THE FEMININE PSYCHOLOGY
OF
JACINTO BENAVENTE

by

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Introduction

With the exception of a few isolated men of the more hardy type, Spanish literature, since the triumph of romanticism, has been dominated by writers under the influence of generalizations and the sway of unreal machinery. Romanticism had been conspicuous for its brilliance and eloquence, its beauty of diction, its heroic sentiment and its strong appeal to the emotions, as typified by the Duque de Rivas and Zorilla. Although systematic romanticism, as a movement, lasted only for a period of about thirty years, its influence permeated the fabric of Spanish Literature much longer, and the inheritance of its principles was only swept away by the dawn of realism with its cold marshaling of facts.

The advent of the "generation of 1898" brought a decisive change in the forces of Spanish letters. Although the Spanish-American war has been called the Great Disaster, in the field of literature it had the opposite effect, because it woke the writers to a more robust sense of reality. The loss of the colonies brought the nation to a sudden realization of the disastrous effects of its lethargy, to a realization that it had been content to rest on
its traditions without any adequate effort to strive to assume a position among the progressive peoples of the world. These realizations brought the people face to face with many unpleasant facts, and made them willing to confront things as they existed instead of closing their eyes to those which they found unpleasant. The ugliest of the facts that loomed so large on their new horizon was the incontestable one of Spain's decadence; to attack this was the first step toward that regeneration that became a virtual Renaissance in the Spanish world of literature.

Animated by a spirit of protest, and affected by the ideas and influences that had long been at work, the "generation of 1898" gave new impetus to the "regenerative" movement. This group owed something to foreign influence, but this was due rather to a certain receptivity of foreign ideas which continued to function independently, than to any direct imitation of foreign models. They upheld the ideas of (1) spontaneity, with utter disregard for the rules of all schools; (2) individuality,—each being true to himself and his own beliefs; (3) sincerity, with frank facing of unpleasant facts; and (4) courage and insight to find out and understand what their nation represented. All of these qualities
were considered essential, but more important than any was the quality of vigor.

Contemporary writers, such as Valle Inclán, Pío Baroja, Azorín, Martínez Sierra, and Blasco Ibáñez, have moulded these instruments to suit their own use. Although they show a certain generalization, it is a vastly different generalization from that of romanticism—it is generalization from experiences, founded upon observation, and with firm insistence upon detail. With their representation of force, aggressiveness, and earnestness they have effected a combination from which has been fashioned a new literature. To be sure the new era had been delayed longer in Spain than elsewhere, but nowhere had the triumph of its principles proved so radical or so absolute.

The new movement included many of the ideas of modernism of today. Now the essence of modernism is that it rejects the past, it denies its validity in itself. Only as the past is absorbed into the present, only in so far as it becomes a part of the living tissue of emotion and volition and so reproduces itself in action, can it be said to be alive. For the


(2) Ibid.
rest its value is potential only.

Benavente can in no sense be called an originator in this movement initiated by the men of the so-called "generation of 1898", and yet the Spaniards recognize him as the foremost modern dramatist. By a coincidence, perhaps, his evolution has kept pace strictly with the successive phases of the movement's development. His plays have been conceived in the new spirit and executed with modern technique, and have been a most stimulating influence for the younger generation.

Jacinto Benavente y Martínez was born at Madrid on August 12, 1866, and ever since has been closely identified with his native city for it has been the center of nearly all of his literary activities. He was the son of Mariano Benavente, a physician and distinguished specialist in the diseases of children; it was from his father that he acquired his great fondness for children, a trait which finally led him to a short-lived venture in the foundation of a Children's Theater. This influence is found in his own commentary, Por algo

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(1) John Garrett Underhill: Benavente as a Modern in *Foot Lore*, March-April, 1918, p. 194
(2) John Garrett Underhill: *Introduction*, P. IX.
soy hijo de quien mereció el nombre de médico de los niños. He attended the University of Madrid and studied law there; but this routine study failed to interest him sufficiently and before long he abandoned all thought of a legal career. While at the University he gave evidence of the remarkable literary ability to the exploitation of which he was later to turn for his life-work. He craved intercourse with people of all sorts and of all conditions, and after he left school, set out to satisfy these cravings. For a while he travelled with a circus, and it is even said that he performed in the ring. He appeared on the stage in the company of María Tubua and in fact has appeared in some of his own productions. Always a veritable adventurer, during the course of his extensive wanderings he became conversant with the languages and literatures of western Europe and of America, in which he is familiarly at home.

