

MAJOR WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE NOVELS OF PALACIO VALDES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. PURPOSE	1
II. LIFE AND WORKS OF DON ARMANDO PALACIO VALDES	3
III. WOMEN IDENTIFIED WITH RELIGION	16
A. María	16
B. Gloria	19
C. Rogelia	21
D. Obdulia	27
IV. YOUNG, MARRIAGEABLE WOMEN	32
A. Marta	32
B. Maximina	34
C. Elisa	39
D. Angelita and Fernandita	44
E. Demetria	49
F. Cecilia	57
G. Ventura	61
H. Angelina	63
V. WOMEN OF THE HOME	69
A. Cristina	69
B. Clementina	71
C. Doña Rosario	74
D. Mother of Palacio Valdés	76
VI. CONCLUSIONS	79
VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY	82

CHAPTER I

PURPOSE

The purpose of this thesis is to make a study of the women portrayed by Palacio Valdés in his novels. He characterized them very well, and his novels reveal their habits and customs in all social classes. He himself belonged to the upper stratum of society, but there is evidence of his sympathy for people of the lower classes. In fact, in La espuma, Palacio Valdés openly criticized the life of the social élite.

Palacio Valdés used as subject matter for his novels only those conditions, regions, and historical periods familiar to him through first-hand experience. Thus the women we encounter in his novels can be considered typical of those of his day. Several of his novels, among them Riverita and Maximina, are allegedly autobiographical.

Palacio Valdés had a high esteem for women. He allowed them an important place in society, and in his novels he did not push them into the background. According to César Barja, all the women depicted in the novels of Palacio Valdés keep their true feminine nature. It is the women, in fact, who give warmth and life to his novels.¹

¹César Barja, Libros y autores modernos (Los Angeles: Campbell's Book Store, 1933), p. 383.

Throughout this thesis, novels will be reviewed featuring women in order to indicate the importance that Palacio Valdés gave to womankind.

45

Palacio Valdés was born into a favored
social environment. He was the first of

CHAPTER II

LIFE AND WORKS OF DON ARMANDO PALACIO VALDES

Armando Francisco Bonifacio Palacio Valdés was born on October 4, 1853, in Entralgo of the Asturias, the most rugged part of Spain. This environment was to have a great influence on the life and the chosen profession of Palacio Valdés. Angel Cruz Rueda said of the Asturias: "Estos valles, estas montañas, estas costas fueron cantados en linda prosa castellana por don Armando Palacio Valdés."

Palacio Valdés was born into a favorable social and economic environment. He was the first of three sons of a successful lawyer, Silverio Palacio Cárcaba, whose native town was Oviedo. His mother, Eduarda Rodríguez Valdés, was born in Entralgo, but she always considered herself from Avilés, a town on the Bay of Biscay. When Armando was three years old, a second son, Anastasio, was born to the family; four years later Leopoldo was born.

Since the maternal grandfather had died a few months before his birth, Palacio Valdés knew only one grandfather, don Francisco Palacio Alonso, whom he grew to love and admire.

²Angel Cruz Rueda, Armando Palacio Valdés; estudio biográfico (Madrid: Agence mondiale de libraire, 1925), p. 8.

If anything hindered the carefree pleasure of don Armando's childhood, it was the fragile health of his mother. In the words of Angel Cruz Rueda:³

Fué toda su vida un frágil cristal de Bohemia. No podía llamarse en verdad mujer a una criatura tan débil, tan delicada y próxima a extinguirse que cualquier ráfaga de aire podía apagar en la hora menos pensada.

The amusements that Palacio Valdés enjoyed as a boy were very normal for a child of his era. He readily adjusted to the change from seashore activities to life in the mountains, both of which he enjoyed immensely.

When Palacio Valdés was twelve years old, he went to Oviedo, the capital city of the Asturias, to attend secondary school. He stayed during that time in the home of his paternal grandfather, that charming old gentleman of whom Angel Cruz Rueda has said:⁴

Entró en este mundo allá por las postrimerias del siglo XVIII; y cuando salió de él estaba en la creencia de que había existido en un nido de ángeles y no en una cueva de bandidos, como pensaba Schopenhauer.

Don Armando seemed to enjoy the same cheerful outlook on life as was enjoyed by his grandfather.

Young don Armando was almost immediately successful in his studies at Oviedo, for after a month at the Instituto

³Ibid., p. 13.

⁴Ibid., p. 17.

he was listed on the Cuadro de Honor, on which were found the names of the most illustrious students of the Institute. This greatly encouraged Armando in his school work. During his third year in the secondary school, Palacio Valdés started to associate with a group of young men who were a few years ahead of him in the academy. This association had a great influence on him. Among these young men was his lifelong friend, Leopoldo Alas, who wrote under the name of Clarín. From the time he was fifteen years of age, the chief ambition of don Armando was to cultivate philosophical and political sciences. This group of friends helped to change his interest from social science and philosophy to literature.

Palacio Valdés enjoyed school at Oviedo and was saddened when he had finished his studies there. The first of October, 1870, just three days before his seventeenth birthday, young Armando arrived in Madrid accompanied by his father. There he enrolled in the study of law. This meant that he must leave his boyhood home, the varied experiences of mountains and seashore, and his beloved parents. He was especially touched at having to leave his mother, whose health was rapidly failing. He felt as if he had been expelled from the Garden of Eden. The life of a large city did not appeal to him. His own words on arriving in Madrid were,

"¡Adiós! ¡Adiós! Adán salió del Paraíso."⁵ His unrest was increased by the death of his mother in December, 1871.

Before he had finished his studies at the university, Palacio Valdés entered the Ateneo, the famous literary and scientific club of Madrid. Most of the older members of the Ateneo looked with scorn upon the younger ones; but one of the members, Luis Navarro, associated with the publishing company, Medina y Navarro, discovered in a short time the philosophical nature of don Armando Palacio Valdés and invited him to write some philosophical articles. This association can be credited with starting Palacio Valdés on a literary career, for when he finished his studies at the university at the age of twenty-one years, Luis Navarro offered him a job writing for his daily paper, El Cronista. It was in this position that Palacio Valdés earned his first money. Following his graduation, he continued to be an active member of the Ateneo. He was secretary for the Sección de Ciencias Morales y Políticas of the Ateneo from 1875 until 1878.

While he was associated with this group of literary men in Madrid, Palacio Valdés distinguished himself by writing for various philosophical and political publications.

⁵ Armando Palacio Valdés, La novela de un novelista (Madrid: Librería de Victoriano Suárez, 1921), p. 313.

His first real contribution to literature was a series of humorous sketches of novelists, poets, and orators for the Revista Europa, of which he was editor for three years. This writing increased his interest in literature. He was highly critical of the writing of his day. When he was a young man he decided that he could create quite as well as some of the novelists whose works were being published. He proved it by launching into a career as a novelist and by being one of the most popular authors ever to write Spanish literature. Because of his early success, don Armando elected to abandon the career of law, for which he had so carefully prepared, and chose a career in literature.

In 1883 Palacio Valdés met Luisa Prendes when he was in the coast town of Candás, Asturias. The same year the two were married. In 1885, at the age of eighteen, the youthful wife died, survived by her husband and an infant son, whom Palacio Valdés cherished. Present at his wife's funeral were two of the most distinguished men of letters of his day: Pereda and Pérez Galdós.

In 1889 Palacio Valdés married a young lady from Cadiz, Manolita Vela. There were no children from this marriage. Palacio Valdés and his son Armandín were very close to each other, so it was a great shock to don Armando when he received word in 1919 that the son had been killed

in a motorcycle accident. Palacio Valdés was then left as the guardian of two granddaughters on whom he bestowed all his affection.

By the time he had reached his sixties, Palacio Valdés was truly a world figure. His ideas concerning world problems were highly esteemed. During the First World War Palacio Valdés was asked by the editors of El Imparcial to give his views on the countries involved in the great war. This he did in a book entitled La guerra injusta. His opinion about the conflict is evidenced in the title; he was not neutral. In the book he says: "Me incliné del lado de la Francia; porque pensé, y sigo pensando, que la razón y la justicia se encuentran de su parte."⁶ This sympathy extended to still another of the allied countries, England, of which he had this to say:⁷

Admiro a Inglaterra como a ningún otro país del mundo. Es aquel donde el hombre más respecta al hombre; por lo tanto, el que puede llamarse sin jactancia más civilizado. Pero Rusia, en cambio, es el más atrasado; no había, pues, motivo para una declarada preferencia.

In spite of this sincere admiration, he never mastered the English language. However, he did hire instructors to teach English to his granddaughters.

⁶ Armando Palacio Valdés, La guerra injusta; cartas de un español (Barcelona: Bloud and Gay, 1917), p. 6.

⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

In the same book, showing his typical respect for women, he entitled one chapter "Las mujeres y la guerra." In this chapter he mentioned the capability of women to serve where they could in time of crisis. Some of his contemporaries were alarmed at what the economic result might be if women were allowed to work in men's jobs, since women were willing to work for lower wages. Palacio Valdés maintained that it would mean only that men would have to live more frugally if they were to compete with women.⁸

In 1920 Palacio Valdés accepted a chair in the Royal Spanish Academy. He had been elected to the academy in 1906 to fill the vacancy left by José María de Pereda. Because of Palacio Valdés' high esteem for his good friend, he did not accept the chair immediately.

In 1929 Leah R. Wagenheim interviewed this great man of letters for Hispania. She found him living on the southern border of France at his summer home, Châlet Marta y María, named for one of his early novels. With him were his wife and his two attractive granddaughters. Of the interview Miss Wagenheim said, "Gradually we drifted into a discussion of his novels, and as I have always admired his women characters, I wanted to know if he had a favorite. He

⁸Ibid., p. 106.

He then expressed his preference for Rogelia, the heroine of Santa Rogelia.⁹

The interviewer expressed the thought that Palacio Valdés was more liberal in his attitude toward women than were many others of his day. He felt that women could assume positions of great responsibility in the government. She quoted him as saying, "Soy más feminista que las mismas señoras sufragistas de Inglaterra. Ellas no piden más que el voto; yo pido toda la política para la mujer y también la administración de justicia."¹⁰ He certainly had more faith in the wisdom of women than might be expected of a conservative of the early twentieth century.

In spite of the loss of several loved ones, Palacio Valdés' long life appears to have been a rather happy one. He led a simple life and enjoyed simple diversions. In his younger days he kept himself fit with gymnastic exercises and learned to fence. During his later life he liked to take strolls in Madrid's Retiro park, which was one of his favorite haunts. Palacio Valdés was determined always to run his life according to a strict schedule, and many people have said that one could set his watch by the appearance of

⁹Leah R. Wagenheim, "A Chat with Armando Palacio Valdés on Feminism," Hispania, XII (November, 1929), p. 443.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 446.

don Armando in the Retiro. Another of Palacio Valdés' favorite paseos was Moncloa Park, also in Madrid. He eventually learned to feel at home in Madrid, and his life came to a close there in 1938.

