sup>23</sup> Benito Pérez Galdós, Doña Perfecta, Introduction by Harriet De Onis (New York: Barrons Educational Series Inc., 1960), p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Benito Pérez Galdós, Doña Perfecta, Introduction by Max Aub (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma de México, 1958), p. 58.

It was in this manner, then, that Galdós mirrored nineteenth-century Spanish society. Following the dictates of his day, he presented factual details, he reproduced the crudities of life. But above all he was a moralist rebelling, as already stated, against a society ridden by dogma and prejudices.<sup>25</sup> Guided by a Christian conscience, he set himself up as the awakener of the national conscience. However, unlike many reformers he was not embittered; he was moderate and broadminded. He was impartial.

Like a socio-psychologist, he set himself the task of observing in detail the life of Madrid, especially the lower classes where poverty, sorrow and human degeneration were evident. Belonging to that group of people who think of life as a series of emotions, he turned to those who lived a life of emotions, the outcasts, the dreamers and the little children.<sup>26</sup> L. B. Walton states, "Galdós is always at his best in dealing with feminine human nature which has been in some way warped -- usually, in his novels, either by an excess of piety or by an inordinate passion for luxury."<sup>27</sup> His books are replete with strange and abnormal souls.

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25 Sherman H. Eoff, Novels of Pérez Galdós (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1954), p. 12.

26 Balseiro, p. 25.

27 Walton, p. 49.

## CHAPTER II

### SPAIN IN THE LAST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

To understand Galdós and his novels better, one must take a brief glance at Spain's history from the reign of Isabel II in 1843 to the end of that fateful century. This was the world from which Galdós drew his inspiration, the world which forms the background for his Novelas Contemporáneas.

At the age of thirteen, Isabel, who was to surpass her mother Cristina in "affairs of the heart", became queen of Spain. Salvador Madariaga says of her: "In private life she created her own standards of queenly behavior. In public life she conformed to the traditions of her parents. She betrayed her first Prime Minister . . . " <sup>1</sup> Perhaps as an explanation for her behavior, one can consider two factors; the example set by her passionate mother and also her forced marriage to Francisco de Asís, Duke of Cádiz, who was reputed to be impotent.

As expected, this marriage of convenience was a marriage merely in form. Isabel realized it as did her husband and they lived separately, "even when in the same palace, in different wings of it." <sup>2</sup> In spite of the separation, however, the queen bore several children, although "There were all sorts of guesses at the parentage". <sup>3</sup>

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1 Madariaga, p. 60.

2 Robert Sencourt, The Spanish Crown, 1808-1931 (New York: Charles Scribner and Son, 1932), p. 214.

3 Ibid., p. 230.

Afflicted with a malady which made "normal standards of morality almost impossible for her," <sup>4</sup> she bestowed her favors on several men, among them a fat vulgar man named Marfori. This last choice was the straw that broke the camel's back, causing her to lose the favor of her subjects. In all cases, these men aspired to power and at times forced her to "compromise her choice of governments." <sup>5</sup> The increasing liberal power and the death of her two main supporters, Narváez and O'Donnell, caused Isabel to make a prudent move, and in 1868 along with her family she left Spain for France. Spain was left again without a monarch.

Whatever Isabel's conduct during her reign, Spain had been calm. It was a militarily imposed calm, but nevertheless, it gave the new industry and science an opportunity to bring prosperity to the country. Schools and universities expanded, roads, telegraph lines and railroads increased, and finally the amount of gold in circulation, which is a good index of a nation's economy, increased. From 450,000 pesetas at the beginning of her reign, it rose to over 100,000,000 pesetas in 1865. <sup>6</sup>

Monarchy or not, Spain politically continued on the same road. The masses and military leaders were unable to communicate. The masses were indifferent and the leaders cared little about the national will. As expected, the reins of the state passed over to Serrano and Prim, and they took over the helm of "a raving ship of lunatics" as Sencourt so succinctly puts it. <sup>7</sup>

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4 Ibid., p. 227.

5 Ibid., p. 227.

6 Ibid., p. 229.

7 Ibid., p. 232.

For two years Spain lived without a monarch, but finally unable to break away from tradition, the Cortes Constituyentes decided on renewing the monarchy and began searching throughout Europe for a candidate. Under the sponsorship of Prim and the radicals, Amadeo of Savoy, son of Victor Emmanuel, was chosen. Unfortunately, in spite of the fact that Amadeo was a fine and conscientious young man, fate and circumstance were against him. Shortly before he arrived in Spain, Prim, his sponsor, was assassinated and not too long after the Carlist Wars began anew. In 1872 a thoroughly frustrated Amadeo abdicated and set the stage for Spain's first attempt at a Republic. This Republic became a dismal failure and in less than one year had four presidents. Spain was not ready yet. The Republic died in 1874.

Out went the cry for a king again, and Alfonso XII, son of Isabel, answered the call, ushering in the period known as the Restoration. Here finally was a king who knew his responsibilities. Unfortunately, his ministers, Cánovas and Sagasta, did not, or otherwise his might have proved to be the most fruitful of reigns. A moderate oligarchy was established, and a two party system was also established in the legislature. Again Spain demonstrated its unpreparedness. The ballot failed to function and consequently the rotation of parties did not occur naturally, which made it necessary to arrange that rotation through contrived elections.<sup>8</sup> The assassination of Cánovas left Sagasta in control, and with his motto of "Time and I against everybody", the corruption continued.

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<sup>8</sup> Harold Livermore, A History of Spain (New York: Farrar, Strause and Cudahy, 1958) p. 396.

Sensing the disillusionment of the people and resultant lack of responsibility to the crown, Alfonso and his minister thought it wise to call on the support of the military and the clergy, but this merely heightened the disillusionment. The masses, especially the rural masses, completely excluded from political life, began to move toward the new doctrines of Marxism and Anarchism. "They had learned to do without the church and the crown and they could do without politicians." <sup>9</sup>

Alfonso's reign was a brief one for consumption ended his life in 1885. He left no male heir, but his wife María Cristina of Hapsburg was expecting a child. The child born shortly after the king's death was a male, destined to become Alfonso XIII, Spain's first and only twentieth-century monarch. Meanwhile the nation went on under María Cristina's regency and, as before, "liberals and conservatives alternated in office with seemingly little reason". <sup>10</sup> What did occur of importance during the regency, occurred abroad. The Riff uprising was put down in 1893, but the uprisings in Cuba became worse, finally culminating in the War of 1898 with the United States. This war cost Spain Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. The remainder of the West Indies possessions were sold to Germany. Thus Spain closed out the nineteenth century somewhat as she had opened it, by losing more and more of her empire.

Socially during this period of political chaos Spain progressed little. This undoubtedly was due to various factors other than the political instability

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 398.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Moran, Spain Its Story Briefly Told (Boston: The Stratford Company, 1930), p. 227.

such as geography and clericalism.

Compared with the rest of Europe, Spain's increase in population was slight in spite of medical advances, such as smallpox vaccine, which had been made. The vaccines cut down infant mortality, but the warfare and the emigration brought on by the political climate offset any gain. <sup>11</sup>

In regards to class structure, Spain, which had undergone little or no modification for several centuries, began to experience changes similar to those which had taken place earlier in England and France. The expanded commerce and industrialism created a bourgeoisie with Barcelona as the center for the Industrial Burges, and Madrid as the center for the Comerciante Burges. The title burges was not used in Spain until about 1868 and prior to this the words amos or fabricantes had been used when referring to factory owners. <sup>12</sup>

These bourgeoisie, who in effect had the same interests as the old land-owning class, came to be an important element. They were seen as cultivators of culture and progress. <sup>13</sup> Along with this class, one might also consider the new military class. These were men of middle-class beginnings, who by establishing themselves militarily, had also espoused the liberal cause. They soon, however, turned to the conservative and even reactionary side in order to maintain their power. <sup>14</sup>

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11 Vicens J. Vives, Historia Social y Económica de España y América (Barcelona: Editorial Teide, 1959), IV, 36.

12 Ibid., p. 151.

13 Ibid., p. 160.

14 Ibid., pp. 182-184

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for transparency and accountability, particularly in financial matters. The text suggests that organizations should implement robust systems to track and document every aspect of their operations.

2. The second part of the document addresses the challenges faced by organizations in managing their resources effectively. It highlights the need for strategic planning and the allocation of resources to achieve long-term goals. The text suggests that organizations should regularly assess their current state and make necessary adjustments to their strategies.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the role of leadership in driving organizational success. It discusses the importance of clear communication, vision, and the ability to inspire and motivate team members. The text suggests that leaders should foster a culture of innovation and encourage their teams to take initiative.

4. The fourth part of the document explores the impact of external factors on organizational performance. It discusses how market conditions, technological advancements, and regulatory changes can influence an organization's success. The text suggests that organizations should stay informed about these external factors and adapt their strategies accordingly.

5. The fifth part of the document discusses the importance of continuous improvement and innovation. It suggests that organizations should regularly evaluate their processes and seek ways to optimize them. The text emphasizes that innovation is key to staying competitive in a rapidly changing environment.

6. The sixth part of the document addresses the issue of risk management. It discusses the various risks that organizations face, such as financial, operational, and reputational risks. The text suggests that organizations should implement a comprehensive risk management framework to identify, assess, and mitigate these risks.

7. The seventh part of the document focuses on the importance of human resources. It discusses the role of employees in organizational success and the need for a skilled and motivated workforce. The text suggests that organizations should invest in training and development to enhance their human capital.

8. The eighth part of the document discusses the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR). It suggests that organizations should consider the impact of their actions on society and the environment. The text emphasizes that CSR is not just a moral obligation but also a strategic imperative for long-term success.

9. The ninth part of the document addresses the issue of sustainability. It discusses the importance of balancing economic, social, and environmental factors in organizational decision-making. The text suggests that organizations should adopt sustainable practices to ensure their long-term viability.

10. The tenth part of the document provides a conclusion and summarizes the key points discussed. It reiterates the importance of maintaining accurate records, managing resources effectively, and fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. The text suggests that these principles are essential for achieving organizational success in the long run.

11. The eleventh part of the document discusses the importance of data analysis. It suggests that organizations should leverage data to gain insights into their operations and make informed decisions. The text emphasizes that data-driven decision-making is crucial for staying competitive.

12. The twelfth part of the document addresses the issue of cybersecurity. It discusses the various threats to an organization's digital assets and the need for robust security measures. The text suggests that organizations should implement a comprehensive cybersecurity strategy to protect their data and systems.

The countless titled nobility still remained. Although as a social category they were disappearing, by virtue of land holdings and traditions they maintained a dominant social position.<sup>15</sup> Many had little but their titles.

Industrialism brought with it much the same evils and problems as it had done in England and France. The owners began to exploit the workers; hours were long and wages were low. Children and women worked many hours and in general there was job insecurity:

En general, el fabricante consideraba que los obreros eran gente de distinta condición humana. A excepción de los que se distinguían por su inteligencia y esfuerzo, y que el amo elegía ser colaboradores y capataces, los demás eran o bien unos holgazanes o unos desaprensivos. La taberna y el prostíbulo se sucedían con el taller, en la vida del operario; mujer y familia religadas en hogares nauseabundos -- casi siempre, cuartos realquilados: Al final hospital o manicomio.<sup>16</sup>

To all this was also added the problem of the farm and country worker, who lured to the city by the factories too often found themselves destitute and consequently turned to begging, stealing and prostitution.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Ibid., p. 132.