(2) John Garrett Underhill: Introduction, p. VII
(3) Created role of Pepe in Sin querer, and acted in La ciudad alegre y confiada.
(4) John Garrett Underhill: Introduction, p. VIII
Although essentially a dramatist, who has given himself whole-heartedly to that vocation and whose outside interests have taken very little of his time, his first writing was published under the simple title of Poems. This was followed by Teatro fantástico (1892) which has seldom been excelled in style and delicacy.

Then came Figurinas and Vilanos, both containing short sketches and prose dialogues and showing likewise the beginnings of his fluent style. His next book Cartas de mujeres is a series of letters dis-

(2) En materia de estilismo, Benavente no ha hecho mejor que Teatro fantástico,----desarrolla primores de lenguaje y exquisita galanura de forma. No es obra de tesis; es una colección de cuadritos ideales, de ensueños vagos y borrosos que 'quieren recordar momentos felices' de la vida en que recorrimos, en unión de nuestros amores, las floridas jardines de la ilusión. (A. Bonilla y San Martín: Jacinto Benavente, in the Ateneo, January, 1906, p. 34).
(3) Una joya de libro, que revela la fuerza de ese talento en que tan solamente se ha reconocido la gracia. Son delicadas y espirituales fabulaciones unidas por un hilo de seda en que encuentres a veces, sin mengua en la comparación, como la filigrana mental del diálogo shakespeareano, del Shakespeare del Sueño de una noche de verano, o de La tempestad. El alma perspicaz y cristalínnamente femenina del poeta crea deliciosas fiestas galantes, perfumadas escenas, figurinas de alocanico y taboquera que en un ambiente Watteau salen de las pinturas y sirven de receptáculo a complicaciones psicológicas y problemas de vida. (Rubén Darío: España contemporáneo, Paris, p. 88).
playing with rare skill the innermost feelings and varied emotions of women. It has been called a masterpiece in cameo-like perfection of workmanship and in fluent satiric style. Conspicuous among the best qualities of these letters is their unusual insight into the depths and recesses of the feminine heart, a faculty which has always been considered as one of the clearest manifestations of Benavente's genius. (1)

Among the other productions, distinct from his Teatro is De sobremesa, a collection in five volumes of weekly articles written for Los lunes del Imparcial (1908-1912). This gives his opinions on worldly affairs in general, and naturally contains his views on dramatic criticism. By his easy ability to discuss the most widely different subjects he shows himself to be a level-headed man of affairs. Although he never spares his satire and irony for Spanish abuses, he seldom fails to exhibit a noble patriotism. Essentially cosmopolitan in many of his theories, he is at all times intensely Spanish. Desconfiemos de los grandes ideales y atengamos a los pequeños. Como esos que dicen; Yo no soy español, soy algo más; soy ciudadano del mundo. Tened por seguro que en el fondo es un region-

(1) John Garrett Underhill: Introduction, p. VIII
aliste que sólo quiere ser ciudadano de su pueblo, y si es posible, vecino de su calle. Por ser ciudadano del mundo antes que españoles, regionalistas y anarquistas se confunden a veces. These articles show that Benavente is a keen observer of human nature, and that he uses these observations to splendid avail.

It has been said that Benavente, more than any one else, has attained the theatrical ideal expressed by Zola that the stage should portray life without moralizing, but teaching merely by the picture shown. And that he portrays life as it exists in reality by a series of photographic scenes is evidenced by almost any one of his plays. Although he is known principally as a satirical writer of plays dealing with society, this is not by any means the only phase of life that he portrays; in fact his characters are of the widest variety. The versatility of his genius may be easily observed by a glance at his Teatro. These eighty-seven plays include all varieties of dramatic output ranging from light one-act musical comedies to heavy four-act tragedies. Among these various productions are monologues, dialogues, zarzuelas, farces, fairy-tales, translations, adaptations, comedies and tragedies of one, two, three, and

four acts and even novels in dramatic form.