Although Palacio Valdés departed from this life over twenty years ago, his works have made him immortal. He had the good fortune to be born into a family of sufficient means; therefore it was never necessary for him to write to meet monetary needs. In addition to security, Palacio Valdés inherited from his father an active imagination and a thirst for education. This set of circumstances combined to form one of the most popular novelists Spain has ever produced. Not pressed for money, Palacio Valdés was enabled to write purely for the love of writing. Most of his novels, however, were financial successes. Many of his works have been translated into other languages. He tried to make his novels examples of art. He portrayed life as he saw it, and for this reason is considered a realist. According to Ernest Mérimée, "He is neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but a realist."¹¹ In most of his novels he drew from experiences in his own life. He treated human foibles sufficiently sympathetically, but as a rule his stories

¹¹Ernest A. Mérimée, A History of Spanish Literature, translated, revised and enlarged by S. Griswold Morley (New York: Holt, 1930), p. 554.

finish with a sense of retribution, especially for those characters portrayed as being innately evil as was Máximo of Santa Regelia. He did not limit his studies to the sordid and brutal aspects of life, so he cannot be placed in the same school with many who are considered complete realists. Palacio Valdés looked for and found greatness in the lives of simple folk. He did not favor dwelling too long on details. He approved using details to disclose important threads of thought, but the prime feature of his novels was characterization. He vested his characters with the power to carry the weight of the novels.

For most of his novels, Palacio Valdés drew his setting from his native Asturias. He was skillful in picturing realistically his own region. He wrote, too, about his own era. He did not write historical novels. He based all of his writing on his own observations.

He presented a picture of life that contains something of sorrow and something of joy. Angel Valbuena Prat wrote, "La novela de Valdés es más paño de lágrimas que acicate de pasiones intensas."¹² Occasionally he interspersed his narrative with a touch of humor that never distracts from the story. His humor was never forced. Palacio Valdés

12

Angel Valbuena Prat, Historia de la literatura española, Tomo II (Barcelona: Catedrático de la Universidad de Barcelona, 1937), p. 829.

scorned complicated plots. His skill lay in the ability he had in arresting interest by dealing with events simply. He did not idealize the common life, but studied it closely in order to reveal the best that is in it. In only two of his novels was he accused of dealing too harshly with his subjects. La Fe was criticized as censuring the church, and La Espuma was an attack on the upper stratum of society. In La Aldea perdida Palacio Valdés indicated his preference for the pastoral life over the industrialized life being brought into his country by such activities as mining.

Palacio Valdés was associated rather early in life with a career in writing. Aubrey F. G. Bell wrote:¹³

Don Armando Palacio Valdés had been writing for twelve years as a critic and story-teller when his first novel of lasting success appeared in 1883 under the title of Marta y María. This, with La Hermana San Sulpicio, José, and La Aldea perdida, is the work on which his fame will most securely rest.

He was never a bitter critic, and he was quite as stern with himself as he was with other authors; soon after the publication of his first novel, El señorito Octavio, he criticized it himself and made a second attempt at writing. The second one, Marta y María, he viewed much more favorably. Marta y María was his first novel to be translated into another language.

¹³Aubrey F. G. Bell, Contemporary Spanish Literature (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1933), p. 70.

In 1931, a half century after the publication of his first novel, Palacio Valdés published La novela de un novelista, which gives us an insight into his first seventeen years.

From César Barja we learn the extent of the work of Palacio Valdés. Some twenty-five volumes of novels and stories constitute the literary production of Palacio Valdés, and it is the work of some fifty years. The epoch of his major productivity corresponds to the years 1881 to 1900. During these years he wrote a book approximately every year.¹⁴

His popularity spread even to America. According to Antón del Olmet and José de Torres Bernal:¹⁵

Sabido es que Palacio Valdés goza de un enorme prestigio en los Estados Unidos. La primera novela de D. Armando que se tradujo - Marta y María - traducida fué en Norte América. Los 200.000 ejemplares de Maximina, que en los Estados de la Unión se vendieron, son una prueba irrefutable.

This man of universal appeal made a vast impression on the western hemisphere.

As a portrayer of women, Palacio Valdés is hailed as one of the most skillful. In many of his novels a woman is

¹⁴Barja, op. cit., p. 385.

¹⁵Luis Antón del Olmet and José de Torres Bernal, Los grandes españoles: Palacio Valdés (Madrid: Imprenta de Juan Fueyo, 1919), p. 159.

the main character. In others, such as Marta y Maria, women characters are contrasted. In A cara e cruz the similarities of two women are emphasized. He portrayed mature women with as great skill as he did the more youthful charmers. They are not stereotyped; each has her own personality. He disagreed with some of his contemporaries that women should serve only in the home. In 1931 El gobierno de las mujeres was published. In it Palacio Valdés evaluated the work of such immortals as Isabella of Spain, Elizabeth of England, Marguerite of Austria, and Victoria of England.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN IDENTIFIED WITH RELIGION

María de Elorza, one of the two main characters of Marta y María, was the daughter of an engineer who was very well thought of in the little town of Nieva, which closely resembles the childhood home of the author's mother. In the actual town, Avilés, Palacio Valdés spent much of his boyhood. María was patterned after Mary, one of the two sisters of Lazarus, whose account can be found in Luke X: 41-42: "And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." As the reader progresses into the novel, there is doubt in his mind that Palacio Valdés agreed that it was Mary who had chosen the good part.

Throughout the story María showed her preference for things of the spirit rather than things of the world. She was betrothed to Ricardo, marqués de Peñalta, but she treated him with lack of consideration. She appeared to outsiders to be like a saint, but she persistently trampled on the feelings of those close to her. Although she appeared selfless, she was actually using such means to attract attention to herself.

Even in her teens, María was directing her talents and interests toward ethereal ideals. Leaving the housework and daily chores to her younger sister, who was more practical, María enjoyed reading Sir Walter Scott's stories and other romantic novels, often confining herself to her room for hours. Because of her insatiable thirst for reading, she exhausted her friends' supply of books. She was greatly influenced by the autobiography of Santa Teresa. She enjoyed music because of the moods it expressed. Palacio Valdés described her thus in the novel:¹⁶

La música, en la cual había hecho prodigiosos adelantes, había fomentado en su corazón cierta tendencia a la melancolía y al llanto. Lloraba por cualquier cosa; a veces sin motivo alguno y cuando menos se esperaba; pero las lágrimas eran tan dulces y sentía con ellas placer tan intenso, que en muchas ocasiones las provocaba con artificio.

She was so easily moved to tears that often her parents were concerned about her health.

María appeared to be a martyr in her affiliation with the Carlists, guerilla bands organized for the purpose of placing don Carlos VII, pretender to the throne, at the head of the Spanish government. Perhaps her interest in the movement was stimulated because members of the clergy often led the guerilla bands, and María was an ardent worker for

¹⁶Armando Palacio Valdés, Marta y María (Madrid: Librería de Victoriano Suárez, 1920), p. 46.

any cause supported by the church. She aided the Carlists with money and munitions. She even tried to persuade Ricardo to risk his life in assisting the Carlists. One night during a tertulia, soldiers arrested Maria for participating in a Carlist revolution. She was taken before a Consejo de Guerra. She confessed her guilt, but out of respect to her father the authorities pardoned her.

Since her novio had no family of his own, he went to the Elorza family for companionship and became beloved by the family. When Maria revealed that she did not intend to marry Ricardo, her mother grieved so greatly that she died shortly afterward. Maria then asked her father for permission to become a nun. Knowing his daughter's determination, the father did not resist but gave his consent. Her renouncing marriage to assume a more sacrificial life in a convent evoked sympathy and admiration from acquaintances, but all the time Palacio Valdés gave the impression that this selfish heroine was enjoying the attention aroused by such behavior.

In contrast to Maria, who renounced the life of the world for life in a convent, Gloria Bermúdez, of La hermana San Sulpicio, loathed the life of a nun. When she was very young, Gloria, with her cousin, la hermana Maria de la Luz, had been placed in a convent in Andalucía. Gloria's religious name was hermana San Sulpicio. Gloria was in the convent at

the wish of her mother and not from choice. The two cousins were quite different in temperament. Hermana Maria was docile and obeyed the regulations of the convent. Gloria proved to be an incorrigible charge for her superiors.

Sanjurjo, a handsome doctor from the Asturias, had been assigned to the convent to care for an elderly, ailing nun. Sanjurjo became rather well acquainted with the nuns, especially the hermana San Sulpicio and her cousin, the hermana Maria de la luz. The hermana San Sulpicio behaved in a manner quite unique in a convent and, with her independent spirit, she soon won the admiration and affection of Sanjurjo. By confessing that she was dissatisfied and did not intend to take her final vows, she aroused hope in Sanjurjo that he might someday be her suitor. She revealed to Sanjurjo her secular name. She asked him to bring her a copy of a book popular at that time. The book she wanted was Maximina, written by Palacio Valdés. It was necessary for her to get permission before reading it; but, whether she received permission or not, she intended to read the novel and perhaps be punished for it. The hermana San Sulpicio was so accustomed to chastisement that she grew to accept it as a matter of course.

Although she had not yet taken her final vows, the hermana San Sulpicio eventually finished her training and went to Seville to teach in a school there. Sanjurjo, as

might be expected, located her almost immediately in Seville. In hopes of releasing the hermana San Sulpicio, or Gloria, as he now called her, Sanjurjo appeared before her superior and explained that she had no ecclesiastical leanings but that she had been coerced into becoming a nun. The superior was furious and ordered Sanjurjo from the room. Again the unfortunate nun, innocent in this case, received punishment. Sanjurjo wrote to one of his uncles who was wealthy and quite influential in the church. He told his uncle of the plight. When the superior learned of Sanjurjo's connections, he offered to do anything he could to help Sanjurjo gain the young nun's release.

For a time the two lovers did not try to meet in person, but they contacted each other by means of notes through Paca, a servant. Eventually the two were daring enough to meet at night occasionally. During one of their entrevistas, Gloria told Sanjurjo that she could not requite his love. His disappointment is described in his own words in the novel:¹⁷

Me es imposible definir el estado de mi espíritu al oír estas palabras. Fueron pronunciados en un tonillo irónico que podía hacer creer que se trataba de una broma; pero los razonamientos eran tan verosímiles y lógicos, que destruían tal suposición.