16 Ibid., p. 213.

17 Ibid., p. 212.

## CHAPTER III

### WOMEN IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY SPAIN

Interestingly enough, in a country where female sovereigns have played such an important role, women in general played a relatively small role in public life and were, in fact, treated as inferiors. John K. Effinger, in his massive work Woman in All Ages and in All Countries, states: " .... everywhere in Spain there is a tacit recognition of the general inferiority of woman." <sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that the nineteenth century is noted as the century of Feminist Movements in Europe, they had comparatively little influence in Spain.

Publicly the nineteenth-century woman remained relatively unimportant. <sup>2</sup> Legally considered a minor whether married or not, she was denied the civil rights accorded men, including that of suffrage. <sup>3</sup> Even if the vote had been given them, however, it would not have proved much, for as Posada in his book Femenismo writes, "The suffrage in Spain can scarcely be called such: it exists in law but in practice it is an indecorous and unworthy farce. How is it possible for men to feel the necessity of giving it to women, or for women to be anxious to become like the majority of men, merely honorary citizens?" <sup>4</sup>

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1 John R. Effinger, Women in All Ages and in All Countries (Philadelphia, 1907), p. 393.

2 L. Higgins, Spanish Life in Town and Country (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1902), p. 229.

3 Ibid., p. 229.

4 Havelock Ellis, The Soul of Spain (New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1908), p. 87.

Women achieved some progress in education. The universities opened their doors to women in the last quarter of the century, but according to the great Spanish female novelist, Emilia Pardo Bazán, this was not enough. Speaking at a conference in Paris in 1899, she stated: "The customs [in Spain] are completely unfavorable to woman, the universities and classes of the faculties are open to her but those who avail themselves of them are blamed and ridiculed: families dare not brave public opinion, and women are left with no resources but marriage and in the lower classes domestic service, prostitution or mediocrity." <sup>5</sup>

Even if they had availed themselves of educational opportunities, there was little use for it. Employment opportunities were for the most part severely limited in spite of the expanding industries. Legally women were barred from the professions and it was not until late in the century that they were allowed to teach in the elementary schools. <sup>6</sup> It is this lack of economic opportunity which often led to prostitution or marriages of convenience. <sup>7</sup> Concepción Arenal states:

Los padres suelen tener una impaciencia que algunos podríamos llamar febril, por colocar a sus hijas; muchas se casan, más que por amor, por temor de verse en el abandono y en la pobreza. <sup>8</sup>

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5 T. A. Joyce and N. W. Thomas, Women of All Nations (London: Casell and Company Ltd., 1909), II, 719-720.

6 Concepción Arenal, La Mujer del Porvenir, La Mujer de Su Casa (Madrid: Librería de Victoriano Suárez, 1895), p. 51.

7 Ibid., p. 52.

8 Ibid., p. 92.

This reprehensible situation had been brought about by many factors. Historically women had always been treated as inferiors and even the Greeks with their love of virtue and beauty assigned an inferior position to their women.<sup>9</sup> In Spain, the Gothic social system recognized the independence of women, and both husband and wife held property in common. Still the women played only a small part in public affairs and were looked upon as inferiors.<sup>10</sup> Under the Moors and contrary to common belief, the lot of women was not very bad. They enjoyed social equality and even educational opportunity. Later the Moors took up some of the outward forms of Chivalry and the position of women improved more.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, according to Lecky, Chivalry gave impetus to the Don Juan tradition and the seduction of women became a popular sport.<sup>12</sup> It is this condition which probably elicited the following statement appearing in the book Women of All Nations: "In his treatment of women the Spaniard mixes the tyranny of the Turk with the exaggerated reverence of the knight errant, a combination unfavorable to the evolution of the perfect woman nobly planned. He is thoroughly persuaded that the sole aim of woman is and should be to please man..."<sup>13</sup>

Possibly the most important factor in bringing about the conditions in

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9 W. E. H. Lecky, History of European Morals (New York: George Braziller, 1955), II, 292.

10 Effinger, p. 223.

11 Ibid., p. 250.

12 Lecky, p. 346.

13 Joyce and Thomas, p. 720.

nineteenth-century Spain was Christianity, and specifically Catholicism.<sup>14</sup> Unable to forget Eve's betrayal, Christianity emphasized purity and chastity, resulting in a wave of ascetism which denouncing marriage, in turn brought about a consequent degradation of women.<sup>15</sup> Pío Baroja states :

Es el Catolicismo que ha ido produciendo  
su inferioridad, todas las sectas semíticas  
han mirado siempre a la mujer como animal  
lascivo y peligroso.<sup>16</sup>

Another Spanish writer expresses this opinion: "Through their religious instruction and their studies of classic literature, Spanish boys are forced to visualize the female body as a 'sack of uncleanness' and to imagine its putrefaction in slow loathsome stages."<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately this instruction often causes a reaction which is completely opposed to the one hoped for. It produces an early and intense awareness of sex, breeding either sexual extroverts such as Don Juan or introverts such as the beatas.<sup>18</sup>

Under these conditions, then, it is safe to assume that women in nineteenth-century Spain bore some resentment or at least were beginning to do so. Joyce and Thomas in their book write: "Unconscious of undue subjection in one sex and undue dominance in the other has hitherto prevented friction between them—both are persuaded that all is as it should be, but there are already signs that the day of awakening is at hand."<sup>19</sup> For Pío

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14 Lecky, p. 339.

15 Ibid., p. 321.

16 Pío Baroja, El Mundo es Así (Mexico: Espase-Calpe, 1943), p. 134.

17 Arturo Barea, Lorca: The Poet and His People (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p. 57.

18 Ibid., p. 58

19 Joyce and Thomas, p. 719.

Baroja, the awakening had already come. He states that a woman lives on the defensive, and being unable to use her intelligence attempts to dominate men through her baser instincts. <sup>20</sup> He adds:

Los españoles consideran a las mujeres  
como a un enemigo no beligerante, al  
que se puede robar y entregar al pillaje.  
Las españolas miran a los hombres como a  
un enemigo beligerante con quien se  
puede pactar. <sup>21</sup>

Seemingly, the women in spite of their position did not do badly and Havelock Ellis concludes that Spanish women on the average are superior to the men and in fact dominate them. After stating that Spanish women require much wooing, he continues: "This proud reticence, the absence of an easy response to masculine advances is the probable source of the erotic superiority of women, the sexual subjection of men, which has often been noted as characteristic of Spain and is indeed symbolized in the profound Spanish adoration for the Virgin Mary." <sup>22</sup> There was more, however, than merely sexual attraction. In order to endure her lot, the Spanish woman developed other attributes. Joyce and Thomas comment: "There is magnificent material in the Spanish woman. She is a creature of great natural intelligence, capable of the utmost strength and fortitude in adversity, and has often given proof of a high physical courage and strong individuality." <sup>23</sup>

These qualities of physical prowess and independence are often characteristics exhibited by the heroines of nineteenth-century literature. In Pardo

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<sup>20</sup> Pío Baroja, *Dama Errante* (Madrid: R. Rojas, 1908), p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Pío Baroja, *El Mundo es Así* (Mexico, 1943), p. 135.

<sup>22</sup> Ellis, p. 84.

<sup>23</sup> Joyce and Thomas, p. 722.

Bazán's La Tribuna, the heroine, Amparo, was a woman who would not hurt a fly, yet she could demand the one hundred thousand heads of those who preyed on the people.<sup>24</sup> Juan Valera's Juanita La Larga walked with a martial air, ran like a deer and with one bound could plant herself on the back of any horse.<sup>25</sup> La Cordobesa, another of Valera's heroines, we learn, could defend her honor vigorously yet quietly, while the heroine in Blasco Ibáñez' Flor de Mayo was capable of knocking down any young man even though he be as strong as the mast of his ship.<sup>26</sup> This physical prowess was probably more in evidence, however, among the lower class women where the women were more apt to be engaged in hard physical labor.

It must be kept in mind that this brief look at women in nineteenth-century Spain applies only generally and that conditions varied from social class to social class. Posada seemed to think that lower-class women, since they shared identical work with the men, had less inferior positions, while in the upper classes with their greater contact with the remainder of Europe, women also were accorded a more equal footing with the men. It was the middle-class women who appeared to the least advantage, lacking the money and privileges of the upper class and the freedom of the lower class.<sup>27</sup>

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24 Ellis, p. 91.

25 Juan Valera, Obras Escogidas de Juan Valera - Juanita La Larga (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1929), p. 38.

26 Blasco Ibáñez, Flor de Mayo (Valencia: Prometeo, 1919), p. 55.

27 Ellis, p. 103.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE FEMALE SENSE IN GALDOS' NOVELS

All the novels selected for analysis have one thing in common: the action revolves around a woman or women. Furthermore a strong female sense predominates and by this I mean that the women appear as the more vital, dynamic characters. Their male counterparts, in contrast, often appear as insipid bystanders or as smug nonentities. Many of Galdós' women appear mentally or emotionally unbalanced.<sup>1</sup> But it is this 'warped feminine nature' which makes them vital. It is this condition which drives them and pushes them in their respective quests. They become the center of action, affecting and overshadowing the male characters.

Isidora Rufete of La Desheredada is perhaps the most unbalanced of the series of women we are about to study. She is a woman with a degree of intensity verging on abnormality. "She not only had the gift of a vivid imagination but she also had the facility of intensifying her impressions and at times of exaggerating them enormously so that those things which her senses pronounced to be large were immediately apparent to her mind as colossal, anything small became infinitesimal; anything ugly revolting; anything pretty, divine and beautiful beyond conception."<sup>2</sup>

To what did Isidora owe this condition? Part of it, perhaps, could be attributed to heredity, for her father had died in an insane asylum, a victim of ambition, a petty government employee dominated by an overpowering

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1 Walton, p. 44.

2 Ibid., p. 137.

drive to become a person of importance. This desire had driven him to forge some documents which ostensibly made Isidora the illegitimate daughter of a now dead noble woman. For many years then, Isidora had been nurtured on the illusion that she would some day come into riches :

Cuántas veces en las noches del invierno,  
él la embelesaba diciéndole que sería  
marquesa, que tendría palacio, coches,  
lacayos, lujo sin fin y riquezas semejantes  
a las de Las mil y una noches! <sup>3</sup>

She had been taught not to work, but to wait for it all to be handed to her.

The novel, beginning with Isidora's arrival at the home of relations in Madrid, deals entirely with her attempts to assert her place in nobility. Obsessed by this illusion, she is driven to excesses in attempts to finance the cost of legal aid needed to substantiate her claim. It is not merely this that she needs to finance, but also her attempts to uphold her supposed position and appearance as befits a daughter of a marquesa. Finally when the forgery is discovered, she is crushed and in her disillusionment turns to the streets to become a common prostitute.

This illusion then, was her authentic life, for it was what made her a vital, dynamic being. In her mind and in her behavior it kept her apart from the cursis she detested. In one dramatic scene Galdós presents her as she breaks down under the shattering weight of disillusionment. Not wanting to accept the tragedy, tearing at her ragged clothing, she screams :

Soy noble, desheredada, soy noble.  
No me quitaréis mi nobleza, porque  
es mi esencia, y yo no puedo ser sin ella, .... <sup>4</sup>

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3 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Desheredada (Madrid: Librería de Perlado Páez y Compañía, 1909), Segunda Parte, p. 230.