A writer so subtle and versatile must have conducted many experiments in technique and in subject matter; indeed, must have adapted his instruments of expression to many different purposes. Considering this aspect of the Benaventian theater the successive stages of its history prove interesting. The eighty-seven plays of the Teatro may be divided into four general types, not altogether homogeneous groups to be sure, but nevertheless representative of the most important phases of Benavente’s dramatic career. In a general way, these types follow the chronological order of production, although it will be noted that a number of plays constitute exceptions to this order. The following table indicates these periods and several representative plays of each:

1. Satirical society plays.
   a. Gente conocida (1896)
   b. La comida de las fieras (1898)
   c. Lo cursi (1901)

2. Plays of Intrigue.
   a. La gobernadora (1901)
   b. La noche del sábado (1903)
   c. El dragón de fuego (1903).
Even in his very first plays, Benavente makes quite clear his attitude toward life and the general complexion of his thought. When Spanish criticism appraised the youthful author as pre-eminently a satirist, it was unquestionably correct in its judgment—for satire has always been a conspicuous element in his work. Wit and humor in their different forms are qualities which have continued to be characteristic of his genius. "His wit is incisive and penetrating, free from bias in any special connection, exhibiting remarkable power of detachment, but unmistakably also illuminative of character." In this period of the satirical society play the story is never of predominant interest nor is his treatment of it either un-

(1) John Garrett Underhill: Beneventiana in Plays by Jacinto Benavente, second series, New York, 1919, p. VII.
usual or markedly individual. He held up to scorn the false values of the Spanish aristocracy of the day, and displayed their failings and foibles with merciless precision. Behind this array of very human personages which he presents to the public we somehow feel the presence of Benavente himself.

In the midst of these selfish, frivolous men and women, we occasionally find a noble character whose function is to bring into strong relief the general worthlessness of the other personages. That a woman is chosen to play the part of strength and virtue is by no means accidental; a study of Benavente reveals him as a defender of women; not at all as their blind worshipper, it is true, but distinctly in sympathy (1) with their problems and trials. He is an active and inquisitive observer of society, knowing how to look at things and note what he sees. Dowagers, men of politics and letters, young men of fashion, actresses, a crowd of original characters which he evokes, go and come and scheme and play under our eyes a real human comedy. In accordance with his conception of

(1) John Van Horne: Introduction to Tres Comedias por Jacinto Benavente, Heath's Modern Language Series, 1918, p. XVI.
human nature, he never pictures any character in these early plays as entirely culpable or entirely praiseworthy. His general method is satirical or ironical, yet upon occasion he manifests the ability to sympathize with the weaknesses of the persons whom he ridicules. Most of the individuals possess as their principal attributes only discouraging mediocrity and inability to rise above a certain level. Although he often displays the pretentious vulgarity of some of the aristocracy, it is plain that he is not a mere reviler of the aristocracy. Si algunas veces he fustigado (según cliché) a nuestra aristocracia, no fué por prevención desfavorable contra ello, sino que puesto a satirizar y dudar la natural y pícara preferencia del público, por reír a costa de los que gozan de muchas ventajas en la vida, que a costa de los humildes que trabajan y padecen es casez de todo. Nunca me ha parecido que el tener hambre sea una cosa de risa (y ya sabemos que en la mitad de nuestro teatro cómico es el hambriente principal motivo de regocijo).