¹⁷Armando Palacio Valdés, La hermana San Sulpicio (Madrid: Librería de Victoriano Suárez, 1920), p. 160.

He showed so much grief at hearing the news that she finally relented and agreed that they would continue their romance.

One day Paca arrived at the inn in which Sanjurjo was staying and told him that Gloria had been kidnaped. Her mother, doña Tula, had ordered her return to the convent. Sanjurjo overtook the captors, and at gun-point, the kidnapers released her. Now that Gloria was free, Sanjurjo would have married her, but she was not of age and could not marry without her mother's consent.

Sanjurjo went to the home of doña Tula to ask for Gloria's hand. Tula would have consented, but the director of her estate, realizing that Gloria was to inherit a great sum of money, accused Sanjurjo of being a fortune hunter and influenced the mother to withhold her consent. In time the director was convinced of Sanjurjo's sincerity, and he and doña Tula consented to the marriage.

Gloria was at last happy in a life so different from her past experience. The couple, after their marriage, took an extensive wedding trip into France. On their return to Spain, they visited the convent in which they had met. Gloria was delighted to be merely a spectator and not a participant in sacrificial living.

Different from either of the women already discussed is Rogelia of Santa Rogelia. Rogelia's behavior ran the gamut of morals from the most censurable to the most saintly.

Her sin was far more shocking than any action of her forerunners, but her sincerity and penance were superior to these traits in either of the women of the former novels. In the face of bitter discouragements, Rogelia bravely persisted in her effort to mend her broken life. Although she was only a lay Christian, Rogelia's act of faith was equivalent to that of anyone taking formal vows.

Rogelia lost both of her parents when she was very young, so she made her home with her elderly grandmother. The two lived very meagerly on the small salary that Rogelia earned by working at the mines.

Life at the mines was not desirable for an attractive young lady who should be considering prospective husbands. Rogelia had many suitors but none quite so persistent as Máximo, a former prisoner who worked at the mines.

No one was quite certain why it was that Rogelia eventually accepted Máximo's proposal of marriage. He was considerably older than Rogelia. He was certainly not handsome. His manner was gruff. He was hated by his associates. However, he offered more wealth to Rogelia than most of the miners. Because of his strength, he could work faster and thus earn more money than any of the other miners. In the words of Palacio Valdés:¹⁸

¹⁸Armando Palacio Valdés, Santa Rogelia from Obras escogidas (Madrid: M. Aguilar, 1933), p. 1996.

Este Máximo, de quien se hablaba, era una plaga que había caído sobre aquella región. Bajo de estatura pero de fuerzas sorprendentes, antiguo minero, habilísimo como tal, ganando doble que los demás porque picaba en un día más carbón que los otros en tres, agresivo, pendenciero, presto de esgrimir el cuchillo en cualquier ocasión, licenciado de presidio, según se decía, había logrado inspirar terror en la comarca. Sus compañeros le odiaban y le temían. Pasaba un poco de los treinta años. La belleza de Rogelia, que tenía muchos golosos, le sedujo.

This was the man whom Rogelia married.

Although Máximo treated Rogelia tenderly before their marriage, after their marriage he felt there was no further need to woo her, and he showed her very little consideration. Often he beat her. Rogelia was miserable, but she consigned herself to her fate and to her husband's abuses.

This treatment incensed Rogelia's friends, and one night one of her former suitors attacked Máximo with the intention of killing him. In this encounter Máximo's great strength saved his life.

Máximo was taken home to his wife. She cared for him patiently. Since it was apparent that a doctor must be summoned, Rogelia set out to bring a doctor from a neighboring town. She made the trip on foot at night over dangerous terrain. She went to the home of a Dr. Vilches, who after much persuasion consented to accompany Rogelia back to her husband to administer the immediate treatment necessary.

Dr. Vilches was the exact opposite of Máximo. The doctor was handsome, graceful, and considerate. He dressed neatly and enjoyed fine furnishings in his living quarters. It is no wonder that Máximo seemed more crude than ever to Rogelia. During the course of Máximo's illness, the doctor made several calls at the house. The doctor, with his sympathetic manner, fell in love with Máximo's beautiful young wife, who deserved a better life than fortune had bestowed upon her.

Dr. Vilches was planning to go to France to continue his medical studies. After Máximo recovered from his wounds, Rogelia and Dr. Vilches went together to France. Rogelia lived as the common-law wife of Dr. Vilches. Rogelia had no training in finesse and no education, so the doctor spent a great deal of money making a lady of her and training her to live in upper-class society. She was an adept student and quickly adapted to the change in her life. It was during their stay in France that a son was born to them.

Dr. Vilches completed his studies, and the three returned to Spain. Rogelia had been very happy in France, but now that they were back in Spain she was afraid that someone might recognize her. In order to avoid meeting people, she refrained from being seen outside their home. She began to be apprehensive about living as a common-law

wife, but now that she had a son, she hesitated to change her status.

Rogelia and Dr. Vilches were staying at the home of an old duke. The duke had a daughter, Cristobalina, who had become a nun. Cristobalina came to visit her father and became acquainted with Rogelia. Not knowing of Rogelia's erratic life, Cristobalina spoke out very effectively against such evils. Rogelia became aware of her sin.

Dr. Vilches and Rogelia had received word that Máximo had murdered a man and had been sent to Ceuta, a prison town in Africa. Rogelia's conscience had been awakened, and she could not help thinking of her legal husband.

Finally she was overcome by her feeling; and, in the middle of the night, she left Dr. Vilches and their son to join her rightful husband. Rogelia had become accustomed to the life of a lady, but when she arrived in Ceuta, the only way she could support herself was by doing manual labor. She did washings and ironings and worked in an inn. Her employer in the inn was kind to her and realized that Rogelia had not been in the habit of working so hard. She tried to persuade Rogelia not to call on Máximo, who was feared by all who knew him. Nevertheless Rogelia made frequent visits to the prison to see Máximo. The guards at the prison tried to discourage Rogelia from her endeavor,

but she insisted that she owed Máximo her devotion. She felt deeply penitent for the injustice she had done him.

Naturally Máximo was not receptive to visits from the wife who had left him. He insisted that he did not wish to see her, and she had to force her presence upon him. Máximo, always of a cruel disposition, resented Rogelia's former behavior and was very unkind to her. Once in a fit of anger he beat her so badly that she had to be taken to a hospital. After she recovered and was dismissed from the hospital, she stopped at a church to pray. Life had become almost unbearable, but she accepted her afflictions as the cross she must bear for her past sins. Following the prayer she offered, she heard Christ say to her that she had done sufficient penance and that her sins had been forgiven. She felt some comfort in the thought that she had paid for her transgressions. Soon afterward she learned that Máximo had committed suicide.

At last she was released from her first marriage. While she was away, she had been very anxious about her son and the doctor, so she immediately returned to them in Spain. Her task was finished. Her conscience was at ease. She could now enjoy the son from whom she had been separated so long.

As for bringing any joy to Máximo, Rogelia's efforts had been in vain. It seems a very foolish thing to leave

the doctor after there was a child to be cared for, but by giving up her comfortable life with the doctor, Regelia found peace in her heart.

Obdulia Orsuna of La fe might be compared to Maria of Marta y Maria in that outwardly she was respected and was considered quite religious, but inwardly she was selfish and scheming. She was different from Maria in that she was not devoted to any cause. She was much more self-centered than Maria was, and she had less consideration for those who cared for her. Maria simply rejected her suitor to enter a convent, but Obdulia had the man she loved committed to eight years of prison because he did not share her feelings.

Obdulia was the only child of a widower, Orsuna. Orsuna was the administrator of the estate of Montesinos, a wealthy man and an atheist. Obdulia was a charming girl and was very considerate of her father. Her father showered her with attention because during much of her life she suffered from poor health. She attended church faithfully and appeared to lead an exemplary life.

One day a young priest, the padre Gil, moved into the village of Peñascosa, in which Obdulia lived. He was popular with the villagers, especially with the women. Obdulia became even more interested in religion. She approached the padre Gil and told him that she wanted to enter a convent but that her father objected. The priest suggested that she

enter an Augustinian convent in Lancia, but she said that she preferred one in Castile called Astudillo. Because she would have to make such a long journey, the padre Gil offered to accompany her to the convent.

The padre Gil was an intelligent young man with interests even outside the church. He borrowed literature from the agnostic Montesinos. Some of the things he read caused him to wonder about certain beliefs held by the clergy. He confessed some of these doubts to his fellow priests, who were disappointed to think that he allowed such thoughts to cross his mind. They began to question his worth as a priest.

Obdulia meanwhile continued preparations for her journey with the padre Gil. The itinerary was planned, and they began their journey early one morning. Before they reached the convent, Obdulia said that there was something she must confess to the padre. The young priest asked her if she wanted to wait until they reached a church so that she could confess properly. She said that it would not be necessary and admitted to him that she was not interested in entering a convent. She said that her father had not objected to her intentions because she had never mentioned them to him. The priest was very much surprised and asked why they were making the trip. It was then that she professed her love for him and told him that she had invented

the ruse to be alone with him. He was quite upset at hearing this and was uneasy about how he should handle the matter.

Obdulia pretended to be sick, so as soon as they reached a town, the padre Gil took her to an inn to rest. She asked for something to drink. The priest went after it. When he returned he found Obdulia out of bed; she had fallen on the floor. He picked her up, and as he was carrying her back to bed, someone knocked at the door. Orsuna and two other men had followed the couple and had finally caught up with them. When her father and his companions opened the door and discovered Obdulia with the priest, they were quite shocked and without hearing the circumstances accused the priest of dishonorable intentions.

Obdulia's father took her home, and the priest returned to his residence. Obdulia exonerated the padre Gil by telling her father that the whole affair was her fault and that the priest had behaved quite respectably. She still could not resign herself to the fact that the priest was not romantically interested in her. She went to his parish house and without permission from doña Eloisa, the housekeeper, entered the priest's room. Much to the amusement of Eloisa, the padre Gil immediately put her out.

Obdulia was so enraged that she went to her father and told him that the padre Gil had made romantic advances

to her. Her father had the unfortunate priest arrested. The only witness to Obdulia's last visit to the priest was the housekeeper. She testified on behalf of the padre, but Obdulia denied the statements of Eloisa. Obdulia told a very convincing story. She was supported in incriminating the priest by other priests who knew that he was innocent but who disliked his liberal views on religion. The docile clergyman made no great effort to defend himself and was sentenced to eight years in prison. The vengeful Obdulia in her frenzy had succeeded in making the padre Gil suffer for rejecting her love. During his stay in prison Gil became more devoted in his religion but lost a great deal of respect for the clergy.