4 Ibid., Segunda Parte, p. 232.

In an attempt to further her claim Isidora meets with the old Marquesa de Aransis, her alleged grandmother. The marquesa asks her not to insist further, because the claim is unfounded. But how could Isidora not insist, since this illusion was her life :

Pedir a Isidora que no insistiera, era  
como pedir al sol que no alumbrase. Era  
toda convicción, y la fe de su alto origen resplandecía  
en ella como la fe del cristiano, dando luz a su  
inteligencia, firmeza a su voluntad y sólida  
base a su conciencia. El que apagase aquella  
antorcha de su alma habría extinguido en ella todo  
lo que tenía de divino, y lo divino en ella era  
el orgullo.<sup>5</sup>

The blame for her condition however, can not be laid solely at the feet of her ambitious father. It was also society that prompted her, for it was a society which stressed materialism; where people all tried to be or tried to appear to be what they were not, even though it meant doing without food.<sup>6</sup> It was a society which fostered a Melchoir Relimpio, "fresh from the womb of the Alma Mater and devoid of knowledge as he was full of pretensions."<sup>7</sup> It was a society that looked up to Joaquín Pez, "el marqués viudo." This marqués was noted for two things, his good looks and his moral weakness. He readily admitted the tragedy of his life :

Mis faltas son debilidades, y, además, un  
efecto preciso de la mala, de la perversa  
educación que he recibido. ¿Por qué educaron  
en el lujo al hijo de un pobre empleado  
con treinta mil reales? ¿Por qué desde niño  
me enseñaban a competir con los hijos de

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5 Ibid., Primera Parte, p. 256.

6 Ibid., Primera Parte, p. 90.

7 Ibid., Primera Parte, p. 145.

los grandes de España. ¿Por qué no me dieron una carrera, por qué no me aplicaron a cualquier trabajo, en vez de meterme en una oficina que es la escuela de la vagancia? Estas son las consecuencias. Me criaron en la vanidad, y la vanidad me conduce a este fin desastroso.<sup>8</sup>

If Isidora is vain and proud she still never becomes unkind or selfish. She exhibits a compassion and nobility of character which does not waver until the very last, when her battle is lost. She loves her illegitimate child in spite of his deformity; she never speaks harshly to the old man Don José Relimpio in spite of the fact that he follows her around as a puppy after its master, continuously getting underfoot. When Juan Bou proposes to her she tries to make her refusal tender so as not to hurt him. Even the caged animals at the zoo evoke her sympathy.

Notwithstanding the parade of lovers which kept her and supported her, Isidora, in her mind, committed no wrong. The question of morality never occurred to her. Her convictions justified any means to her end. She was not religiously inclined and rarely did she call on God to help her. She needed no help. The rules of society would support her. Why even call on God? If she were doing wrong, she reasoned, then surely God would send down his punishment.<sup>9</sup>

Even her impiety could be attributed to society. People went to Mass, but only as a matter of course. They went to look and to be seen. Her own uncle advised her not to be too pious lest she be suspected of trying to cover up some wrongdoing. He told her, "Considera que ya no hay santos ni cosa

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8 Ibid., Segunda Parte, p. 178.

9 Ibid., Primera Parte, p. 134.

que valga." <sup>10</sup> Why then should she be an exception?

Her convictions were her only religion and it was this very thing which gave her the vitality that not one of the male characters can match. Don José Relimpio obviously is a puppet who lives only as long as Isidora wishes him to live. How could he be otherwise after Galdós' description of him?

El bigotito de cabello de ángel, de un dorado claro y húmedo; los ojos como dos uvas, blandos y amorosos: la cara arrebolada, fresca y risueña, con dos pómulos teñidos de color rosa, marchita; el mirar complaciente, la actitud complaciente, y todo él labrado en la pasta misma de la complacencia (barro humano, del cual no hace ya mucho uso el Creador) formaban aquel conjunto de inutilidad y dulzura, aquel ramillete de confitería, que llevaba entre los hombres el letrado de José Relimpio y Sastre natural de Muchamiel, Provincia de Alicante . . . Era el hombre mejor del mundo. Era un hombre que no servía para nada. <sup>11</sup>

When he went to the market with his wife, "Don José llevaba el cesto y Doña Laura el dinero." <sup>12</sup>

When finally Isidora leaves him, telling him that Isidora no longer lives, he walks around aimlessly like a machine, then falls dead.

What more can be said of the already-mentioned Joaquín Pez. He was a man with no convictions and no aim in life other than frivolous pleasures. He was the one man who could have saved Isidora, for she loved him alone. He saw in her merely an easy conquest. Like a general he set about to plan his strategy just as he undoubtedly had done many times before. Then

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10 Ibid., Primera Parte, p. 279.

11 Ibid., Primera Parte, p. 141 .

12 Ibid., Primera Parte, p. 222 .

finding himself destitute, he allowed himself to be supported by Isidora. She in turn demonstrating her love for Joaquín sold her jewels and clothing and as this did not provide sufficient money, she even offered to sell herself to Augusto Miquís.

Augusto Miquís is the only male who comes close to approaching the vitality of Isidora. A young liberal-minded doctor, he is cast in the pattern of Pepe Rey in Dofia Perfecta. Science was his God and

Todas las teorías novísimas le cautivaban,  
mayormente cuando eran enemigas de la  
tradición. El transformismo en ciencias  
naturales y el federalismo en política  
le ganaron por entero. <sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately he was not an enemy of that Spanish tradition which viewed all Spanish women as possible conquests :

Y la verdad es que me gustabas muchísimo ! . .  
Y si he de serte franco creía hacer contigo  
la gran conquista. Yo quería acreditar  
entre mis compañeros, y decía para mí :  
'Esta no se me escapa'. <sup>14</sup>

Now that Isidora offers herself, however, he is tempted but unable to accept. Shortly he is to be wed to a very wealthy young lady. An ambitious and determined young man, he still never achieves a sense of great vitality, due perhaps to his excessively gay and carefree attitudes.

Continuing with this gallery of thwarted women, in Tormento we come to Amparo Emperador, another orphan left in the care of relations, much as Isidora had been. With Amparo, however, we have a young woman who

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13 Ibid., Primera Parte, p. 71.

14 Ibid., Segunda Parte, p. 136.

unlike Isidora is really not neurotic. She merely is a confused young girl enmeshed in a web of circumstances. As a study in the fatal effects of vacillation, Tormento is admirable. <sup>15</sup>

Amparo and her sister Refugio had been left orphans by the death of their father. He had left them a sum of money which soon was exhausted. At this point Pedro Polo, a priest, aided them greatly, but unfortunately in the process he had also seduced Amparo. The seduction cannot entirely be attributed to any weakness in Amparo, though she herself admitted it was a weakness. She was a kind person dominated by a sense of obligation and compassion. As stated in the following paragraph she is truly repentant of her grievous sin, but she is also terrified by Pedro Polo :

En el corazón tenía la desventurada joven tantas dosis de arrepentimiento como en la conciencia y no podía explicarse bien el error de sus sentidos ni el desvarío que la arrastró a una falta con persona que al poco tiempo le fue tan aborrecible. Mas no osaba expresarlo así por miedo a las consecuencias de su franqueza, siendo de notar que si la caridad tuvo alguna parte en su visita, grande la tuvo también aquel mismo miedo, el recelo de que su desvío exacerbara al hombre y le impulsase por caminos de publicidad y escándalo. Sobre todas las consideraciones ponía ella el interés de encubrir su terrible secreto. <sup>16</sup>

Living now under the care of the Bringas family, she and her sister worked as general housekeepers. The small pittance they received they earned

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<sup>15</sup> Walton, p. 158.

<sup>16</sup> Benito Pérez Galdós, Tormento (Madrid: Librería de Perlado Páez y Compañía, 1906), p. 125.

indeed, for they had to endure the cruelty and insults of Rosalía Bringas, a pretentious and vulgar snob. The entire Bringas family presided over by Don Francisco de Bringas was poor but pretentious. Refugio asks her sister:

Quítales aquel barniz; quítales las  
relaciones, y ¿qué les queda? Hambre,  
cursilería. <sup>17</sup>

Humility and resignation prevent Amparo from ever complaining. Even when Amparo becomes engaged to the Bringas rich cousin Agustín, she never takes advantage of her position. If anyone achieves a sense of nobility, it is Amparo, in spite of her shortcomings. Her independent sister Refugio, on the other hand, is not as submissive:

A tí te gusta ser criada, a mí no.  
En mí no machaca la señora doña Rosalía  
con sus humores de marquesa. <sup>18</sup>

So she ostensibly becomes an artist's model and always seems to have money. To justify her behavior she makes an interesting commentary on society:

¿Por qué es mala una mujer? Por la pobreza.  
¿Qué ha de hacer una mujer sola, huérfana,  
sin socorro ninguno, sin parientes y  
criada con cierta delicadeza? <sup>19</sup>

For Amparo a solution has appeared, a way out of the insecurity and poverty. Agustín finds in her everything that he has looked for in a woman — beauty, diligence and humility. She is a jewel, and so he proposes to her. Amparo does not know what to say; instead of being overjoyed, she is torn between hope and fear. She could not deceive such a wonderful man. To

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17 Ibid., p. 77.

18 Ibid., p. 77.

19 Ibid., p. 96.

aggravate the situation further, Pedro Polo, learning of her forthcoming marriage to Agustín, once again asks her to meet him at his apartment:

Ah! ¡pícara Tormento ¿conque te casas?...  
 Mi hermana me lo escribió a El Castañar.  
 Enterarme, perder todo lo que había ganado  
 de salud y en juicio, fue una misma cosa.  
 Si te digo que el cielo se me cayó encima,  
 te digo poco. Todo lo olvidé, y sin encomendarme  
 a Dios ni al diablo, me vine a Madrid donde  
 estoy dispuesto a hacer todas las barbaridades  
 posibles. <sup>20</sup>

This time she goes there thinking it will be the last time, it will be "peace or death". In the apartment she finds Polo's old housekeeper gravely ill, and in a dramatic scene we have the two lovers violently arguing while in the adjoining room the old woman is groaning in agony. At last Amparo has become decisive. Polo asks her for just one more night and she refuses, saying:

Prefiero morirme aquí mismo. Yo soy cristiana, yo sé lo que es el arrepentimiento; morirme de pena, deshonrada, antes que caer en el lodazal a donde quieres arrastrarme. <sup>21</sup>

She goes to Agustín's house determined to confess her secret and end her life. She writes a note to Agustín telling all, then drinks a potion which she believes is poison. Fortunately, the servant who is ordered to get the potion realizes it is a dangerous poison and replaces it with some harmless liquid which merely makes Amparo ill. Discovering Amparo's secret, Agustín finds himself unable to marry her, but also unable to leave her.

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20 Ibid., p. 216 .

21 Ibid., p. 235 .

Finally, he says :

Y si el decoro social me prohíbe que la vea,  
yo digo a la sociedad que toda ella y sus  
arrumacos me importan cuatro pitos, y me  
plantaré en medio de la calle si es preciso  
gritando; viva la inmoralidad, viva la anarquía. 22

Amparo then agrees to live with him without the formality of marriage.