(1) Benavente : De Sobremesa Vol. I-p. 65
His first play, *El nido ajeno*, was acted in 1894, but failed to attract unusual attention. Nevertheless it proves interesting as the first interpretation of some of the theories and ideas which he continued to expound. In some places there is an evident suggestion of the doctrine of fatality. Hay dos vidas en nosotros, paralelas siempre. Una, la que vivimos, urdimbre de la casualidad y del destino, en la que somos juguete de circunstancias—. Otra, la que soñamos, rompiendo de luz que abre la imaginación a otros mundos, donde somos superiores a la fatalidad de nuestro destino. Y de las dos es mejor la imaginada que la vivida. Soy humilde, porque he luchado mucho con la suerte, sé que la suerte es superior a nosotros. On the performance of his second work *Gente conocida* at the Teatro de la Comedia, Madrid, in 1896, it was immediately recognized that an unusual genius had appeared. Although its triumph on presentation was instantaneous and final, that result came as a complete surprise; the actors had viewed the new play with such utter disgust during

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(3) John Garrett Underhill: *Introduction*, p. X.
the rehearsals that even the author himself had lost faith in it. Benavente has been accused of plagiarism in _Gente conocida_; the charge has been brought that he borrowed the character of Petra from Ibsen. Yet in his reply to the censure he declares that there has been no conscious imitation, and that if any writer can be said to have served as a model it is Henri Lavedan. He wished to unfold a picture of life as it is in a series of photographic scenes, and he succeeds well in this, his favorite type. He presents a series of scenes of the life of the aristocracy, done with profound analysis and irony that penetrated deeply into their life of boredom and brought to light their decay and uselessness. En tus tiempos la aristocracia deslumbraba con el brillo de sus títulos. Hoy un título lo tiene cualquiera; se dan y se venden por nada, y al que tiene dinero y lo sabe gastar, nadie le pregunta de dónde ha venido. Nuestros tiempos han pasado: sepúltemos con dignidad su recuerdo en las ruinas de nuestros vetustos caserones. Pasa a las nuevas aristocracias, la del dinero y la del talento.

(1) John Van Horne: _op. cit._ p. XVII
(3) Rubén Darío: _España contemporánea_, Paris, p. 86.
(5) _idem_, p. 192.
It is said that in *El marido de la Téllez* we are shown the intimate life of a certain eminent Spanish actress who was married to a nobleman of prominence on the stage. Benavente gives some of his ideas concerning the relationship existing between actors and the public and the sort of acting that pleases the public.

This is followed by a brilliant succession of satirical comedies dealing with Madrid society or with political adventurers from the capital condemned for a while to serve in the provinces. Then comes *La farándula*, little connected in subject matter with the characteristic type of the satiric society comedy. In it there are hints of pessimism, of the unhappiness of both the rich and the poor. *Esta pobre gente*----son más felices que nosotros. Aquí debían inspirarse los socialistas utopicos. Hay mis-erias, sí, y terribles desigualdades; pero a qué poco costa pueden remediar-se.

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(1) Rubén Darío: op. cit. p. 86.
(2) *El público, a su modo*, ama a las artistas favoritas y se siente ofendido el día en que su artista fija su amor en una persona determinada. *Teatro*, vol. I, p. 244.
La comida de las fieras in 1898 met with exceptional favor. It is among the most typical of his plays in which he depicts metropolitan routine as a systematic preoccupation with everything in life which is not worth-while. It is a piece of splendid literature, of ingenuity, and is distinguished for the grace, naturalness and sparkle of the dialogue, as well as for the admirable characters. It was so extravagantly praised not only for the precision of the picture and for what it had of modern art, but also for the spice of its wit. Benavente denies that he took his characters from life, but they are so perfect that it is agreed that we cannot believe his protest. Victoria y Hipólito seem to belong to living humanity and we become entirely in sympathy with their strife against conventional prejudices. The theme of the play is expressed by Hipólito at the close. Porque en lucha he vivido siempre; porque viví desde muy joven en otras tierras donde la lucha es ruda y franca. ¿Porqué venimos a Europa? En América el hombre significa algo; es una fuerza, una garantía—se lucha, sí, pero con primitiva fuerza; cae uno y puede volver á levantarse; pero en esta sociedad vieja, la posición es todo y el hombre nada——
vencida una vez, es inútil volver a luchar. Aquí la riqueza es un fin, no un medio para realizar grandes empresas. La riqueza es el ocio; allí es la actividad. Por eso allí el dinero da triunfos y aquí desastres. Pueblos de historia, de tradición; tierras viejas, donde sólo cabe, como en las ciudades sepultadas de la antigüedad, la excavación, no las plantaciones de nueva vegetación y savia vigorosa.