Among the women in the novels of Palacio Valdés associated with religion there are varying degrees of devotion. Obdulia proved to be quite insincere, but she always managed to convince others of her religious ardor. Actually she had little real religious conviction.

María and Rogelia were extremes in religion. One who was more moderate in her religion was Gloria. She was not devoted to the monastic life into which she had been placed. Gloria was well schooled in religious rites, but she failed to accept them as the only way to a good life. She was not irreligious, and the fact that she wanted to go back to visit the convent is evidence that it was not too unpleasant

to her. However when the opportunity arose to lead a life including more pleasures, she chose the less sacrificial way.

Religion was rather important to Palacio Valdés, but he insisted on thinking out some of the beliefs of religion for himself. He did not criticize the holy life, but he approved the value of a faith that was not so ostentatious. The women associated with religion in his novels bear this out.

...the reverent life...
...of her religion, as was...
...her religion was to serve those alone to...
...them comfortable.

[...facts but her...]

CHAPTER IV

YOUNG, MARRIAGEABLE WOMEN

A young lady who was overshadowed by her older sister was Marta of Marta y Maria. Marta was not so talented as her older sister, Maria, but she was more sincere. Palacio Valdés showed his preference for Marta by placing her name first in the title, whereas we usually find their Biblical counterparts spoken of in the reverse order. Marta was not interested in making a show of her religion, as was her sister; rather her religion was to serve those close to her and to make them comfortable.

Since childhood Marta had been accustomed to shrinking from the foreground when in the presence of her sister. When Maria's fiancé, Ricardo, called on the family, it was Marta's duty to see that the house was in order. She was skilled in the culinary arts and often favored family and guests with her creations. This type of practicality was considered inferior to her sister's musical ability.

Because Ricardo was so close to the Elorza family, Marta grew to admire him a great deal. She was sympathetic toward him when she observed Maria's lack of consideration for him. Ricardo was fond of Marta, but it had never occurred to him to consider her anything but his future sister-in-law.

Don Mariano, father of the girls, owned a small island on which he often entertained friends. At one such entertainment Ricardo and Marta found themselves seated next to each other at the meal. Because of Ricardo's coaxing, Marta had taken three glasses of champagne. She was not accustomed to alcohol, and soon she was overcome by a feeling of suffocation. While the others were dancing, Marta and Ricardo went down to the seashore. Marta induced Ricardo to explore some of the coast terrain with her. Marta bravely and foolishly strayed too far out on a small peninsula when the tide came in completely surrounding the two with water. Meanwhile the group at the party had missed the pair, and don Mariano had sent a searching party to find them. In the meantime Ricardo had managed to escape and to help Marta out of danger and back to the others. Not wanting to be near the sea at night, the party soon got into boats and headed homeward. It is hard to know what was in the mind of Marta, but she gazed into the sea and was spellbound by it. To the surprise of all Marta hurled herself into the water. Ricardo was an excellent swimmer and was immediately in the water to rescue her. The rescue was successful, and soon everyone arrived at his destination.

Maria had not engaged in the festivities but was, as usual, enjoying solitude. The mother, doña Gertrudis, was never in good health and died soon after the excursion. The

family was greatly saddened by her death. Don Mariano and Marta grieved greatly, and Maria became even more detached from the world and interested in the spiritual life. She asked her father for his permission to enter a convent. He hesitated to answer but finally consented. Maria wrote to Ricardo telling him of her decision.

Ricardo felt the blow very keenly and resolved to leave his home in Nieva. He went to the home of don Mariano, still his closest friend, to bid him farewell. Marta was silent during most of the visit as don Mariano tried to persuade Ricardo to stay. Ricardo was sorry to leave, but he felt so alone in the little town after having been rejected by his sweetheart that he did not feel that he could remain in the neighborhood. That night Ricardo dreamed that Maria was being married not to Christ, but to the town ruffian. Eventually the dream included Marta, and she declared her love for him. The dream drove Ricardo to go another time to the Elorza home. This time he asked Marta to marry him. Don Mariano and Marta were delighted not to have Ricardo leave them. Marta accepted Ricardo's proposal, and Ricardo realized that Marta was a much better wife than Maria could have been.

One of the most humble of the women in the novels of Palacio Valdés is Maximina, the heroine of two novels, Riverita and Maximina. In the book Riverita, Maximina was

an orphan girl who lived with her aunt and uncle and worked for them in the hotel they managed. Because of her position, she was ridiculed by the people of Pasages, the little seacoast town in which she lived. Her aunt and her uncle thought that because they allowed her a place to live and an opportunity to earn her way they were being very kind to her; however, even their children teased Maximina and considered her inferior to themselves. Because her aunt and uncle were too poor to offer a dowry to anyone to marry her, she considered entering a convent.

One day there arrived in Pasages a young lawyer, Miguel, the son of the brigadier Rivera. He immediately noticed Maximina and asked the proprietress of the hotel, Maximina's aunt, about her. He discovered that she was an orphan and that her only hope for the future lay in her entering a convent. The aunt thought that Maximina was not beautiful enough to attract a husband unless the family could offer a dowry. Miguel felt that Maximina had been grossly underrated. Although Miguel did not consider her beautiful, he was attracted to her. Early in their acquaintance, her appearance was described thus:¹⁹

¹⁹Armando Palacio Valdés, Riverita (Madrid: Librería de Victoriano Suárez, 1922), p. 245.

Era una morena más pálida que sonrosada, la nariz pequeña, la boca fresca, la cabeza y la frente muy bien modeladas, el cabello castaño y los ojos garzos, ni grandes ni pequeños, más baja que alta, apretadita de carnes y abultada de formas, revelando en sus movimientos un gran vigor muscular. Nadie podía llamar hermosa a esta muchacha con justicia, y sin embargo, la expresión humilde e inocente de sus ojos, la sonrisa constante que contraría sus labios la hacían altamente simpática.

Soon after their meeting Miguel showed more interest in Maximina than he did in the other girls of the village. Since Maximina had never been considered very attractive, the other girls of the town told her that Miguel was not sincere in his attentions to her and that soon he would leave and forget about her. Maximina was disturbed by these remarks and asked Miguel if he really did care for her.

Miguel assured Maximina that he loved her, but soon he had to return to Madrid to accept a position as political editor of a newspaper. When he announced to Maximina his intentions of leaving, she feared that what the girls had warned her about was true. As a parting gift she gave Miguel a crucifix, and she asked him to wear it to remember her.

From Madrid Miguel sent a telegram to Maximina. He waited anxiously for her reply. He had written to his sister, Julia, that he was in love with Maximina, but Julia did not think that he was sincere about it until she noticed how eagerly he corresponded with Maximina.

In one letter to Miguel, Maximina sent a picture of herself. Miguel, fearing that Julia might not consider Maximina pretty enough, was reluctant to show his sister the picture. When Julia finally did see the picture, she was pleased with the girl.

As time went on and the lovers had been separated for a considerable length of time, Julia sensed that Miguel had become lax in his corresponding with Maximina, and she spoke to him about it. Actually he felt guilty about his actions but tried to cover them up by saying he did not wish to continue the romance and gave several reasons for not wanting to marry. Julia felt sorry for Maximina and urged Miguel not to hurt her feelings.

The paper for which Miguel wrote was La Independencia, a liberal paper. There was an opposing publication in Madrid, La Monarquía, which was very conservative. The two papers constantly made attacks on each other's views. These polemics became quite sharp, but Miguel wrote with such diplomacy that no one could be offended by his remarks. Once after he had written his column and had given it to the editor, the editor took the liberty of changing some of the remarks. The views, which had been handled rather judiciously by Miguel, now became an affront to the opposing faction. The editor of La Monarquía demanded a duel with the political editor of La Independencia.

Miguel consented to the duel and was seriously injured. He was cared for by the loving Julia, who obeyed his slightest whim. Julia took it upon herself to write to Maximina and ask her to come to Madrid. While he was bed-fast, Miguel had time to think, and his thoughts repeatedly centered around Maximina. Eventually he requested that Julia write to her. He wanted Julia to ask Maximina to forgive him for his neglect and to ask her to become his wife if he survived his injuries. Julia left the room to write the letter and was not gone two minutes when she called to Miguel that the letter had been sent and that the reply had already arrived. Miguel was very much surprised to see Maximina entering the room. He proposed to Maximina; she accepted. As soon as he recovered, he went to Pasages and they were married.

The story of Maximina and Miguel is continued in the novel Maximina, the account of their married life.

At first the young couple went to live with Miguel's sister and step-mother, Julia and Angelita. Maximina was unhappy there, so Miguel took his wife to a house of her own. It was there that their son was born.

Julia fell in love with her cousin, a very undesirable person, but one who was very attractive to women. Miguel had to leave his home for a while to influence Julia to renounce her lover. This and his work kept him often away

from home. Miguel was given a political position that took him to Serin some miles from Madrid. On one of his trips he requested that his wife and his son go with him. Maximina was overjoyed at the prospect. While she was away from home, Maximina contracted a serious illness and died. The book ends in a rather sad mood. Miguel felt that he was fortunate to have his son in his time of sorrow. The child gave him the courage to continue living. This part is autobiographical in that it was based on Palacio Valdés' own short marriage, that had a similar ending.

A charming girl who lived in a fishing community of the Asturias was Elisa, sweetheart of José, the chief character in the book of the same name. José was rugged, handsome, and capable of hard work on a fishing vessel, but he had always been too timid to approach the lovely Elisa until his fellow sailors encouraged him. They insisted that the two would make an ideal couple. José was attracted to Elisa because she was considered the most beautiful girl in the village. Elisa was equally attracted to José. In view of this mutual admiration, it would appear that the two would find nothing in the way of their happiness, but they had their obstacles. The difficulty lay in the dispositions of the mothers of José and Elisa. The unfortunate Elisa was the victim of her mother's whims.

Teresa, the mother of José, opposed the romance not because she disliked Elisa but because she was involved in a long-standing personal feud with Isabel, Elisa's mother. Teresa insisted to José that if he should marry Elisa, she, Teresa would be the laughing-stock of the town.

José was not the only young man who pursued Elisa. The town idiot, Rufo, a young man of about twenty years, also had hopes of winning Elisa. He was encouraged by citizens of the town, who urged him on for their own sport; by Elisa's mother, who did so to make José appear ridiculous; and by Elisa's own charming manner.

After Elisa and José had made plans to be married, doña Isabel set about to stop the wedding. By telling Rufo that she preferred him to José as a son-in-law, she heightened Rufo's hopes and kindled his anger against José.