If in this ending we see a further demonstration of moral weakness on Amparo's part, it in no way deters from her sincerity and vitality. Society left her no recourse, she must accept or become a common prostitute to maintain herself. She was an essential in Agustín's life and he in hers. But how could she reconcile this with her claims of being a good Christian? First of all she was a Christian in action, her devotion was lukewarm and her attendance at Mass was routine; without a doubt her living with Agustín would be contrary to the tenets of her faith, but one can not help feeling that the sincerity of Agustín and Amparo vindicates them both.

Pedro Polo and Agustín, both entirely different and dynamic personalities in their own right, still appear as secondary images in comparison to Amparo. She, in her own seemingly defenseless way, dominates them both.

Polo, the dissolute cleric, has been brought to ruin because of his own weakness, his passions. He was a savage at heart, the institutions of society suffocated him. He wanted to leave, to forget that he was a priest and to find wild countries where innocence and equality reigned; he wanted a country without a history or patriarchal societies similar to those painted in the Bible. He was an egotist, a selfish man unhappy with his lot and in

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22 Ibid., p. 297.

his unhappiness he wanted company; he wanted his "Tormento", Amparo.<sup>23</sup> Deaf to her pleas, he tells her that he is a slave to his Tormento and that she gives him substance.

The same is true of Agustín, however. He, in spite of his wealth and independent nature demonstrates that Amparo gives him life. After a life of irregularity and disorder in the jungles of Mexico, he now wants more than anything else a family, a marriage, and a home which will be a paragon of morality. He is a firm believer in the Catholic faith. Until he meets Amparo he has led a boring and sterile life, but how much Amparo means to him is evident, for he forgets his obsession with order and morality. He does not do so entirely, however, and although this may seem hypocritical, he is willing to take her as a mistress if not as a wife.

Rosalía Bringas and Don Francisco Bringas are more thoroughly covered in Galdós' next novel, La de Bringas, wherein we find that the Bringas family has moved up the social ladder and is now living in the royal palace. This unfortunately has tended to aggravate the pretentiousness Rosalía already exhibited in Tormento, but much to her chagrin, her husband has remained the same miserly avaricious and unambitious old man.

In this novel we see Rosalía as almost demented, so strong is her obsession with new clothes. As the story unfolds, we see that the buying of clothes is merely Rosalías struggle for emancipation from Don Francisco's strict budgeting :

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23 Ibid., p. 123.

La esposa fiel seguiría a su lado haciendo su papel con aquella destreza que le habían dado tantos años de hipocresía. Pero para sí anhelaba ardientemente algo más que vida y salud; deseaba un poco, un poquito siquiera de lo que nunca había tenido, libertad y salir aunque sólo fuera por modo figurado, de aquella estrechez vergonzante. 24

With the temporary blindness of Don Francisco and his subsequent inability to handle money matters, Rosalía finds an opportunity to give vent to her pent up spendthrift urges. In doing so, however, she places herself in such a financial predicament that she finds it necessary to sell her honor to Don Manuel Pez, a good friend of the family, who has promised her financial aid.

In Pez she saw a well-dressed and wealthy man. He was a higher government employee who in his very appearance represented the sovereignty of the government:

Ese Pez sí que es un hombre. Al lado suyo sí que podría lucir cualquiera mujer de entendimiento, de buena presencia, de aristocrático porte. Pero como todo anda trocado, le tocó esa mula rezona de Carolina... todo al revés! ¿Qué mujer de mérito no se empequeñece y anula al lado de este poquita cosa de Bringas, que no ve más que menudencias, y es incapaz de hacer una brillante carrera y de calzarse una posición ilustre? .... 25

Women are the driving force behind men, she thinks, but how can you do anything with a miser like Bringas? If only she had that Pez.

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24 Benito Pérez Galdós, La de Bringas, (Madrid: Perlado Páez y Compañía, 1906), p. 166.

25 Ibid., p. 90.

Pez, a man of few principles, saw in Rosalía a possible conquest. He told her of his unhappy home life, that he needed affection. As he had hoped, this evokes sympathy, and she in turn tells him of the deprivations she suffers due to Don Francisco's miserliness. He, seeing his opportunity, tells her he loves her and offers financial aid. And it was this offer of aid that really made him more attractive. "She would have surrendered herself to the protector rather than the lover." <sup>26</sup>

Rosalía's lack of character is evident in her rationalizing. She thinks necessity is the cause of disgrace. Saints were saints because they did not need things; they were common. When the time comes for Pez to meet his obligations, however, he conveniently excuses himself saying that he has suffered some financial setbacks. Rosalía, pale and disillusioned, thinks:

Pecar llámote necesidad y digo la mayor  
verdad del mundo... Pues no necesitando,  
¿qué mujer habrá tan tonta que no desprecie  
a toda esta canalla de hombres? <sup>27</sup>

As we leave la Señora de Bringas, she has begun to revolt against her husband. The era of her passiveness and slavery is behind. <sup>28</sup>

The reader is hard put to see Rosalía as a vital female, but certainly in comparison to the males she dominates the scene. First of all she is the center of action, and secondly, there are only two male characters of major importance.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

Don Francisco de Bringas, her husband, as described previously in Tormento, was a religious and hard-working man. He loved his family, had no vices and less ambition. But he was a miser; Refugio Emperador clasified him as a "pisa-hormigas". What more than what his wife already said, can be added? He was a good man, a kind man, a nonentity. Next to him, Rosalía appeared as a living driving force of the family.

Don Manuel Pez, although appearing in a more dashing light, still can not be classified as a vibrant dynamic character:

Hombre curtido por dentro y por fuera, incapaz de entusiasmo por nada, revelaba Pez en su cara un reposo semejante, aunque parezca extraño, al de los santos que gozan la bienaventuranza. Era la cara del que se ha propuesto no alterarse por nada ni tomar las cosas muy en serio.... 29

His eyes said:

Soy la expresión de esa España dormida, beatífica que se goza en ser juguete de los sucesos y en nada se mete con tal que la dejen comer tranquila; que no anda, que nada espera.... 30

There could be no men more insipid than these two.

In Tristana we encounter again the theme of the destitute orphan which Galdós used frequently. Tristana Reluz is a young, beautiful and naive girl under the despotic care of Don Lope Garrido. Her father and mother had died leaving her with Don Lope, who was her father's great friend.

Don Lope was the most important factor in the formulation of Tristana's character, and for this reason he must be seen in the light of the following

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29 Ibid., p. 65.

30 Ibid., p. 66.

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statement concerning his philosophy:

Presumía este sujeto de practicar en toda su pureza dogmática la caballeridad, o caballería, que bien podemos llamar sedantaria en contraposición a la idea de andante o correntona; mas interpretaba las leyes de aquella religión con criterio excesivamente libre, y de todo ello resultaba una moral compleja, que no por ser suya dejaba de ser común fruto abundante del tiempo en que vivimos... 31

He still believed in dueling and the code of honor, had no use for the state or contemporary system of justice and believed men should still wear a sword. Furthermore :

Respecto a la Iglesia, tenía por una broma pesada que los pasados siglos vienen dando a los presentes, y que éstos aguantan por timidez y cortedad de genio. Y no se crea que era irreligioso; al contrario, su fe superaba a la de muchos que hociquean ante los altares y andan siempre entre curas. 32

Still he was a kind man, and to his friends he would give any of his belongings, but he did have his faults :

Fuera del caso de cortejar a la dama o esposa o manceba de un amigo íntimo, en amor todo lo tenía por lícito. 33

He believed that in relationships between man and woman there was only the law of sovereign love. Two short months after taking in Tristana, he added her to his long list of conquests.

Tristana, due to her innocence and poor education was completely

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31 Benito Pérez Galdós, Tristana (Madrid: Imprenta de Guirnalda, 1892), p. 12.

32 Ibid., p. 15.

33 Ibid., p. 26.

unaware of the unorthodoxy of their relationship. Don Lope taught her his philosophy and weird idealism. In time she began to feel a desire to be an individual; she wanted to become someone. In talks with the maid she would say :

No todo lo que este hombre perverso nos enseña  
es disparato.... ¿No te parece a tí que lo que dice  
es todo la pura razón? Yo.... te lo confieso  
aunque me riñas, creo como él, que eso de encadenarse  
a otra persona por toda la vida, es invención del  
diablo... ¿No lo crees tú? Te reirás cuando te  
diga que no quisiera casarme nunca, que me gustaría  
vivir siempre libre. <sup>34</sup>

In this state of mind, then, she is highly receptive to any opportunity which may present an escape from Don Lope. That opportunity presents itself when on one of her strolls with her maid, she bumps into a young painter, Horacio, and it is love at first sight. After several meetings in the park, Horacio invites her to the privacy of his apartment and here Tristana demonstrates her astuteness. She refuses, guessing what would inevitably happen and fearing that perhaps after such an occurrence his love would diminish, as would hers.

Don Lope aware of what is occurring, asks her about her lover and warns her that no one has ever made a fool of him. Here we have an obvious example of the double standard of morality which existed in that society. Shrewd man that he is, Don Lope knows that by trying forcibly to prevent Tristana from seeing her lover, he will alienate her feelings more, and so he continues :

Bien podría suceder que tu idilio me resultara  
indiferente... mirándolo yo como un medio fácil  
de que aprendieras por demostración experimental  
lo que va de hombre a hombre. 35

She takes him at his word and begins to see Horacio in his apartment.

Horacio, a young man with conventional ideas about marriage, soon begins to have misgivings. He is frightened and dismayed by Tristana's excessive ambitions and aspirations. Her constant cry for independence leaves him in a confused and upset state. Marriage was not for her, she did not want to be constantly bickering over who was head of the household:

Aspiro a no depender de nadie ni del hombre  
que adoro. Quiero ser algo en el mundo, cultivar  
un arte, vivir de mi misma. 36

At this point, Horacio had to leave for an extended period and they began to correspond. In the course of their correspondence, Tristana begins to idealize Horacio, she begins to see him as a reflection of her own ambitions and idealism:

Mi voz interior se entretiene describiéndome  
las perfecciones de tu ser — no me niegues  
que eres como te sueño. Déjame a mí que te  
fabrique.... 37

He, in turn, has begun to see that perhaps Tristana is mentally ill. The stay in the country changes him. He now yearns for a quiet and peaceful life. He wants to raise chickens and vegetables. His ambitions to be a great artist are dead.

Don Lope, who almost accepted the eventual loss of Tristana, is soon

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35 Ibid., p. 101.

36 Ibid., p. 141.

37 Ibid., p. 179.

given the opportunity to regain his lost ground, for Tristana suffers an attack of blood poisoning which subsequently necessitates the amputation of a leg. This not only puts an end to her ambitions to be an actress, but also puts her in bed for some time, giving Don Lope an opportunity to minister to her. He behaves nobly, his love is paternal, he stays up with her, comforts her and tells her that she still has a great future. He buys her an organ, he gets her a language teacher, and in short, exhibits all the love of a father for his daughter. Behind this, however, is the conviction that now she is his, and he is correct.