Lo cursí (1901) is an excellent example of the skilfully constructed society comedy that satirizes the false and undemocratic in the middle-class Spanish society. Together with Gente conocida and La comida de las fieras it is typical of the effectiveness of the plays of this period; and among the longer plays these three have probably received the greatest attention. El automóvil (1902) is given over more completely to humorous situations than his usual society play, but still belongs to this type. Some of the shorter plays, such as Operación quirúrgica, Despedida cruel and Por la herida prove as effective as the longer ones. La gata de Angora shows us a hateful, petted, useless woman of elevated position, a veritable Angora cat just as pretty as she is conceited, cruel and shallow. It may be gathered from what has been said that there

is not a strong element of plot in these society plays, but rather a picture of manner and customs.

Many discussions and criticisms of Benavente indicate that he is known chiefly as a composer of plays that deal with society, written objectively to depict life as it is, with scarcely any betrayal of the author's opinions. This is misleading because we realize as we pass over into his group of plays of intrigue that he is equally at ease in this type of play. Not that he abandons these pictures of society in his Teatro, far from it, because they are especially congenial to his artistic sense, but rather that they represent only one of a number of different types of his versatile talent. We see here the development of his system of "double ententes" into a system of "multiple ententes" in which he attempts to realize upon the stage the inarticulate as well as the articulate elements of intellect and character. As his dialogue matures in fertility of suggestion a fresh adjustment of powers becomes imperative because the old instruments of expression are incapable of the transmission of these new thoughts. What he has al-

(1) John Garrett Underhill: Beneventiana, p. VII.
ready accomplished with satire, he now sets out to perform with plot; this he does by turning his attention to the secondary elements, and by suggestion transferring the importance of the events of the action to their controlling influences, thus indirectly creating the desired atmosphere. In this method, the events induce their own meaning but in so doing deprive the story of definite form and unity.

*La gobernadora,* ironic in the extreme, typifies his accomplishment in this method which characterizes the group of plays of intrigue. Here we are introduced to prominent political characters in the provincial town of Moraleda. The successive incidents show how a variety of influences from undesirable sources are brought to bear upon a government official. By his wife, a shrewd, clever, designing woman, the governor is persuaded to use his authority against his better judgment. There is throughout a decidedly skeptical note concerning the strength of the hold of virtue upon humanity. The exposition descends quickly from the realm of politics to that of the personalities who are at the

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(1) John Garrett Underhill: *Beneventiana,* p. XI.
bottom of the upheaval. One thing which deserves particular mention is the remarkable technique displayed in the scenes in which a number of characters are shown on the stage at the same time. The first scene shows a crowd in a cafe, and a later one the spectators at a bull-fight; both are marked by truth of detail and by vividness of portrayal. It is, upon its technical side, a comedy of details heaped upon details, all recorded with photographic accuracy. The first act in particular is a splendid example of objective realism, for the incidents are approximately all of equal value without any dominant emotion to give them coherence or lend them unity. All the details have been related with exceptional skill; yet the effect arises chiefly from the material that insinuates its significance without any obvious interference or interpretation upon the part of Benavente. An excellent example of his method of detailed exposition, it has at the same time been designated as "by far the most negative and corrosive of his works and a play which confirmed the misapprehension of Benavente at one time prevalent, as a purely destructive, maliciously clever writer."

(1) John Garrett Underhill: Beneventiana, p. XI (2) Idem, p. XII.
In *La noche del sábado* (1903) and *El dragón de fuego* (1904) we find that he is removing the drama from the realm of structural regularity, and making it depend for its effect upon the impressions received from a wide variety of incidents and of situations in which the story is almost lost and at times made entirely obscure. Such a variety destroys all unity of impression. Benavente seems to have felt that at best, fact is inexpressive and that it is susceptible only of the very broadest effects. But in reality, instead of broadening his character satire in an effective manner, this abundance only serves to combine the satirical and emotional elements in a most bewildering manner. When we consider with Underhill that "these polychromatic spectacles are the romantic outburst, the ungovernable adventure of the Benaventian theater, by very lack of restraint stimulating the imagination to a perception at once restless and inchoate, of the majesty of life" it is a cause of satisfaction and relief that realism so completely overcomes this romantic outburst that he does not return to this manner again.