José had two ships, but he relied on the newer one to earn his living. Rufo knew that without the newer ship José would be unable to support Elisa and they could not be married. Isabel led Rufo to believe that if he could succeed in halting the wedding, he could claim Elisa as his bride. With this in his mind, Rufo loosed José's newer boat from its mooring and caused it to be lost in the sea. Isabel, quite aware of how the boat happened to become lost, joined the others in commiserating with José, but Teresa was not so easily deceived as José, and she suspected that Isabel had

something to do with the disaster. This suspicion aggravated the ill will between the two women. An investigation took place. Rufo was found guilty and was committed to an institution.

A caballero of the Asturias was don Fernando de la Meira, an old gentleman who had come from a family of some means, but the family fortune had dwindled until there was very little left for don Fernando, the last remaining member of the family. Thus he had to find sustenance as best he could. Because he had so few clothes, it was necessary for him to go out at night to find food. Doña Isabel had a prolific garden, and don Fernando at times entered the garden to gather food. He excused himself by insisting that it was a matter of life or death. One night, on entering the garden, he was surprised to find another person among the shadows. To his surprise it was José, but he could not determine why, for it was believed in the community that relations between Elisa and José had been terminated since the battle between their mothers over the loss of José's boat. Don Fernando continued to watch José as he signaled Elisa to join him. Very soon Elisa was in the garden. To escape notice, don Fernando climbed a tree. Soon a shower occurred, and José and Elisa sought shelter beneath the very tree in which don Fernando was hiding. Thus the old gentleman

was able to hear the conversation of the lovers and to discover that their plans for marriage were being thwarted by José's financial situation after the loss of his boat and by the objections of Elisa's mother.

Following this night don Fernando thought about the incident considerably. He could not rest easy until he had done everything in his power to help the lovers. He had nothing in the way of material goods except his house. Making the supreme sacrifice, he sold his house to be turned into a factory for canning fish. With the money he bought José a new boat and asked the youth to help him with a task. From over his door he took down the family coat-of-arms, that had been there for many generations. He and José took the heavy burden, which don Fernando had hidden in a sack, out to the sea. There he told José what it was he had brought, and they buried the last symbol of the Meira nobility in the ocean.

The replacing of his boat solved half of the problem of making Elisa his wife, but José still could not get the consent of Isabel. Since Elisa was not of age, Isabel's consent was imperative. Here again don Fernando offered his help. If Elisa should live for a length of time with someone other than her mother as guardian, she could marry without her mother's consent. Don Fernando secured a guardian. The person engaged for this duty was ill tempered, and Elisa at

times was tempted to return to her mother and to ask forgiveness. She was sustained only by José's gentle attention and concern. The time arrived when José had to return to the sea for a season of fishing. Elisa was very lonely, but she remained firm in her decision to wait for his return. She was further grieved at the news of the death of their benefactor, don Fernando.

Elisa waited patiently for the return of her betrothed. Eventually the time came for the return of the fishing vessels, but a storm had occurred on the sea, taking the lives of many fishermen. The citizens of the town crowded the shores to wait for and perhaps welcome some survivors. After many weary hours of waiting, they lost hope and returned home or went to the church to pray. In time news arrived that a boat had been spotted. Again hope sprang up among the citizens. Again they thronged to the seaside; Elisa hoped, despaired, and hoped again with the others. With her new guardian she ran to the shore. After a length of time she saw José among those disembarking. She ran to him, and they, forgetting for a moment the sorrows of those whose loved ones had been lost, hurried to the church to give thanks that they had been reunited. The final words of the novel indicate their future plans: "Bajaron emparejados la calzada del pueblo, dejando señalado, antes de llegar a

casa, el día de su boda."²⁰ Thus it was that Elisa was successful in planning her own future and her own happiness.

Two girls who must be treated in the same section are Angelita and Fernandita, identical twins who were the first and second wives respectively of Julio Samper. Julio's method of deciding which girl he should marry led to the title of the book, A cara o cruz, in which the girls play equivalent roles.

Julio met the girls because of a favor he was performing for the girls' brother-in-law. Julio lived next door to the brother-in-law, don Macrino Salcedo, a very large man. Macrino's wife, doña Rosario, was a very small lady who in spite of her size was a scolding, nagging wife who dominated her husband.

One day Julio and Macrino had gone to a Madrid amusement park, the Bombilla. While they were there, Macrino saw a very beautiful young lady and asked her to dance with him. The lady's husband was enraged, and a fight ensued. Julio was very much embarrassed to see Macrino involved in a fight, so he took him home.

The next day as Julio was passing Macrino's house, he heard screams. He asked if someone there was mad. Rosario

²⁰ Armando Palacio Valdés, José (Madrid: Librería general de Victoriano Suárez, 1921), p. 235.

answered that her husband had lost his mind. Julio and another passer-by summoned a carriage and helped Macrino off to the hospital from which he was taken to an asylum. Julio then went into the house to comfort Rosario, and she related the events of the night before. Rosario told the story quite calmly. Macrino, after he had returned home, had refused to eat but went straight to his bedroom. During the night he rose from his bed and returned to it several times. Finally he walked out into the garden. Rosario went after him, ordered him into the house, and forced him to eat something. Rosario asked him what was the matter, but Macrino found it difficult to speak. He got up from the table and went again into the garden. Rosario then locked him out of the house. When he discovered that he had been shut out, he started the commotion that had attracted Julio's attention.

One day after Julio was confident that Macrino was safely installed in an institution, he was surprised to look up from his work and find Macrino standing in the room. At first Julio was very much startled and frightened, but Macrino assured him that although he had been demented, he was now perfectly sane, and he had brought a paper signed by the doctor to prove it. He had come to Julio for help. Rosario had left him and had gone to live at the home of her sisters. Macrino went to bring her home, but she refused to talk to him. When he wrote to her, she returned his

letters unopened. He had even sent messengers without succeeding in encouraging her to return home. In desperation Macrino had come to Julio to ask him to go to Rosario with some poems he had written for her, because he thought that Julio could read them very winningly.

Julio went to the fifth-floor apartment of the sisters and found everything there as diminutive as the furnishings in Rosario's own home. Julio felt as if he were Gulliver in Lilliput.

It was there that he first saw the twin sisters of Rosario, as dainty as she was but younger and more beautiful. They were very much alike in looks and in temperament; both were very attractive and very pleasant. Julio immediately felt their friendliness. He sensed that they were in sympathy with poor Macrino, for as soon as they learned that Macrino had sent him, he was made to feel quite welcome. Julio gathered from the conversation that Macrino had previously been in love with Fernandita, and he felt that Macrino's taste was extremely poor to have rejected her for Rosario. The twins flattered Julio by remarking that their brother-in-law had spoken often and very highly of Julio and that he considered his neighbor wise. Julio could not resist glancing into the mirror to see if he had the appearance of a wise man. He asked what brilliant thing he had done. They

answered that his writing for periodicals gave him that distinction.

When Rosario entered the room, it was evident that she was as officious with her sisters as she was with her husband. She very coldly asked Julio his business. When he said that her husband had sent him, she insisted that he was wasting his time. He asked her to listen to the poetry. After much coaxing by the sisters, she agreed to listen, but she closed her eyes to indicate boredom, and she was very critical of the poetry. The twins, on the other hand, were quite charmed by the poetry and complimented Julio's excellent reading as well as Macrino's superb poetry. They were very gracious in bidding him good-bye.

Because of his despondency at not being able to reconcile himself to his wife, Macrino killed himself. To show his concern, Julio made several calls on the widow and her sisters. Julio was impressed by the beautiful young ladies, who were so much alike it seemed that one was the mirrored reflection of the other. His cook, Peña, sensed the attraction. One day she suggested to Julio that he marry one of the girls. He agreed that it was a good idea and asked which one she would have him marry. Peña answered that it should be the one he liked best. He answered that he liked them equally. Peña asked if she should toss a coin. Samper said that if it landed heads, he would marry

Angelita, if tails, it would be Fernandita. The toss was made; and, according to the coin, Angelita was to be his wife. He ordered Peña to write a poem declaring his intentions.

At first he had thought this idea was only a joke, but it occurred to him that perhaps it was rather sensible. The next morning when Peña brought him a letter written in verse, he tore it up and wrote his own. After sending the letter, he worried about what the twins might think of him. He followed his letter with a visit. Fernandita greeted him. He was very much embarrassed and wanted to confess that he loved the sisters equally and had made his decision to marry Angelita only after tossing a coin, but he refrained. Since the girls were so fond of each other, Julio agreed not to separate them but to let Fernandita live with them after they were married. Wherever Julio and his wife were seen, there also was Fernandita. When he bought a gift for Angelita, he bought an identical one for Fernandita. Nevertheless, Angelita never showed any signs of jealousy.

A year after her marriage, Angelita suddenly became ill and died. Julio and Fernandita were very much grieved. Fernandita continued to stay at the house and care for Julio until Rosario wrote a scathing letter denouncing Fernandita for staying in the same house with her brother-in-law after her sister's death. The two were saddened to think of

parting, but Fernandita made arrangements to stay with an aunt until she could find permanent housing. On the day that Fernandita was to leave, she and Julio went to the Bombilla for a day of pleasure, but both of them were unhappy because they knew they were going to be very lonely without each other. As the time approached for them to part, Julio asked Fernandita to marry him. She accepted, and a few months later they were married. Julio said that his two wives were so similar that they were one wife and that he had never been a widower at all. He claimed that he had been married twice by law only, for actually to him it was the same wife. Fernandita replaced the happiness that he had lost when Angelita died.

The leading character of La aldea perdida was a young lady who was the victim of a tragedy. Her early life was very happy in the small village where she lived with her foster parents, who were very kind to her. Demetria, as she was called, lived for many years without suspecting that her foster parents, Felicia and Goro, were not her true parents.

One day Pepin, a young brother of Demetria's, came home obviously from a fight. Demetria scolded him and demanded to know why he had been fighting. Pepin very reluctantly admitted that his playmate, Tomás, had insisted

that Demetria was not Pepin's own sister but that she was from the orphanage.

Demetria thought about this remark, for people had taunted her before in the same manner. She wandered to the city fountain as she thought about it. She cried a bit while reflecting. As she was returning home, Felicia met her and asked her why she had been crying. After much coaxing, she related what Pepin had told her. Felicia was greatly shocked and tried to console her.

Demetria's sweetheart was a very fine lad who lived nearby. Demetria was afraid that if Nolo, the sweetheart, discovered that she was an orphan he would not wish to marry her. At mass she prayed to the Virgin Mary for help. Suddenly, as if in answer to her prayer, this thought entered her mind: "Antes que llegue a descubrirlo, dejaré la casa y me iré a servir a un amo en Oviedo o Gijón."²¹ Eventually she did arrive in Oviedo but under different circumstances from those she had planned.