When Horacio returns, Don Lope even invites him to see Tristana, shrewdly surmising that Tristana will no longer see Horacio in the same light and that Horacio in turn will be repulsed by a one-legged woman. His guess proves to be correct, for Tristana is disillusioned upon seeing Horacio again. This was not the man she had created, this was a common vulgar one. It is evident now that Tristana will never love a flesh and blood man, for all along she has been looking for an ideal, an illusion; and what better entity than God fits such qualification. Horacio marries someone else, Tristana becomes very religious and in time she and Don Lope marry. He has been conquered, but she is merely resigned to her fate:

No sentía el acto, lo aceptaba como un  
 hecho impuesto por el mundo exterior,  
 como el empadronamiento, como la  
 contribución, como las reglas de policía. 38

But regardless of her surrender, Tristana has really not lost her vitality. The cry for social independence has been stifled, it is true, but she has achieved a spiritual independence which continues to give her life and purpose. Don Lope undoubtedly is a dynamic being, an unforgettable Don Juan dominated by erotic instincts which he tries to justify by a system of chivalry; and we are hard pressed to make him any less dynamic than Tristana, but still the fact remains that he is dominated by Tristana. She is the prime motivation in his life and he readily admits his great love for her. She is necessary to him and finally she is the one who makes him break with his philosophy, a philosophy which he has espoused all his life.

Horacio, needless to say, is merely a man who came at the right time. He is the bridge that carried Tristana from the realm of emotional and physical gratification to that of spiritual independence. He is an incident in her life and one gets the feeling that any man could have served the purpose.

With Victoria de Moncada in La Loca de la Casa, we have what seems to be a reversal of the process. Victoria, daughter of a wealthy businessman, Juan de Moncada, has been assaulted by a religious enthusiasm which borders on insanity. She therefore has entered a convent where she is a novice. Her sister Gabriela, on the other hand, is a practical, reflective person who is engaged to Jaime, son of La Marquesa de Malavella, a woman who has lost all her money and possesses nothing but her title.

Don Juan Moncada also finds himself in dire straits. He has suffered serious setbacks in business and it appears that he is doomed to failure.

Interestingly enough, however, it is not the loss of money that he fears but rather the loss of honor, "la deshonra comercial", as he calls it.<sup>39</sup> There is one hope in the person of José María Cruz, a man recently returned from America after having acquired a fortune. Cruz has offered to buy out Don Juan, although this would spell the end of Sr. Moncada as a businessman. There is one alternative — to marry Gabriela off to Cruz, which would keep the business in the family.

The idea of marrying a man who repulses her and whom she considers a barbarian is beyond reason for Gabriela, who declares: "¿Qué! ¿Que nos arruinamos, que dejaremos de ser ricos? No me importa."<sup>40</sup> What a sacrifice! Even the martyrs thrown to the beasts were less to be pitied. Victoria, on the other hand, does not appear nearly so selfish and egotistical. She longs for self-sacrifice.

El mayor gusto mío es que me manden algo en que tenga que vencer dificultades grandes o aguantar algún peligro que me imponga miedo, más bien terror, ... Quiero padecer y humillarme.<sup>41</sup>

This ambition and desire had always been strong in her. It was so extreme that at times her own family thought her crazy.

Finding her father depressed, she says that she will help him through prayers. Gabriela, still feeling some guilt for having refused to help, tells her:

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39 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Loca de La Casa (Madrid: Librería de los Sucesores de Hernando, 1915), p. 91.

40 Ibid., p. 67.

41 Ibid., p. 88.

Ay! es un gran comodín eso del espíritu  
y hacer todas las cosas con el pensamiento,  
en vez de hacerlas con las manos,.... 42

Victoria answers that she will make any sacrifice, for the sacrifice of one's happiness in a good cause is a homage to God. After a great deal of soul searching, Victoria decides to be the victim. However she wishes to make it profitable, so an agreement is drawn up with Cruz in reference to her father's business and also to Cruz' spiritual life. He must agree at least to comply with the fundamental precepts of the Roman Catholic faith. He agrees, admitting that he, however, has no faith.

The arrangement causes everyone to breathe a sigh of relief. Everyone expects that Victoria will dominate Cruz, causing him to loosen his purse strings. Eulalia, Victoria's aunt and a rabid leader of charitable causes, needs money for an orphanage. La Marquesa has a home on Moncada's property, which she now expects will be given to her outright. The nuns of the nearby convent also expect to reap some profit. Unfortunately Cruz is not to be swayed. He is a rugged individualist who has earned everything through work. To charity he gives nothing saying:

No quiero proteger la mendicidad que es lo mismo  
que fomentar la vagancia y los vicios.  
El que no puede o no sabe ganarlo que se  
muera y deje el puesto a quien sepa trabajar.  
La compasión! Donde quiera que arrojen ustedes  
esa semilla, verán nacer la ingratitud. 43

This inability on Victoria's part to change Cruz causes her to fall into disfavor

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42 Ibid., p. 102.

43 Ibid., p. 49.

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with everyone and now they begin talking about her.

With the passage of time Victoria begins to love Cruz. He no longer repulses her and in fact she has even become his moneyhandler and bookkeeper. Gabriela laughs at her and tells her she is his slave. Victoria again has an attack of resolution and gives some money to Gabriela to give to La Marquesa. Enraged upon discovering what Victoria had done, Cruz accuses her of marrying him for pecuniary interests only, and she agrees, saying that it was her idea to win his confidence in order to spread his riches, giving of what he has in excess to those who have not enough. Further, Cruz accuses her of infidelity and she leaves him. It is now that Cruz realizes how much he loves his wife.

Victoria's father is unhappy over the situation, for he has begun to admire Cruz and realizes that Cruz was a good husband. Victoria herself is unhappy. Although admitting that at first the separation seemed a good idea, it is not that way now for she misses Cruz. Besides, she is expecting a child. Her father, hopeful of bringing about a reconciliation, tells Cruz about Victoria's condition. Cruz, whose ambition has been to found a dynasty, is beside himself. He wants Victoria now more than ever. Victoria agrees, but only under certain conditions which are outlined in a business-like transaction. Cruz is vanquished, even when he pleads :

Considera que yo como jefe de la familia, yo el padre  
debo velar por la propiedad, por los intereses. 44

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44 Ibid., p. 297.

Victoria answers that that is old-fashioned and that it is the mothers who govern the world.

Cruz, beaten and ashamed, in an almost pitiful manner asks Victoria not to reveal to anyone that he has capitulated. Señor Moncada has guessed it however and he tells Cruz, "Eres hombre vencido y domado, Victoria hace de ti lo que quiere." 45

With this ending it is difficult to picture Cruz as a vital character. Until the ending, however, he had been a determined man of rigid principles. His ambition and drive had raised him from a servant in the Moncada household to the owner of it. In the jungles of America he had conquered savages and beasts. A forceful and outspoken man, he commanded respect. There was one thing lacking in his life, all his riches notwithstanding — an heir. This, coupled with Victoria's inflexible faith in her mission, brings about his submission.

This impressive array of dominant women is continued in Galdós' next two novels, La Incógnita and its sequel Realidad. In La Incógnita, written in an epistolary style, we have Manolo Infante writing a series of letters to a friend Equis, concerning his attempts to seduce his married cousin Augusta, and also his attempts to determine whether she is faithful to her husband.

From the onset we have an indication of the course that Manolo's emotions will take. Although in his first letter he had written that he did not find his cousin beautiful, there soon appears a change in his evaluation. Perhaps bearing out Havelock Ellis' contention about the sexual subjection of

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45 Ibid., p. 299.

of Spanish men, we have Manolo writing, "I imagine her with little clothing and become ecstatic." Unfortunately he finds her pure in conduct and excellent in reputation.

These qualities present no barrier to a man so dominated by sexual desire. In an attempt to rationalize his designs, he writes :

De aquí nace mi mayor pena, pues precisamente las cualidades que le atribuyo ponen una barrera moral entre ella y yo. Para imaginar que esta aspiración mía, incierta y tímida pueda satisfacerse alguna vez, tengo que destruir mi propia obra y exonerar a la señora de mis pensamientos, quitándole aquellas mismas perfecciones que le supuse. 46

The destruction of these qualities begins by his suspecting her of infidelity, a suspicion which is fanned further by the discussion at the club meetings. Like any beautiful and popular woman, Augusta is a topic of conversation and speculation. Some say she is unfaithful, some say she is not. The concensus, however, is that one should not be disturbed by happenings which are common in society. Unwittingly, even Augusta's father spurs him on with his ultra liberal philosophy :

Mira Manolo, no seas tonto. Haz el amor a las mujeres de todos tus amigos y conquístalas si puedes. No pierdas ripio por cortedad ni por escrúpulos, ni por miramientos sociales de escaso valor ante las grandes leyes de la Naturaleza. Las prójimas que más respeto te infundan, son quizás las que más deseen que avances; no te quedes, pues, a la mitad del camino. Sé atrevido, guardando las formas y vencerás

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46 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Incógnita (Madrid: Perlado Páez y Compañía, 1906), p. 43.

siempre. Toma el mundo como es y las pasiones  
y deseos como fenómenos que constituyen la vida. 47

Manolo plans his attack like a general mapping out his strategy. He  
informs Equis :

Qué pesado estás con tu exigencia de que te  
cuente algo de mi campaña, y de cómo he puesto  
las paralelas para rendir plaza tan bien artillada  
y las reglas acreditadas por el éxito; obsequioso  
con discreción, puntual en los encuentros,  
tierno en el mirar, intencionado en el decir,  
triste hasta la ictericia cuando el caso lo requiere  
y bastante hábil para hacerme pasar en ciertas  
ocasiones por el ser más desventurado que existe  
debajo del sol. 48

Again entirely in keeping with Ellis' earlier-mentioned conclusion about the  
"proud reticence, the absence of an easy response to masculine advances,"<sup>49</sup>  
as being the source of the Spanish woman's erotic superiority, we learn from  
Manolo's letters that his advances have been met with alternating coyness,  
indifference and encouragement.

His carefully laid plans notwithstanding, he is repulsed. This merely  
whets his desires more and embittered he writes :

Y como no siento ninguna vocación de  
volverme yo también ángel, mi maldad aspira  
a sentar plaza en las filas satánicas  
y acosar nuevamente a la querubina con  
mis pretensiones, hasta cansarla, rendirla,  
vencerla y hacerla mi dama. Nada halaga tan  
vivamente los instintos humanos como traerse  
un ángel del cielo a la tierra, lo que equivale  
a robar la esencia celestial.

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47 Ibid., p. 65.

48 Ibid., p. 113.

49 Ellis, p. 84.

¿Comprendes lo que te digo? Por lo mismo que  
 mi adorada prima se me ha puesto en un pedestal  
 de virtud, quiero arrancarla de él, perderla y  
 perderme, bajándonos ambos muy abrazaditos a las  
 cavidades de ese infierno donde los amantes  
 de verdad, dígase lo que se quiera, han de pasarlo  
 muy bien, quemándose por dentro y por fuera. 50

Again it is all to no avail and Manolo becomes determined to discover if she has a lover.

Events take a dramatic turn as Federico Viera, a close friend of Augusta's husband and the man whom Manolo suspected of being her lover, is found mysteriously killed. Manolo's efforts to determine if he was in fact Augusta's lover are intensified. He makes love to a prostitute, La Perri, a friend of Federico's, in hopes of getting information from her, but even under the threat of physical violence she refuses to confirm Manolo's suspicions. Augusta's father in turn tells Manolo to leave matters be :

Conténtate con la verdad relativa y  
 aparente, una verdad fundada en el  
 honor .... El honor y las formas sociales  
 nos imponen esa verdad y a ella nos atenemos. 51

Furthermore it is concluded that crimes of passion and honor are beyond the limits of societies statutes, for a crime of love has been sufficient punishment. Under Manolo's incessant demands, Augusta finally admits that she has been unfaithful, but that she is now trying to mend her ways.