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(1) John Garrett Underhill: *op. cit.* p. IX.
La noche del sábado changes the scene of action from Spanish to royal and international society. When contrasted with some of his lighter works, the pessimistic tendency is very evident, in fact almost unpleasantly so. He seems to have attempted to combine reality with fancy and has so greatly exaggerated the reality that he has almost turned the play into a melodrama; the characters are shadow-like creatures without any real semblance to flesh-and-blood human beings. The atmosphere is very vague and indefinite, and the joy and humor that usually pervade the plays of Benavente as a conspicuous quality are lacking.

A striking example of this period is El dragón de fuego, a drama which displays the difficulty of determining Benavente's political notions. It is a serious, mysterious work, dominated by the same intense pessimism found in the other plays of intrigue. The story deals with a puppet-king, Dani-Sar, who falls a victim to the selfish and cruel policy of civilization; in fact the whole work treats of the unavoidable conflict between an advanced and a backward race. There is a mixture, incomprehensible in ideas; he recognizes the power of civilization
and the inevitability of its advance, yet at the same time he seems to value as highly, perhaps more highly, the gentle, noble patriotism of his hero. Other savages he describes as depraved and superstitious, although brave and in love with liberty. There is more symbolism than is usual in his plays; e.g. the emissaries of civilization, a general, a merchant, and a clergyman, symbolize arms, money, and spirituality. The events so happen that there results only a confusion instead of close association, and for this reason the action of El dragón de fuego fails of effectiveness. The only features that redeem it from absolute mediocrity are its irony and humor.

Although it could not be called a play of intrigue, in the strictest sense of that term, La princesa Bebé undoubtedly belongs to this group by virtue of its pessimism, its variety of detail; its wide scope, and its suggestive atmosphere. He depicts the elegance and sophistication of royalty, its perfect breeding, its artificiality, with sympathetic irony. In fact it has been said that this play was composed by Benavente peculiarly to please himself.

(1) John Van Horne: op. cit. p. XX.  
(2) John Garrett Underhill: op. cit. p. XII.
The princess, being in a pretentious, yet false, environment, ventures forth in search of truth. But from the court down to the underworld, everything proves to be deceptive counterfeits and not the least illumination of truth comes to tear away this web of delusions. When the basis of reality is disclosed it seems to the reader little more substantial and definite than the unrealities. In the reading of La princesa Bebé there is a mixed pleasure, pleasure derived from the aspirations, the wanderings and hesitations of the mind, yet pleasure tinged with disappointment because of the failure to find a definite basis of truth.

It is worth noting that side by side with serious efforts of this type, Benavente produced several pieces marked exclusively by the search for comic effect. No fumadores (1904), a farce in one act, is a play of exceptional dialogue; few dramatists are capable of writing dialogue which unites so many things at one time; he produces simple phrases which are both sagacious revelation of character and useful exposition in the play. It is written with a singular force and vigor of characterization. In El tren de los

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(1) William Haynes: op. cit. p. 132
maridos (1902) he gives free run to the spirit of fun. In Las cigarras hormigas, the longest of the eighty-seven plays, every moment from the beginning to the end is crammed with frolicsome amusement.

Although there is a tendency on the part of certain reviewers and critics to deny the presence of a thesis in any of the Beneventian theater, the beginnings of this tendency may be traced back to some of the first plays in which a strong woman is introduced as a foil to her companions. Sacrificios (1901) and Alma triunfante (1902) both display serious steps toward a thesis drama. The latter is a glorification of a woman's generosity of soul, "it is the elegy of the futility of life and of the tragic emptiness of our souls." Porqué se ama (1903) describes the influence of compassion in causing a woman to cling through thick and thin to the object of her affection. During the development of this type, Benavente became intensely interested in the problems of married life; and it is in his treatment of conjugal relations that we find the most evident problem plays. In

this purposeful treatment he endeavors to attain two aims; first, to idealize feminine constancy and love, and second, to glorify true love itself.