Demetria and Flora, a friend, were accustomed to go to the river to do the wash. On one such occasion Demetria grew silent and serious. Flora asked her what was wrong, and she confided in Flora her fears that she was an orphan.

²¹ Armando Palacio Valdés, Obras completas, Tomo I (Madrid: M. Aguilar, 1948), p. 1061.

Flora tried to comfort her by suggesting that perhaps she was not an orphan but the child of a nobleman who had left her in the care of Goro and Felicia. Flora then confided to Demetria that she was in similar circumstances, that she, too, was living with foster parents. It was true. Flora was the daughter of a nobleman, don Félix Cantalicio Ramirez del Valle, and a servant. Although he had never publicly claimed her, he always saw that she was provided for.

One day doña Beatriz, the real mother of Demetria, arrived at the home of Felicia and Goro and demanded to take Demetria away with her. It was not until Demetria met doña Beatriz that Felicia confessed that Demetria's suspicions had been true, she was not really the daughter of Felicia and Goro.

Upon being assured that she was a foster child, Demetria went to the village fountain, as was her custom when she needed to meditate. There she met her very close friend, Telva, who sensed that something was wrong and coaxed Demetria to confide in her, but Demetria refused. Telva rushed to Felicia and, seeing a strange woman, asked if there had been a misfortune. Felicia was too unhappy to explain, but Goro told her that the lady had come to take Demetria away.

In the next few days there was a fiesta. Nolo went in hopes of seeing Demetria. He searched in vain for her.

Finally another young man, Celso, told Nolo the story of the strange woman who had come to take Demetria to Oviedo to make a lady of her.

Nolo's next meeting with Demetria was by chance.

Demetria was on her way to bid farewell to her friend Flora. The two, Demetria and Nolo, greeted each other very awkwardly; neither knew what to say. Demetria took the initiative and told Nolo how sad she was to leave. He felt that he would no longer be worthy of her since she was to become a lady. She assured him that she would much rather stay in the village among the common people and that she would never forget him or feel superior to him. As a parting token, Nolo gave her a bouquet of carnations to place at the feet of the Virgin when she passed the church and entered to pray. Others in the village tried to act joyful that Demetria was to have a fine education and become a lady, but Demetria was not successful in masking her feelings. She was quite candid in manifesting her sorrow.

Doña Beatriz sent Demetria to a convent in Oviedo, where she was very unhappy. She was cut off entirely from her happy peasant life and from those whom she had known. This added to her discontent. She did manage to contact her foster parents by mail. In each letter she expressed more unhappiness. She never forgot to send her regards to Nolo. Nolo made a habit of visiting with Felicia and Goro and

reminiscing about the time during which Demetria was with them.

Demetria finished her studies at the convent and went to live with her mother and with her aunt Rafaela. Nolo knew the address at which she was living and decided to try to find her. He left his home one day on the pretext of going to buy a horse and set out to find Demetria. When he arrived at her mother's great house, he lost his nerve, thinking that a fine lady could not love a peasant lad. Later his courage returned, and he thought that if he could not call on her as her suitor, he could visit her as a friend and carry to her the good wishes of her foster parents.

Demetria was overjoyed when she heard him singing a familiar song. At first she could scarcely believe that she had heard him, but her hopes were verified when she actually saw him.

When Nolo talked to her and discovered how unhappy she was in her new environment, he suggested that she go away with him. She consented. He suggested that they start the following morning, but she insisted on starting that very night. She had planned to go to a dance that evening with Rafaela. She told him to wait for her at the dance and she would try to leave with him at about ten o'clock.

Nolo waited several hours later than the time agreed upon, but he was no more impatient than Demetria, who was

under such close surveillance that she could not escape. About midnight she complained that one shoe was hurting her foot. She went to get her coat, and a servant offered to accompany her home. She told the servant that it was not necessary. As she left the building, she was joined by Nolo, who took her to his horse. They mounted and spent a long, tiresome journey, arriving eventually at Canzana, Demetria's former home.

On the way home Nolo informed Demetria of the news that she had missed during her absence. He told her that don Félix had acknowledged that Flora was his daughter. This meant that Flora would become the heir to his wealth. Demetria was very happy about this. However, some of the changes that had taken place during her absence were not so favorable. Mines were being developed in the vicinity. This was rather distasteful to the villagers, for they objected to the type of people who lived near mines. Crime was increasing.

Demetria was uneasy, for wherever she went she encountered the uncouth people who worked at the mines. The most formidable of these was Plutón, an ugly monster who seemed more beast than man. She told Nolo that after they were married she wanted to move away, but Nolo told her that it would do no good, because all of the neighboring towns were also being overrun by miners. Besides Goro was growing

old, and the couple had planned to live with him to help him with his work.

One day Demetria was going on an errand past the mine. She stopped for a while to enjoy the woods where she and her friends had spent so many carefree hours. She began singing. She was startled when suddenly she saw Plutón nearby. He asked her to continue her singing, but she said that she no longer felt like singing. He said that if she did not do as he said he would kill her, and he flashed his scythe menacingly at her. He came closer to her; she stumbled backward into the depth of the mine. Plutón was still in pursuit. She grabbed the scythe and struck him. Believing him to be dead, she wandered in the mine until she was lost. Nolo and her foster parents searched for her for a long time. After extensive hunting without finding a trace of her, they suspected that she might have returned to the home from which she had fled with Nolo. Finally Nolo learned that she and Plutón had been seen near the mine. He searched the vicinity still more thoroughly until at last he found her.

It was a long time before Demetria told the truth of the incident, because she feared being tried for the slaying of Plutón. During this time Nolo mistrusted her. After she learned that she had only wounded Plutón, she told the entire story to Nolo. She and Nolo were married.

Constantly the situation with the miners was becoming worse. The miners were mistreating the villagers, and the villagers were seeking revenge. At festival time a group of miners invaded the village, destroying at will. Plutón was in the group. When he saw Demetria alone, he recognized the opportunity to avenge his narrow escape in the mine. While Nolo was battling with other miners, Plutón killed Demetria.

To some it may appear that the exploiting of people and resources is the beginning of civilization, but Palacio Valdés believed that it is an example of barbarism, for his last words in the book are as follows: "¡Yo os digo que ahora comienza la barbarie!"²² Demetria was a symbol; even her name comes from Demeter, goddess of fruitfulness. At the first of the novel she represented the carefree happiness of a peasant village. At the last she represented the tragedy and sorrow that come when a group of people are forced to undergo a change effected because of the greed for wealth.

A favorite device of Palacio Valdés was a romantic triangle involving two sisters. In addition to Marta y María and A cara o cruz, El cuarto poder uses the same situation, but the outcome of the novel is quite different. The

²²Ibid., p. 1155.

suitors, Gonzalo, makes a choice of wife that leaves the reader dissatisfied and that leads to his own destruction.

Cecilia de Belinchón, the oldest daughter of a wealthy cod merchant, was the first novia of Gonzalo. The two had known each other since childhood, for they had lived all of their lives in Sarriá, a small village bordering the Bay of Biscay. Gonzalo was a serious and timid youth who, like most of his neighbors, became a sailor. He was not interested in girls until one day when he called on the señor de Belinchón. The merchant's daughter, Cecilia, greeted him. She was busy doing the family ironing, but she conversed with him while he waited to see her father. Gonzalo was attracted to her because she seemed so pleasant.

Soon afterward Gonzalo's ship sailed to England. They corresponded while he was away. Although Cecilia was careful not to be too forward in her letters, Gonzalo felt that he was falling in love with her. After thinking for a long time about the matter, Gonzalo mustered enough courage to write to Cecilia and ask her to marry him. After he had sent the letter, he feared that Cecilia might refuse him. Cecilia was not one to rush into a decision. She considered the feelings of her family and deliberated with them before accepting the proposal. It was planned that they should be married soon after Gonzalo's return to Spain.

During Gonzalo's months away, Cecilia's younger and more beautiful sister, Ventura, developed into a young lady. She knew that she was more attractive than her older sister and could not resist using her charms to attract Gonzalo. Gonzalo was a very naive young man and easily succumbed to her winsome ways.

Gradually Gonzalo lost interest in the plain Cecilia, but he felt that his honor would not let him break his promise to her, so he said nothing about his feelings, and plans for the wedding proceeded. The family worked happily in joyful anticipation of the occasion. Even Ventura helped with the necessary preparations, although she did not intend for her sister to marry the handsome sailor.

Gonzalo was falling deeper in love with Ventura, and he struggled inwardly about how to solve his problem. He could not force himself to break Cecilia's heart. Neither could he give up Ventura. The more flippant Ventura agreed to be the one to break the news to her parents.

Dofia Paula, the mother of the girls, was always in poor health, and when Ventura asked for her consent to marry Gonzalo, she fell seriously ill. While dofia Paula was bed-fast, she required the continuous attention of the family. Her most faithful attendant was Cecilia, always willing to do what she could to make life pleasant for others. It was while Cecilia was alone with her mother that Paula, overcome

with grief, told Cecilia that the wedding might not take place as planned, for she feared that Gonzalo was not constant in his love. Doña Paula was little comfort to Cecilia; on the other hand, Cecilia comforted her mother by telling her that it was better to find out before she was married that he did not love her than to find out afterward. Paula continued and told Cecilia that Gonzalo was in love with Ventura and wanted to marry her. Cecilia remained silent, but later, when Paula promised that she would not consent to the marriage without first having the blessing of Cecilia, Cecilia unselfishly gave it.

Ventura and Gonzalo were married and lived at an estate of Ventura's parents originally intended for Cecilia and Gonzalo. Contrary to what one might expect, Cecilia showed no bitterness toward either her sister or her former lover. When a crisis arose, Cecilia was there to offer what help was necessary. When Gonzalo lay sick in bed suffering from an infection, Ventura gave him a minimum of attention. When there were visitors to see him, she was present and made a display of being concerned; but when he was alone and needed companionship, she found excuses for leaving him alone. Caring for him was distasteful to her. It was Cecilia who tirelessly waited on him. She was at his side carrying out his commands and anticipating his needs. When Gonzalo complained of Ventura's inattention, Cecilia did not criticize her sister but tried to justify her behavior.

Gonzalo admired Cecilia and realized that she would be a good wife. One of Gonzalo's friends felt that he could love Cecilia, and Gonzalo encouraged her to become better acquainted with him, but Cecilia had no intention of encouraging a suitor, for she did not wish to marry anyone.

When a child was born to the couple, Cecilia moved to their home to care for the mother and baby. The child was not permitted to disturb Ventura at all. The baby slept at night in Cecilia's room. As she grew, she was reared by Cecilia.

Ventura did not take her household duties seriously. With her sister there to look after matters, Ventura spent her time caring for herself and staying beautiful. She assumed practically no responsibility.