The novel ends on this note only to be continued in its sequel, Realidad,

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50 Ibid., p. 125.

51 Ibid., p. 225.

where we find that Federico was in fact Augusta's lover and that in a moment of remorse he committed suicide, another victim to the tribulations of illicit love.

In these two works Galdós has presented us with another instance of female predominance. He has added one more character to his gallery of spiritually emancipated women. Augusta is a religiously weak woman, and an iconoclast. Manolo says:

Se le parece en que tira siempre a  
sacrificar la verdad al ingenio y a  
despreciar los dictados del sentido  
común, prefiriendo la originalidad a  
la certeza y poniendo el chiste por  
cima de toda idea de justicia. 52

There is a basis for her behavior. As a major factor one might consider her father with his extremely liberal ideas regarding the relationship of the sexes. He states:

Y qué costumbres necias; y qué idiotismo  
en las relaciones de los sexos; y qué  
monotonía desesperante en la vida, toda...  
Yo quiero que toda esa balumba de artificios  
y de esclavitudes, formada por el puritanismo  
inglés y la gazmoñería protestante desaparezca  
en el abismo de esa historia fastidiosa que  
nadie ha de leer. 53

If this were not enough, let us consider the society in which she lived. Manolo writes Equis:

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52 Ibid., p. 79.

53 Ibid., p. 29.

En una sociedad tan chismosa, tan polemista,  
y donde cada quisque se cree humillado, si no  
sustenta, así en la charla pública como en  
la privada, un criterio distinto del de los  
demás, son muy raras las reputaciones y  
éstas tienden siempre a flaquear y derrumbarse  
como puentes de contrata, contruídos sin  
buen cimiento... Falta indisciplina intelectual y  
moral. 54

It would be difficult for any woman in this environment to aspire to maintain a sense of honor or virtue.

In her likeable and condescending husband, Augusta almost found the final nod of approval for her behavior. It is in complete contradiction to the generally accepted picture of the Spanish husband, that we find Orozco telling the ghost of his wife's lover that his wife's adulterous behavior bothers him not as much as the fact that she kept it from him. Attempting to summarize his peculiar code of morality, he concludes that jealousy is ridiculous and that the whims and passions of women are mere trifles and man should show his contempt by ignoring them.

These conditions in no way minimize Augusta's infidelity, but she still demonstrates a strength not evident in the male characters; that is, unless Federico's suicide or Orozco's indifference can be interpreted as such. Her repentance and refusal to succumb to Manolo's advances further attest to her strength. In the final analysis she can not be seen as anything other than predominant. One man has ended his life because of her, another hopefully

tells her that he will be her slave, and the betrayed husband looks the other way in almost fatuous tolerance.

The aspiring lover, Manolo, merits further attention not only because he is a protagonist, but more important because in him Galdós has given us a prototype who is representative of the male in that society. It is through Manolo that we see the society's code as concerns the male-female relationship. Unable to cope with his erotic motivations Manolo states :

Somos muy pillos los descendientes del  
señor de Adán. Llevamos el mal en nuestra  
naturaleza, y la cultura nos ha dado  
una filosofía pérfida y farisaica para  
cohonestarlo. La sociedad, con diarios  
y persuasivos ejemplos, nos incita a  
cursar esta filosofía, y no lo creas, ahí  
tienes a mi padrino, el castizo Cisneros,  
que me repite a cada instante su famosa  
prescripción, resultado de un profundo  
sabor sociológico:  
— Manolo, no seas burro. Haz el amor  
sin reparo alguno a las mujeres de todos  
tus amigos. 55

Yet recognizing the perfidy of society, he weakly concludes that as he is not the innovator of the custom of making love to other men's wives, he also shall not be the reformer nor the protestant.



## CHAPTER V

### DOMINANT WOMEN AND CONFLICT

#### IN MALE-FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS

Presented as the oppressed parties, the women in Galdós' novels still manage to dominate the men around them. Although eventually they all succumb to their personal shortcomings as well as to the mandates of the society, they exercise an influence over the male characters which can not be seen as anything other than the erotic domination mentioned by Havelock Ellis. <sup>1</sup>

Examples of these erotically dominated men abound in the Galdosian novel. In the novels examined the most unforgettable example is the wayward priest, Pedro Polo, of Tormento. His fall was credited to his weak character and passions :

No se debió esta catástrofe a lo que  
tontamente llama el vulgo mala suerte,  
sino a las asperezas del carácter del  
caído, a su soberbia, a sus desbocadas  
pasiones, absolutamente incompatibles  
con su estado. <sup>2</sup>

These passions became centered around his desire for and conquest of Amparo Emperador, whom he appropriately called his torment, his gallows, his inquisition. Completely aware of his condition and its consequence he

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<sup>1</sup> Ellis, p. 84

<sup>2</sup> Benito Pérez Galdós, Tormento (Madrid, 1906), p. 110

he still refused when Amparo begged him to forget her, telling her:

Si eso pudiera ser tan fácilmente como lo  
dices... Ha dicho que no soy un perverso.  
Qué equivocada estás! Allá en las soledades del  
monte, estuve tentado de ahorcarme como  
Judas, porque yo también he vendido a Cristo! <sup>3</sup>

In another scene, Pedro trembling with rage tells her, "Ah! perra! si no te quisiera como te quiero..." <sup>4</sup>

The other man dominated by Amparo is Agustín, who recently having arrived from the wilds of America, now longs for a peaceful and orderly life. This he had hoped to accomplish by marrying Amparo. However, faithful to that Spanish code of love which places such a high value on feminine chastity, this was now impossible since she had already belonged to another man. The heart, however, does not recognize social conventions and Agustín's love had not diminished, for he says:

La tengo clavada en mi corazón y no puedo  
arrancármela. Maldita espina, cómo acaricias  
hundida, y arrancada cuánto dueles!  
Te has lucido hombre insociable, topo que sólo ves  
en las tinieblas de la barbarie, y en la claridad  
de la civilización te encandillas y no  
sabes por dónde andas. La manzana que cogí  
parecióme buena. Abrese y la veo dañada. <sup>5</sup>

He concludes, however:

Mi mujer no.... Pero pasará el tiempo, el  
tiempo indulgente, y será mujer de otro. Otro  
morderá en lo sano, pues mucho hay sano  
todavía, mucho que convida, mucho, que  
digan de mi lo que quieran. <sup>6</sup>

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3 Ibid., p. 224.

4 Ibid., p. 237.

5 Ibid., p. 297.

6 Ibid., p. 304.

Disregarding the mandates of society, he takes her as his mistress.

Pedro Polo had tried to live a life forced upon him and had failed. Agustín had tried to live his life in accord with the rules of a society which was alien to him and he failed. Although Amparo can not be blamed as the only motive for their failure, it was the desire for her that had above all else motivated these men.

In the persons of Joaquín Pez of La Desheredada and Don Lope de Sosa of Tristana, we have two men whose domination is not entirely centered about one woman. They are dominated by women in general. Both fit remarkably well the picture of the classic Spanish Don Juan. As already mentioned Don Lope believed all was fair in love, in fact this was his life. His conquests had been many and varied. Tristana tells Horacio:

Sus conquistas son tantas que no se pueden contar. Si tú supieras.....! Aristocracia, clase media, pueblo.... en todas partes dejó memoria triste, como D. Juan Tenorio. En palacios y cabañas se coló y no respetó nada el muy trasto, ni la virtud, ni la paz doméstica, ni la santísima religión. Hasta con monjas y beatas ha tenido amores el maldito, y sus éxitos parecen obra del demonio. <sup>7</sup>

This is in fact almost the same way that Galdós presents Joaquín Pez:

Era tan guapo, tenía tanto partido, que más que el tipo del seductor legendario, tal como nos lo han transmitido los dramas, era en varias ocasiones un incorregible seducido. Las mujeres absorbían su atención, todo su tiempo y todo su dinero, muy abundante al recibir la herencia de su esposa, pero muy

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7 Benito Pérez Galdós, Tristana (Madrid, 1892), p. 87.

mermado ocho años después. Cuando le conocemos, Joaquín estaba en el apogeo de sus triunfos, y en todos los terrenos sociales se presentaba con su carcaj y flechas; es decir que no despreciaba ninguna pieza de caza, ya estuviese en palacios, ya en cabañas o andurriales. 8

In Isidora Rufete, he saw an opportunity for another conquest. Finding her pretty the first time he saw her, he found her "delicious" the third, and there he singled her out as his. 9

Joaquín was not the only one interested in her. As we have already noted in a previous chapter, Augusto Miquís had also seen her as a possible conquest at first. Don José de Relimpio's attachment for her was not entirely paternal. Alejandro Sánchez Botín, who kept Isidora, was described as a jealous satyr. These are specific examples, but we may generalize from them when we read Don José's advice to Isidora about being in the streets at night:

En Madrid hay mucho atrevido. A los  
pícaros españoles nos gustan tanto  
las hembras bonitas. 10

Even Muñoz y Nones, who is the epitome of honesty and honor, we are told, is susceptible to the charms of a pretty girl.

La Incógnita gives us another instance of a man who's passions are such that they almost verge on perversion. This, of course, is Manolo Infante, already mentioned at length in a previous chapter. He was a man willing to assign his soul to eternal damnation merely for the pleasure of seducing his

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8 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Desheredada (Madrid, 1909), Primera Parte, p. 208.

9 Ibid., Primera Parte, p. 210.

10 Ibid., Primera Parte, p. 268.

cousin. But he is not alone in his interests of women, for in the tertulias mentioned, the conversation generally centers about women and the conquests made. Malibran, suspected of being Augusta's secret lover, is especially given to amorous escapades and, when he began to list his famous triumphs, he was unbearable. Manolo is not unique in his willingness to go to hell in return for sexual pleasures. Daniel the religious zealot in La Loca de La Casa, voices the same willingness. He admits to his mother:

Claramente veo ya que mi religioso entusiasmo era un artificio del espíritu para engañarse a sí propio... transformación mágica de mi idolatría por esa mujer; idolatría que no disminuye, más bien aumenta, al dejar de creerla celestial. 11

He continues:

La salida de Victoria de la casa conyugal me trae un nuevo sacudimiento, un nuevo trastorno. Increíbles fases de la pasión en nuestra alma, según se nos va presentando la persona que la inspira! ¿Ella religiosa? yo también. ¿Ella casada? yo demente... y por fin ... al verla huir de su tirano pensé que me amaba; creí que me sería fácil arrastrarla a la infelidad.... ¿Piadoso yo? Vana, ridícula ilusión! con ella, con Victoria... me gustaría el infierno. 12

In other novels read but not discussed at length, Galdós has continued this parade of erotically dominated men. Luis Cadalso, husband of Don Ramón Villamil's deceased daughter, in the novel Miau, is reputed to be a scoundrel whose love affairs brought about his wife's insanity and death. 13

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11 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Loca de La Casa (Madrid, 1915), p. 231.