Critics who deny a thesis in any other play, admit its presence in Rosas de otoño (1905), a play which has assumed by common consent a foremost place in the contemporary Spanish theater. Underhill regards it as a complement, or in a sense, the sequel to La princesa Bebé, which it follows almost directly in the order of composition; "for one is a drama of youth, the other of middle age, and in one the subject is the venturing forth of the spirit, in the other its return home again, when the disillusionments of the wander-years find their compensation in the family and beside the hearth." Although frankly defending a cause, Benavente is not too partisan, for he gives due weight to the partial justice of the selfish arguments of Gonzalo and Pepe. Best of all, he seems not to forget that he is depicting human life. It is with exceptional simplicity that he draws this picture of the manners of the upper

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(1) John Van Horne: op. cit. p. XXI.
(2) John Garrett Underhill: op. cit. p. XIII.
middle class. That he relieves the prevailing tone of sadness by trivial and even comic incidents on the part of minor characters prevents the didactic element from becoming too obvious. Los ojos de los muertos (1907) is a gloomy tragedy of unhappy married relations with absolute lack of the saving element of humor reminds us that "life is real, life is earnest"; this drama has pathos worked in with too heavy a hand. Equally gloomy is the powerful tragedy, Más fuerte que el amor (1906), which carries the influence of compassion to an exaggerated extreme.

Contrasting with these heavy emotional dramas is Los malhechores del bien (1905), a clever comedy satirizing the inherent inconsistencies in organized charity. Upon its presentation at the Teatro de Lara it gave offense; in fact no stage could have been selected where such an offering would have proved more unwelcome; by way of protest many ladies prominent in Madrid society and active in charity work arose and left the theater. Although it was received by the audience as anti-religious propaganda, it is not to be regarded as such.

(1) See p. 25.
(2) John Garrett Underhill: Introduction, p. XVII.
Benavente intended rather to show the faults that lie in the frailty of human nature, and the reaction of character and environment upon each other. In *La losa de los sueños* (1911) we have the story of the same two lovers, now called Cipriano and Rosina instead of Jesus and Natividad, but who, instead of being carried away by the sea which washed them in together, are driven apart forever by a relentless poverty against which nothing avails. The problem is the same, but the solution is so different as strikingly to illustrate the versatility of Benavente.

In this type of thesis play, there is the widest variance of subject matter, but all are connected by their author's keenness of observation, fidelity to life, and unusual human interest. *Los buhos* (1907) is a graceful treatment of the affection of two scholars, for two friends, who are mother and daughter. *Por las nubes* (1909) is a play of the struggling middle classes, with emigration to South America suggested as the remedy; we feel that the physician, whose advice is constantly sought, is quite evidently expounding the opinions of Benavente.

(1) John Van Horne: *op. cit.* p. XXIV.
¡Ver qué hace un hombre! (1909), a plea for the working man, Hacia la verdad (1908), eulogy of simple pleasures, and De cerca (1909) showing how the distrust existing between the rich and the poor may be overcome by the understanding of the common humanity that binds them,—these show a broad view of human nature. La fuerza bruta (1908) is a fairly skilful treatment of the glorification of the spirit of sacrifice; it is nevertheless so cheapened by the introduction of English names and phrases that it leaves the impression of being only a weak imitation instead of a strong original.

A vain endeavor to reconcile social prejudices and external morals with the needs of the heart is pictured in El hombrecito (1903), the sympathetic story of a girl with convictions, who is in love with a married man. This same theme of love without the conventional sanction of marriage is also treated in El mal que nos hacen (1917).