The father of the girls, don Rosendo, had for a long time been active in politics and had met many important people. When a duke visited the province in which they lived, the logical place for him to be a guest was the home of the Belinchóns. At a dinner the duke sat near Ventura. Although the duke was merely being polite, Ventura thought that he paid her a great deal of attention. At first the duke had scarcely noticed her, but she became so flirtatious that eventually he did fall in love with her.

Since the duke's visit lasted for a considerable length of time, the family began to see the scandal that was

occurring. Cecilia was too kind to say anything to Gonzalo; but when doña Paula discovered her younger daughter's behavior, she ordered the duke to leave the house. The situation was somewhat awkward, for it was due to the duke's influence that Gonzalo had become alcalde.

Although he was no longer a welcome guest at the Belinchón household, the duke returned to see Ventura. In order to spare her brother-in-law's feelings, and to exonerate her sister, Cecilia led Gonzalo to believe that it was she who was the mistress of the duke. Gonzalo learned the entire truth when he received a note from the duke challenging him to a duel. In the course of the duel, the duke's bullet scratched Gonzalo's cheek. The enraged Gonzalo threw himself on the duke and nearly killed him with his bare hands. The duke spent a long time in recovering. Ventura's parents, angry because of the disgrace she had brought the family, committed her to a convent.

After the duke recovered, Ventura escaped from the convent and ran away with the duke. This was too much for the sensitive Gonzalo to bear, because he was still very much in love with his wife. He could no longer face his problems. He went down to the sea that he knew so well, tied an anchor to his neck, and drowned himself.

As soon as Ventura saw her dead husband, she became emotional and fainted. Cecilia, as usual, took her grief

quietly. She immediately went ahead with the practical affairs of preparing the house for Gonzalo's body. The author praised her self-control:²³

Cecilia, por uno de esos esfuerzos heróicos que estaba avezada a hacer sobre su alma y su cuerpo, supo encerrar su pena en el fondo del corazón.

Undoubtedly Cecilia loved Gonzalo deeply, but she was so selfless that she did nothing to stand in the way of his happiness even though it meant that she must lose him.

Quite the opposite of her kind, considerate sister was Ventura. Obviously Gonzalo was impractical in deciding which of the two sisters should be his wife. Ventura was a poor manager and a worse mother, but she had an irresistible charm that attracted men. She was quite demonstrative. This trait flattered the timid Gonzalo.

Ventura was vain and seemed to enjoy the misery she caused her devoted lover and husband. When they were first married, she was selfish and did not want Gonzalo to leave her long enough to go on a hunting trip; but when Gonzalo was ill, she could not be bothered by taking care of him.

Gonzalo realized that he was being mistreated, and even when Ventura was unfaithful to him, he could not bring himself to hate her although loving her meant for him a broken heart.

²³Ibid., p. 663.

Doubtless Ventura was satisfied with herself for being the cause of a duel. She liked being the center of attention even though she had to break moral and social laws to accomplish it. Nevertheless she displayed more grief at losing Gonzalo than did her devoted sister. Perhaps she was truly grieved but not so much for Gonzalo, for whom she had never shown any consideration while he was living, but rather she was sorry for herself for having lost an admirer.

Maybe Ventura's selfishness can be justified to a certain extent. Her sister always stepped aside and gave in to the desires of Ventura so that she had no opportunity to show her sister any consideration. Cecilia took all the responsibility of Ventura's home so that Ventura did not feel the effects of her neglect. Perhaps her temperament would have been different if she had not been so sheltered.

In this story we find one of the most vivid contrasts possible between two women. The one was always proper and kind, the other unconcerned about propriety, doing whatever pleased her at the moment.

Another novel set in the Asturias is Sinfonia pastoral. The leading lady in this story is Angelina Quirós. The author described her in a charming way:²⁴

²⁴Armando Palacio Valdés, Sinfonia pastoral (Madrid: Librería de Victoriano Suárez, 1931), p. 13.

Era Angelina de mediana estatura, extremadamente delgada; sus ojos, velados por largas pestañas, rodeados por un leve círculo azulado, tenían expresión de quietud y melancolía, que contrastaba con la viveza, y aún podría decirse violencia de sus ademanes.

The varied experiences of Angelina as she was taken from city life to live near the sea make her an interesting young lady.

Her father, Antonio Quirós, was born into a poor family. He was encouraged by the family to leave Spain and seek a fortune in the new world. After he became wealthy, he returned to Spain. He met and married a lovely girl who bore him a beautiful daughter. His wife died when the daughter was only a child. Antonio had few interests besides his daughter, Angelina, and he pampered her considerably.

When Angelina became a young lady, she suffered from ill health. Her father discovered that there was only one thing that could restore her health and that was to take her away from Madrid and into the open air.

Antonio had a brother living in the Asturias who was of modest financial means. Antonio told the brother, Juan Quirós, that he had lost his money, and he asked Juan to act as guardian to Angelina. Juan and his wife, Griselda, willingly accepted the girl and treated her as their own.

At first she was unhappy in the country. As soon as she arrived she wrote two letters, one to her father and one

to her fiancé, Gustavo Manrique. In each letter she expressed discontent. Juan had two children of his own, Carmela and Telesforo, who were near Angelina's age. As Angelina became better acquainted with her cousins, she grew to like pastoral life.

Telesforo fell in love with Angelina, and matters became complicated when her fiancé went to the Asturias to find her. She had been disappointed in Gustavo because he had never answered her letter. When he found her, he explained that he had never received the letter because he, too, had been away from Madrid. The explanation satisfied Angelina, and she forgave Gustavo.

Angelina and her foster family one day received a letter from Antonio informing them that Antonio had not lost his money. In the letter he explained his plan for restoring Angelina's health. He generously rewarded Juan and told Angelina that she was heir to a large fortune.

Telesforo and a money lender were discussing Angelina's wealth when Gustavo Manrique approached. Gustavo said that he had forgotten one of his gloves and sent Telesforo to get it. Telesforo refused, and Gustavo struck him in the face with a whip. Telesforo jumped upon Gustavo and seriously wounded him. Then Telesforo fled from the vicinity.

When Angelina heard of the quarrel, she was torn between two allegiances. After hearing the details and

pondering over the situation, she decided to write a letter to Gustavo telling him that they were never really meant for each other. She wrote a letter also to Telesforo declaring her love for him and asking him to return. Telesforo hastened home, and he and Angelina made plans to marry soon.

Her father, who had been living in Cuba, came to take Angelina back to Madrid. She told him that she had rejected Gustavo. He was delighted at the news, but when she announced her plans to marry Telesforo, he was outraged at the idea of her marrying a common peasant lad. She stood firm in her decision, arguing that only through a peasant's life had she found health and happiness.

The young, marriageable women in the novels of Palacio Valdés are nearly always very important to the plot of the novels in which they are found, because he was an author who often used the romantic plot. The climax of these stories is usually the marriage of the leading feminine character. In A cara o cruz the first climax is Julio Samper's marriage to Angelita. After her death, his marriage to Fernandita is a second climax. The second marriage is the one that leaves the reader satisfied with the ending.

Another novel with a happy ending is Marta y María. After her sister had made a decision to devote her life to formal religion, Marta married the rejected suitor. The

conclusion is quite satisfactory, for Marta is a much more suitable wife than Maria.

The most important characters in José are the title character and his sweetheart, Elisa. This story ends quite happily with the promise that the two will soon be married. Elisa plays a prominent role throughout the story in the struggle between José and her mother.

Maximina is the protagonist in two novels, Riverita and Maximina. The plots of both novels depend on her. The first deals with Miguel's meeting her and their courtship. It is a pleasant human-interest story, which deals with bringing Maximina from a life of poverty to marriage with a successful young journalist. The second novel employs the same characters and continues the story after their marriage. Although it is not strictly a tragedy, the story ends with the sad event of Maximina's death. These two stories parallel Palacio Valdés' own courtship and marriage.

Demetria is important to the plot of La aldea perdida, for the happiness and the misery of the village follow the pattern of Demetria's fortune. As the village was overrun by miners, Demetria was killed by the most evil of the miners.

Cecilia and Ventura were also involved in a tragedy, but the death occurred not to them but to their suitor, who became Ventura's husband. The two girls form a contrast that

gives El cuarto poder its color. The gentle Cecilia lost her lover to the thoughtless Ventura, who drove her devoted husband to suicide. Like the other women of this chapter, these two created the plot for the story.

In Sinfonia pastoral he used Angelina to support his argument that country life is superior to living in the city.

As was typical of Palacio Valdés, he depicted among the marriageable women those from every walk of life and of every emotional nature. Each one responds to her problems in a manner different from the others. Except for the twins, no two are even similar. This treatment of individuals in his stories is quite characteristic of Palacio Valdés.

CHAPTER V

WOMEN OF THE HOME

In La alegría del Capitán Ribot the wife of Emilio Martí was a young matron who charmed the captain of a sailing vessel, the Urano. The captain was the Capitán Ribot. An act of heroism brought him to the attention of the young lady.

One time when the captain was eating at his favorite inn in Valencia, he heard someone crying for help. He immediately left the table and saw a lady struggling in the water. He rescued her and did not consider the incident especially noteworthy. He noticed the one who had been summoning help. She was Cristina, the daughter of the drowning woman.

Cristina showered the captain with gratitude for what he had done. They fell into conversation and learned about each other's backgrounds. Actually the captain had no close family; Cristina said that her husband was Emilio Martí, one of the owners of a shipping company. Cristina was not beautiful, but she was quite personable, and the captain felt very much at ease talking to her.

Cristina had an unmarried cousin, Isabel. The captain showed her a great deal of attention, but he never was sincere. He could not forget Cristina. When he was away from

Valencia, he thought of her constantly. When he returned, he frequented the home of the Marti's. He and Emilio became very close friends. Most of his associates began to notice how much the captain admired Cristina, but the trusting Emilio suspected nothing.

The captain was not Cristina's only admirer. There was Castell, who was the joint owner of the shipping company with Emilio. He was quite a contrast to the simple Emilio. He was handsome, suave, and debonair. The captain mistrusted him and with good reason. The captain's thoughts about Castell were:²⁴

Ya no podía dudar de que festejaba a Cristina y también de que había advertido el amor que yo sentía por ella.

Because Castell had guessed that the captain was in love with Cristina, he took advantage of the opportunity to place the consequences of his guilt on someone else.