12 Ibid., p. 233.

13 Benito Pérez Galdós, Miau (Madrid: Librería de Perlado Páez y Compañía, 1907), p. 97.

He is constantly thinking of beautiful women and has in fact seduced many.

Doña Francisca in Misericordia, we learn, dominated her husband completely, and her son in turn is dominated by his wife who proudly exclaims:

Desde el primer día le administré el bautismo de los cinco mandamientos, porque chillo en cuanto lo veo cerdear un poco: Porque le hago andar derecho como huso y me tiene más miedo que los ladrones a la Guardia Civil. Se hace una querer del marido enjaretándose los calzones como me los enjareto yo. <sup>14</sup>

The women though dominant still resent their position and we have Tristana crying:

Protesto! me da la gana de protestar contra los hombres que se han cogido todo el mundo por suyo, y no nos han dejado a nosotros más que las veredas estrechitas por donde ellos no saben andar. <sup>15</sup>

This protest is manifested not only in the cry for liberty but also in the antagonism which pervades the male-female relationship. The battle of the sexes is in fact a central theme in these novels. Repeatedly there are examples of the conscious planning and stalking which takes place by male and female as the one tries to seduce and the other attempts to appease and ultimately conquer. This is exactly what Tormento has in mind as she goes to visit Pedro Polo. She tells herself:

Tú, si no te aturdes, vencerás al monstruo, porque eres el único ser que en la tierra tiene

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14 Benito Pérez Galdós, Misericordia (Madrid: Librería de los Sucesores de Hernando, 1920), p. 283.

15 Benito Pérez Galdós, Tristana (Madrid, 1892), p. 141.

poder para ello. Mas es necesario que estudies tu papel; es indispensable que midas bien tus fuerzas y sepas utilizarlas en el momento propicio. Esa fiera que nadie puede encadenar sucumbirá bajo tu hábil mano: lo atarás con hebra de seda, y lo rendirás hasta el punto de que se someta en todo por todo a tu voluntad. 16

Later during the meeting, she thinks :

Si yo supiera lo que otras muchas saben; si yo acertara a engañarle, prometiendo sin dar y embaucándole hasta rendirle!... 17

We gather that her sister, Refugio, is more adept at this game, at least judging from her comments about Amparo's engagement to Agustín:

Buen pájaro te ha caído en la red. Asegúrale, chica, todo el tiempo que puedas, que de éstos no caen todos los días. Pero Dios, te hizo tan sosa, que le dejarás escapar... Si fuera mía esa presa, primero me desollaban viva que soltarla yo de las garras. 18

This same way of looking at men as animals or beasts which need to be captured and dominated is seen again in La Loca de La Casa, where Cruz is referred to as a monster and a dragon. Hopefully expecting Victoria to get some of Cruz' money, the Marquesa exclaims :

Vamos, no es el primer caso de un monstruo vencido y domado por artes femeninas. 19

Isidora Rufete of La Desheredada puts it more forcefully when she declares :

A los hombres, desplumarlos y sacarles las entrañas; quererles, nunca. Sois muy antipáticos; os desprecio a todos. 20

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16 Benito Pérez Galdós, Tormento (Madrid, 1906), p. 217.

17 Ibid., p. 227.

18 Ibid., p. 197.

19 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Loca de La Casa (Madrid, 1915), p. 172.

20 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Desheredada (Madrid, 1909), Segunda Parte, p. 263.

Later she concludes :

En fin los hombres sois todos unos. Hay que vengarse perdiendoos a todos y arrastrandoos a la ignominia. Nosotros nos vengamos con nosotras mismas. 21

Rosalía Bringas had voiced the same opinion after Don Pez explained that he was unable to lend her the money he had promised :

....¿ qué mujer habrá tan tonta que no desprecie a toda esta canalla de hombres ? 22

But she did not give up easily, and we read that she will continue casting her net in search of men of more substance :

Hacía propósito de no volver a pescar alimañas de tan poca substancia, y se figuraba estar tendiendo sus redes en mares anchos y batidos, por cuyas aguas cruzaran gallardos tiburones, pomposos ballenatos y peces de verdadero fuste. 23

As for her husband, little by little she planned to declare her emancipation from him.

For their part, men also look upon women as something to be captured and despoiled. As already mentioned, at times their attempts to seduce a woman are treated almost like military campaigns. Thus we read of Joaquín's plans to seduce Isidora Rufete :

El atrevido capitán de partidas, desde que habló con su padre, ideó, pues la emboscada más habil que concertaron guerrilleros en el mundo. No pondría sitio. Enviaría un parlamentario al enemigo para

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21 Ibid., p. 264.

22 Benito Pérez Galdós, La De Bringas (Madrid, 1906), p. 251.

23 Benito Perez Galdos, La De Bringas (Madrid, 1906), p. 285.

hacerle salir de la plaza. Si el enemigo  
caía en el lazo, si pasaba el río de la  
prudencia y se ponía bajo los fuegos del  
desfiladero de la Audacia. 24

Juan Bou, on the other hand, after having been turned down by Isidora,  
makes this scathing commentary :

La mujer es una traba social, una forma  
del obscurantismo, y si el hombre no  
tuviera que nacer de ella, debería ser  
suprimida. 25

Not all the men felt this strongly, obviously, but neither do they at  
any time exhibit any great degree of respect for the women. The women  
also rarely exhibit great respect for the men. As mentioned, there exists  
an uneasy relationship between the men and women in these novels and the  
central theme is in fact the battle of the sexes.

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24 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Desheredada (Madrid, 1909),  
Primera Parte, p. 210.

25 Ibid., Segunda Parte, p. 129.

## CHAPTER VI

### GALDOSIAN WOMEN AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

In examining the predominance of the female sense in Galdós' novels in Chapter four, there emerged a picture of society as the underlying cause for the predicaments of this female protagonists. Keeping in mind some of the major points brought out in Chapter three about the woman in nineteenth century Spain, we will in this chapter speculate upon the faithfulness with which Galdós depicted the actual conditions existing in nineteenth-century Spain, in the novels examined.

The women in all the novels examined had little formal education. Isidora Rufete knew only how to read and write. Of the daughters of Don Manuel Pez we read:

Su instrucción se circunscribía a un poco de Catecismo, una tintura de Historia, y qué Historia!, algunos brochazos de Francés y un poco de Aritmética. <sup>1</sup>

In Tristana the protagonist laments:

Pero mi pobre mamá no pensó más que en darme la educación insubstancial de las niñas. <sup>2</sup>

Augusta Orozco of La Incógnita we find to be "mujer hermosa pero sin instrucción". <sup>3</sup> This was also true of Amparo and her sister in Tormento.

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1 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Desheredada (Madrid, 1909), Primera Parte, p. 201.

2 Benito Pérez Galdós, Tristana (Madrid, 1892), p. 104.

3 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Incógnita (Madrid, 1906), p. 22.

The sisters in La Loca de La Casa, although of a higher social class, were still not much better off, for we hear them exclaim :

Sí, triste cosa es nuestra insignificancia,  
nuestra incapacidad para todo lo que no sea  
la menudencias del trabajo doméstico. <sup>4</sup>

This commentary on education continues in other works by Galdós. In two novels not examined in the previous chapter, we see the same theme repeated.

Doña Paca of Misericordia had plans to marry off her daughter well, although we read the following about the girl's education :

Escribía muy mal e ignoraba los rudimentos  
del saber que poseen casi todas las niñas de  
la clase media. <sup>5</sup>

In regard to the education of the three main female characters in Miau, we find that they also knew only a little bit of French and less about piano. Speaking through Agustín in Tormento, we hear Galdós' personal commentary:

Las niñas estas, cuanto más pobres, más  
soberbias. Su educación es nula : son  
charlatanas, gastadoras, y no piensan  
más que en divertirse y en ponerse perifollos...  
Las pollas no saben hablar más que de noviazgos,  
de pollos, de trapos, del tenor H, del baile X  
de álbum y de la última moda de sombreros...  
Una señorita que ha estado seis años en el mejor  
colegio de aquí, me dijo hace días que Méjico  
está al lado de Filipinas. No saben hacer unas  
sopas, ni pegar un triste botón, ni sumar  
dos cantidades; aunque hay excepciones....<sup>6</sup>

Thus poorly educated and furthermore legally barred from entering the profes-

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4 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Loca de La Casa (Madrid, 1915), p. 104.

5 Benito Pérez Galdós, Misericordia (Madrid, 1920), p. 60.

6 Benito Pérez Galdós, Tormento (Madrid, 1906), p. 162.

sions, the occupational opportunities for women were sorely limited. True to these conditions not one of the women protagonists in the novels examined had any occupation other than housekeeper, housewife or prostitute. This plaintive cry for opportunity is uttered by Saturnia, the maid in Tristana:

Si tuviéramos oficios y carreras las mujeres como  
los tienen esos bergantes de hombres,  
anda con Dios.... Si nos hicieran médicas,  
abogadas, siquiera boticarias o escribanas,  
ya que no ministras y senadoras, vamos,  
podríamos.... Pero cosiendo, cosiendo....  
calcula las puntadas que hay que dar para  
mantener una casa....<sup>7</sup>

Tristana herself echoes the same sentiments later in the novel saying,

La maldita enagua estorba para eso....  
es que vivimos sin movimiento, atadas  
con mil ligaduras....<sup>8</sup>

It is freedom they ask for, but an honorable freedom. This is the repeated cry of many of Galdós women. Yet it is not to be had and Tristana concludes:

Ya sé, ya sé que es difícil eso de ser libre...  
y honrada.<sup>9</sup>

A sense of futility makes her leave her statement incomplete. Already there is the note of resignation which will leave Tristana unhappy all her life.

Thus effectively barred from achieving any honorable economic independence, marriage became a woman's sole means of acquiring security. Marriages of convenience were the rule rather than the exception and Galdós frequently makes mention of them and their almost inevitable resultant unhappiness.

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7 Benito Pérez Galdós, Tristana (Madrid, 1892), pp. 35-36.

8 Ibid., p. 38.

9 Ibid., p. 39.

Victoria Moncada, contemplating her sister's proposed marriage to José María Cruz says :

Un matrimonio de pura conveniencia como un contrato de arrendamiento ha de ser cosa muy triste. 10

Nevertheless, Victoria agrees to sacrifice herself and marry Cruz purely as a means to keep her father from losing his business. These arrangements brought grief not only to the wedded pair but often also to the families. The unhappy father in Miau, recalling his daughter's arranged marriage which brought her nothing but unhappiness and eventual insanity, remarked :

Qué estúpido afán de casar a las hijas sin saber con quién. 11

Yet at this moment we read the following of his other daughter's forthcoming marriage :

Se casaría con él por colocarse, por tener posición y nombre y salir de aquella estrechez insoportable de su hogar. 12

This completely pecuniary aspect of marriage is demonstrated in the other novels. La señora Pez in La Desheredada, we are told,

Ya no aspiraba simplemente a que sus hijas casasen con hombres ricos y decentes. No ; sus yernos habían de ser millonarios, y además, duques, o cuando menos marqueses ; 13

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10 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Loca de La Casa (Madrid, 1915), p. 132.

11 Benito Pérez Galdós, Miau (Madrid, 1907), p. 97.

12 Ibid., p. 74.

13 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Desheredada (Madrid, 1909), Segunda Parte, p. 201.

In Tormento, Rosalía Bringas ponders the possibility of marrying her daughter to Agustín. Unfortunately, the child is much too young. This leads Rosalía to wishfully think that, if her husband were to die, in a year she herself would marry Agustín. Offering a means of security, marriage still did not offer happiness and many women undoubtedly entered into marriage without a trace of feeling other than the resignation felt by Tristana as she married Don Lope :

Casi no se dió cuenta de que la casaron,  
de que unas breves fórmulas hiciéronla  
legítima esposa de Garrido, encasillándola  
en un hueco honroso de la sociedad. 14

As expected, these conditions led to something less than a happy state of matrimony and we have Isidora Rufete's uncle writing to her :

La vida conyugal es cosa que según oigo  
decir anda ahora muy por los suelos. Es  
posible que tu esposo llevado de la  
corriente y de los perversos usos del  
día se hastie un poco de tí y busque  
entretenimiento. 15

Reflecting this state of affairs, Galdós presents in these novels few marriages which are happy or in which one of the spouses has not committed some infidelity.

In La Desheredada alone, we have Juan Bou who has been ruined by his wife, Botín, who is an adulterer living with Isidora, Joaquín Pez who during his married life chased and vanquished many women, and Modesto

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14 Benito Pérez Galdós, Tristana (Madrid, 1892), p. 251.

15 Benito Perez Galdos, La Desheredada (Madrid, 1909),  
Primera Parte, p. 279.

Rico who constantly beat his wife. The list of unhappy marriages continues in Tormento and La de Bringas, where we find Rosalía Bringas' comment about her miserly husband:

Maldito cominero, cuando te probaré yo que  
no me mereces. No comprendes que una mujer como  
yo cuesta más que una ama de llaves. Pues yo  
te haré comprender. 16

She is not the only misunderstood one, for we read that Don Pez is also unhappily married, as is La Marquesa de Tellería whose husband constantly nags her about her spending. The plots of La Incógnita and Realidad revolve around the theme of infidelity as does the plot in El Abuelo and in Galdós' masterpiece Jacinta y Fortunata, two novels which were not included in the preceding chapters. In Miau, a novel briefly mentioned in the preceding chapters, Don Ramón, unable to tolerate his wife, commits suicide. Before this, however, he thinks:

Ahora me ocurre que cuando fui a pedir  
al señor Escobios la mano de su hija, el  
apreciable médico del Cuarto Montado debió  
arrearme un bofetón que me volviera la cara  
del revés.... Ay, cuánto se le hubiera agradecido  
más adelante! 17

Unhappy married or unhappy single, and furthermore restricted in their outside activities, women often turned to the church and religion. In the novels examined, the female protagonists for the most part are lukewarm in their religion and if they go to church at all it is a matter of routine,

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16 Benito Pérez Galdós, La de Bringas (Madrid, 1906), p. 189.

17 Benito Pérez Galdós, Miau (Madrid, 1907), p. 414.

or as an excuse to get out and socialize. Galdós, describing Madrid on a nice Sunday morning, comments :

Mucha gente va a misa, y a cada paso halla el transeúnte bandadas de lindas pollas de cintura bien ceñida y velito en la frente, que salen de la iglesia devocionario en mano, joviales y coquetelas. 18

Isidora Rufete, we are told, went to church only to break the boredom :

Distraíase con estas superficiales devociones y aún llegó a figurarse que se había perfeccionado interiormente. Recordaba las preces aprendidas en su niñez y se deleitaba con las formas de religión por pura novelería. Pero esta santidad de capricho no sofocaba ni mucho menos su orgullo dentro la iglesia. Más que el sermón ampuloso, más que el brillo del altar, más que la poesía del templo y las imágenes expresivas, la cautivaba el señorío que iba por las tardes a la casa de Dios. 19

Pollos elegantes y atrevidos se agolpaban en las naves laterales para mirar a las niñas y ser de ellas mirados... ¿Pero qué le importaba a Isidora el sermón aunque saliera de labios eloquentes? Lo que a ella le interesaba no eran las manotadas y enfurecimiento de aquel santo varón que no cabía en el púlpito, sino el aspecto y brillo del público, de aquel público que si hubiera revisteros de iglesia, sería distinguido, elegante, y numeroso como el de los teatros. 20

Amparo and Tristana turn to the church also, but in a more sincere fashion. Unable to cope with their problems they seek the solace of religion.

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18 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Desheredada (Madrid, 1909), Primera Parte, p. 133.

19 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Desheredada (Madrid, 1909), Segunda Parte, p. 41.

20 Benito Pérez Galdós, La Desheredada (Madrid, 1909), Segunda Parte, p. 42.

Tristana especially seeks religion and God for they are ideals. Having been rejected by a man she loved and finding her other desires thwarted by society, she turns to the only avenue which will help her escape this world, at least temporarily – religion and a perfect God.

In Tristana also can be seen an embryonic beata, one of those zealots which Galdós portrays so well. Perverted religiosity was one of Galdós' favorite themes and the beatas whom he portrays so well are a prime example of frustrated womanhood. There are no classic examples of a beata in the novels examined here, but some do appear, such as Doña Marcelina, a spinster, in *Tormento*, who even has the odor of a sacristy. She believed heaven was attained only through prayer, but in spite of this she was not entirely happy with the Almighty, or perhaps it was frustration which caused her to denounce Amparo enviously saying, "Maldita, all evil persons have good luck." <sup>21</sup>

Earlier in the novel, Galdós had sketched this amusing picture of some beatas in church, awaiting to enter the confessional:

Las beatas que esperaban de rodillas  
a conveniente distancia, y eran de esas  
que van todos los días a consultar  
escrúpulos y a marear a los confesores,  
se impacientaban de la tardanza, renegando  
de la pesadez de aquella señora que debía ser  
un pozo de culpas. <sup>22</sup>

Spinsters generally seem to make the best beatas and, in La Loca de La Casa, Victoria Moncada prior to her marriage to Cruz could have been

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<sup>21</sup> Benito Perez Galdós, *Tormento* (Madrid, 1906), p. 240.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

classified as a beata. Her spinster aunt Eulalia certainly was one.

Church activities thus played an important role in the lives of women. Having very limited civil right, they could not engage in too many public functions, especially in politics. Not once is there mention made of any woman other than the queen taking any active role in political affairs or any other public affairs. Though in their tertulias the women did discuss the national state of affairs, this was generally the extent of their involvement. Indirectly, perhaps women did make themselves felt, especially women of high positions, and we hear this mentioned in Miau, when one of the petty government officials comments :

Las influencias que vuelven el mundo patas  
arriba y hacen escarnio de la justicia no  
son políticas, son las faldas. <sup>23</sup>

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23 Benito Pérez Galdós, Miau (Madrid, 1907), p. 253.

## CONCLUSION

Reviewing the last three chapters, the following summary can be made. The novels exhibiting an exceptional sensitiveness to feminine reactions on the part of the author are written from a woman's viewpoint. In the novels the women are the main and more forceful characters. This is the case in spite of the fact that they are presented as the oppressed, as the prey, being unmercifully hounded by the men. These conditions are seen by Galdós to be fostered by the society and its traditions, including religion. Such exploitation logically brought about a certain amount of resentment on the part of the women, but unable to better their position they resorted to using their feminine wiles and in time became a dominant force, although operating in the background. This struggle between the male and female characters is a major theme present in all the novels. Finally, in examining Galdós' presentation and the actual conditions existing in society we found Galdós to be a faithful portrayer of his times. Fermín Estrella Gutiérrez writes :

Pérez Galdós observó y anotó cuidadosamente la realidad que lo circundaba, atraído más por los seres que veía, con quienes trataba, que por el paisaje y la costumbre... y llevó a toda esa humanidad con la cual convivía y en la que se había mezclado, a sus novelas. En sus novelas las cosas pasan como en la vida. Los personajes son también personajes verdaderos, tomados de la realidad. Los diálogos parecen copiados del natural. <sup>1</sup>

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1 Fermín Estrella Gutiérrez, Historia de la Literatura Española con Antología, (Buenos Aires: Kapeluz, 1957), p. 626.

Being a chronicler of the times was not Galdós' sole aim. A singularly sensitive man, he above all wished to portray what he believed were the defects of his society. Unalterably opposed to any type of intolerance, he believed in the equal rights of all human beings, and these rights were being denied the women of Spain. <sup>2</sup>

A concern for the social freedom of women is often a tenet of liberalism and this concern is clearly evident in Galdós' work. The women's constant demand for freedom, though not always explicit in these novels examined, is nevertheless present. Tristana voices it, as do Rosalía Bringas, Isidora Rufete and the Emperador sisters in Tormento. Augusta in La Incógnita demonstrated it clearly in her iconoclastic attitudes as well as in her infidelity. In La Loca de La Casa, Victoria essentially seeks freedom. Her initial religious zealousness was an attempt to express herself and to give vent to her desires to do something individually, to be an individual. It is this frustration which leads her to sacrifice herself to the monster Cruz.

Concerning Galdós' treatment of women, L. B. Walton states: "It is clear from his novels that he regards the social problem and the feminist question as inseparable. Until the legitimate claims of women are recognized and satisfied, the social system must in his views lack a genuine basis of stability." <sup>3</sup> There can be little doubt of this. Any time that such an

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2 Walton, p. 109.

3 Ibid., p. 120.

important and large segment of the population as women are denied their justifiable rights, there is destined to be unhappiness and instability and trouble. In no one of these novels has Galdós indicated that his women protagonists ultimately achieved happiness. Isidora becomes an embittered prostitute; Amparo, seeing no other recourse, becomes Agustín's mistress; as we take leave of Rosalía Bringas she is still making plans to emancipate herself from her miserly husband; Tristana resignedly marries Don Lope, a man forty years her senior, and Augusta Orozco, her lover dead, has decided to be a good wife. Victoria, we might assume, achieves happiness. However, this is highly doubtful since her marriage originally was purely strategem and it is highly probable that her husband will always feel some resentment about it, in spite of the fact that he loves her. Furthermore, for Cruz, the most important part of the marriage is the fact that it will bring him an heir.

It is solely in the realm of conjecture, but it seems reasonable to assume that, had these women been afforded greater educational and economic opportunity, the outcome of the stories would have been different, not always happier, perhaps, because allowances must be made for human weakness, which would still exist in spite of any environment, good or bad.

This is what Galdós is trying to point out. Give women a greater opportunity to express themselves and their relationships with men will improve. There will be a greater understanding between man and woman. Galdós, however, is aware of the stubbornness of tradition and realizes that the role of the woman cannot be changed over a short period of time. His

emphasis on the poor education of his feminine characters perhaps indicates that this is a basic factor and it is here that the change should begin.

A completely emancipated womanhood was not Galdós' aim, though he believed in the equality of human beings. Galdós was too much a Spaniard, too much a man and too much an idealist. A man completely opposed to radicalism or extremes, he undoubtedly wished for a synthesis. His fictional women fell into two categories, the beautiful, witty, intelligent and independent, and the meek, domesticated and ignorant. Unfortunately at no time were these qualities intermingled in any of his heroines. This would have been an ideal woman for Galdós, a woman which he seemingly never found in life and therefore never put into his fiction. This, perhaps, also explains why Galdós never married.

Obviously, then, Galdós was unhappy with the existing situation. This was evident in his novels and in his personal life.

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