One night Isabel and Ribot came accidentally upon Castell and Cristina and overheard their conversation. Cristina told Castell that their affair must stop. Castell took the news bitterly. At this point Ribot made himself known and told Castell that he had known for a long time of the romance. Castell, angry at Ribot, went to Emilio and

²⁴Armando Palacio Valdés, La alegría del Capitán Ribot (Madrid: Librería general de Victoriano Suárez, 1920), p. 130.

told him that the captain was in love with Cristina. Emilio approached Ribot and told him to leave forever. Ribot was sad, but he refrained from telling Emilio the truth.

Emilio became a victim of tuberculosis. His illness soon depleted the family funds. Before he died, Emilio called Ribot to his side, for by then he had learned the truth about Cristina and Castell. Emilio died leaving the family in a bad financial state. Cristina had to sell the estate to pay debts. As a surprise for her birthday, Ribot bought back the estate and furniture. He remained in Valencia and continued his friendship with Cristina. He was the godfather of Cristina's daughter, who gave the captain many hours of happiness. The captain took a great deal of pleasure in looking after the young widow and her daughter and seeing that they were well provided for, but he never did marry the widow of his good friend.

Clementina in La Espuma was the daughter of a wealthy duke. She was a pampered young lady. Her mother had died, and the duke had remarried. The stepmother was quite fond of Clementina, who was very beautiful. Wherever Clementina went, her appearance attracted attention. Early in the story, she was described as follows:²⁵

²⁵Armando Palacio Valdés, Obras completas, Tomo II (Madrid: M. Aguilar, 1948), p. 175.

Nadie podía mirarla sin sentirse poseído de admiración, más aún que por su lujoso arreo, por la belleza severa de su rostro y la gallardía de la figura.

Every detail of her dress was as admirable as she herself was. Therefore it was not unusual that she had many male admirers. There was one very young man whom she noticed that followed her and watched her more than most did.

She became very curious about the youth. He was considerably younger than she was, so it seemed unusual that he should have a romantic interest in her. She inquired about the youth and discovered where he lived. She called on him and told him that she was already married to Tomás Osorio. She asked him why he persisted in following her.

Then Raimundo told her the story of his life. He was very brilliant and was pursuing scientific studies. His father, who had been a scientist, died before Raimundo was old enough to remember him. Recently Raimundo's mother had died of pneumonia. Raimundo missed her very much, for he had been very close to his mother. Raimundo had a younger sister, but he had always been his mother's favorite, for he resembled his deceased father. Raimundo confessed that he followed Clementina because she reminded him of his mother. After hearing the story, Clementina's attitude was mollified, and she encouraged his friendship.

In Clementina's family changes were taking place. The duke lost his money and became dependent on his wealthy wife,

doña Carmen. When Carmen died, the duke expected to receive her wealth, but to his disappointment, she left her estate to Clementina. This rendered the duke financially dependent on Clementina and Tomás, who tried to control the duke entirely. They were quite shocked and angered when the duke chose a young lady of low social level to take charge of his household. She and Clementina became bitter enemies. Finally the old duke was declared of unsound mind.

After Clementina's visit to him, Raimundo had continued to see her. He fell very much in love with her even though he was fully aware that she was already married. The two met secretly until one night Clementina told Raimundo that the affair had to cease. Raimundo's heart was broken. He begged her to continue their meetings. As a parting ceremony, she suggested that together they burn his love letters to her. They went to the kitchen to burn them, but they agreed that it would be more appropriate to take them to the forest and burn them in the open air. She had a coach waiting; they rode into the country, burned the letters, and rode back. Clementina insisted that Raimundo should find a wife and forget their romance, but Raimundo remained inconsolable. As they parted, she said that they should always be friends and invited him to be a guest often at her house. His only answer was "Adiós."

Clementina portrayed a typical member of the fashionable set. Palacio Valdés depicted in this story the social life of some of the wealthy class of nineteenth-century Madrid. They placed a great deal of emphasis on money and appearance, but their morals were often very low.

A housewife who stayed in the background of the novel but who was important to the plot was doña Rosario of A cara e cruz. She was the sister of the twins who were the two wives of Julio Samper.

Doña Rosario was the agent that brought together Julio and her two sisters. She was a very temperamental wife. She ruled her husband's every activity. Rosario and her husband, Macrino, lived next door to Samper. Julio Samper and his neighbor were very close friends, and Julio wanted his friend to accompany him on some of his pleasure excursions. It was a rare occasion, however, when Macrino's wife allowed him to go any place.

After one outing on which Macrino had accompanied Julio, Rosario had Macrino declared insane. She then went to live at the home of her younger sisters. When Macrino was released from the asylum, Rosario refused to return to him. Macrino asked Julio to go to the home of the sisters and plead for Rosario to return to him. It was on this occasion that Julio met the delightful sisters, Angelita and Fernandita, who became his first and second wives respectively.

It was obvious to Julio that Rosario was also unpleasant around her sisters. Her sisters complained that she was hard to get along with.

Macrino's unhappy situation led to many humorous incidents in the story. For example, Julio was once telling Macrino about the increasing power of women in politics and business in America and England. Macrino was shocked, but at the same time he allowed his wife to dominate him completely. She was so careful in not allowing him to carry money that it sometimes led to embarrassing situations. One incident was related early in the story:²⁶

Decían que doña Rosario ataba tan corto a don Macrino en cuestión de dinero, que no le daba más que una peseta cuando iba a Madrid; de tal modo, que el pobre hombre, cierto día, a la vuelta, no pudo pagar el tranvía a unas señoras vecinas.

Although the situation often led to humor, his despondency eventually caused the tragedy of the novel. Because Macrino failed in his efforts to bring his wife back to him, he committed suicide. Even after hearing the sad news of her husband's death, Rosario remained adamant and did not repent of her evil disposition. Rosario was unique among the women featured by Palacio Valdés in that one could say that she possessed no characteristics that could be

²⁶ Armando Palacio Valdés, A cara o cruz (Madrid: Editorial pueyo, 1929), p. 26.

called charming. Yet her husband was quite devoted to her and was very lonely without her.

The final woman to be discussed was drawn from an actual person. She was the mother of Palacio Valdés, who, of course, really existed almost as she was depicted in La novela de un novelista. However, since this book is listed as a novel, it is justifiable to mention the mother since she plays a major role in the book. In this novel, which is the most autobiographical of all of his novels, the author plays the chief part; the supporting characters are people important to his early life.

The woman who had the most influence on young Armando's life was naturally his mother. Although Palacio Valdés was very fond of his mother, he admitted that she was firm in dealing with him. It was she, not his father, who was the one who most often decided upon and administered punishment. His father usually sympathized with him and was less severe.

This novel is the fictionalized story of the first seventeen years of Palacio Valdés' life. This was a very happy time in his life. He spent part of it on the seashore and part of it in the mountains. He was not forced to study excessively. Although his mother was rather well educated, she did not insist that Armando spend a great deal of time on his studies. In fact Armando regretted that his early

books and interests were not so cultural as they might have been.

Armando studied sufficiently to finish his early schooling and took his examination to enter law practice. He passed the examinations and located in Madrid. He was very unhappy at first in the large city. He felt as if he were Adam being expelled from Eden. He especially missed his mother. He had been very casual in taking leave of his father, but his farewell to his mother was much more sentimental.

In the novel she remained rather close in personality to his mother in real life. She was certainly a lady. Her poor health made it necessary for her to be very inactive. She did not participate in many public activities but spent most of her life quietly at home. Her death occurred shortly after Armando had gone to Madrid.

This chapter, "Women of the Home," treats a few of the background women and some of those who were main characters in novels.

In La espuma Clementina, although she was married, was involved in a romance. She portrayed a typical young lady of her social class. She was perhaps a bit more conscientious than most.

Another matron who was romantically involved was Cristina, the idol of the Captain Ribot. She lived in

Valencia, but she did not necessarily typify ladies of her locale as did Clementina. Cristina served the purpose of being the constant subject of the captain's thoughts. This was more important to the novel than local color. Clementina and Cristina were both young matrons, but their personalities were quite different. Clementina had social ambition; Cristina was happy leading a rather simple life even though her husband was financially successful before his illness.

Serving quite a different purpose from the two previously mentioned women was doña Rosario. She furnished the background for the main thread of the narrative of A cara o cruz. She managed to bring the main characters together so that the novel might progress. She added the lighter side to the story sometimes, but at one point she caused the most unfortunate incident in the story. Her bitter disposition caused her husband's death.

Another lady who stayed in the background was the mother of Palacio Valdés. He mentioned her only casually, and yet her influence on his life in the novel and in reality is undeniable.

The women of the home serve an important purpose in the stories of Palacio Valdés. Whether they occur in the background or are main characters, they are often necessary to the theme of the novel, adding interest and complications.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The women in the novels of Palacio Valdés are not prototypes except the twins of A cara o cruz, and here it is their similarity that causes them to be unique. Some of them, for example Clementina of La espuma and Demetria of La aldea perdida, represent something outside of the novel. Clementina portrays the ladies of her social class; Demetria personifies the tragedy of industrialization. Still each of these women has her own unmistakable personality.

It is difficult to determine exactly what kind of woman Palacio Valdés favored. According to Marta y María it may be assumed that he doubted the sincerity of some who openly dedicated their lives to religion. However, in Santa Rogelia he showed the value of a nun truly devoted to her task, for it is due to the influence of an admirable nun that Rogelia turned from her life so free from religion to a sacrificial life in order to set her conscience at ease.

It is impossible to describe every woman from every novel of this great master, but these selected from his major novels are representative of his women. There was not enough characterization of some of the minor characters to give them a place in this study. He drew from every

walk of life, from the wealthy to the common people. He wrote with equal authority about women of various classes.

Like most novels, his stories are often concerned with love, but the plots are not trite. Some of the romances end happily; others end in sorrow. His plots are as diverse as his women. Through all of his stories, tragic or happy, he keeps his optimistic attitude.

In conclusion it may be said that the women in the novels of Palacio Valdés had these things in common: they were all Spanish, and all of them lived during the nineteenth century. They were all from regions familiar to Palacio Valdés, many from his native Asturias, and some from the more sophisticated larger cities. The author was bound strictly by his rule of never writing about events or people unfamiliar to him. In this sense the women were limited, but there is no monotony in his novels. Rather each story unfolds an entirely different situation, and except for Riverita and Maximina, entirely different characters, among which women play a major role. Yet his stories all show evidence of his preferences. For example, he preferred rural to city life. He favored the simple life over a complex society. His stories show an attitude of optimism. Even the padre Gil of La fe, who was unjustly accused by a woman, did not think life was futile. This is typical of the view of Palacio Valdés. He believed that even though a person

might be scorned by society, he still had his faith in something greater to keep his outlook cheerful. This characteristic of optimism is the quality found in most of the writing of Palacio Valdés, and his women characters are instrumental in developing the thought.

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