Among the plays of this type, and yet belonging almost equally to the type of character study, are the two most discussed of Benavente's latter-day achievements, Señora ama (1908) and La malquerida (1913). They carry us away from Madrid
and large cities to rural districts and plunge us into an inferno of ignorance, corruption and vice; the author of these tragic histories has no illusions about the innocence of the country. In these plays there is no description either of persons or of locality; and the settings are merely implied so as to suggest the environment of a parched, unchanging landscape. Herein lies the secret of his versatility, in that highest art of description by suggestion only. This description finds its most perfect expression in *Señora Ama* "wherein the Castilian plains are painted in human terms, their bright, hard lights and vast treeless distances being projected from the austere poverty of the minds of the aldeanos or peasants, whose voices seem to break upon the surrounding void and are heard in the great silences of space." (2)

Benavente is reported to have said that he liked *Señora Ama* better than any other of his plays; but there is disagreement among critics as to the merits of the two dramas. One critic has even gone so far in his admiration of *La malquerida* as to base upon it his argument that Benavente belongs among the great masters of the world's literature. It is

(1) John Van Horne: *op. cit.* p. XXV.
(2) John Garrett Underhill: *op. cit.* p. XVI.
(3) Cited by Van Horne as José Rugerio Sánchez, in *Estudio crítico acerca de La malquerida, drama de Jacinto Benavente*, Madrid, 1913.
a tragedy with a unified plot, the end of each act forming a climax with the whole leading to a final crisis. It is a drama of the most meager detail with a pervading sense of uncertainty and impending doom. As Underhill aptly puts it "the subject is the struggle of individual conscience against the conscience of the mass, which is embodied in the talk of the town." (1)

Before discussing his group of plays which emphasizes character study, we may pause long enough to consider his two mask plays, Los intereses creados (1907) and La ciudad alegre y confiada (1916). Attempts to classify these plays with any of the types of Benavente have been unsuccessful; they combine some of the qualities of each of the four groups and yet are much more philosophical than any. The author turns away from modern themes to indulge in the freedom and gayety of the old Italian Comedy of Masks. It seems to be a product of enthusiasm, and is written in such a deft and facile manner that it is easy to pass its significance by. Benavente represents every man as having within him, two irreconcilable selves, the good and the bad, or the generous and the base;

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(1) John Garrett Underhill: op. cit. p. XVI.
(2) Idem p. XVIII.
he represents the good and the bad as being inex-
tricably mixed instead of distinct elements. Praise
has been showered upon the author for his simpli-
city and idealism, for the effective symbolism con-
veyed in the characters, and for purity, clearness
and poetry of style. La ciudad alegre y confiada,
which is a sequel to Los intereses creados has a
definite note of pessimism. Crispín has risen to
be the ruler of the city which he once entered as
a servant, but in spite of all his magnificence his
life is far from joyous; and even Leandro is wretch-
edly unhappy as the husband of Silvia. The pro-
tagonist of the play is El Desterrado, a man once
exiled by Crispín but now permitted to return to
the city, and it is he who serves as the mouthpiece
of Benavente for his ideas about patriotism and
war.

It is true, probably, that no play since 1913
has reached the heights of his masterpieces, such

(1) John Van Horne: op. cit. p. 117.
"Hay que elevarse—sobre el patriotismo que
quiere obligaros a una estúpida admiración
para todo lo nuestro."
(3) Idem. p. 127.
"Si tees, con la serenidad que sólo da el ti-
empo, en historias de guerras que pasaron,
verás que en todas ellas—triunfó siempre lo
que debe triunfar—la idea de Dios que para
triunfar en el mundo se vale siempre de los
fuertes—que la verdadera fuerza es la es-
piritual."
as Señora Ama and La malquerida; and yet there is unquestionably some splendid and skilful character study in these latest plays. In fact this character study is quite evidently the keynote to most of them. He insists upon setting a standard of human virtue; and as a natural consequence he paints some personages who come too perilously close to being angels or villains to rank with the most of his exceedingly human characters. Yet this seems quite in line with the progressive element of Benavente's dramatic life, as we have seen him advance from the satirical society play to the play of intrigue and on to the thesis play. Probably his art has suffered slightly from a desire to exert a good moral influence but his reflections have become correspondingly more profound. As token that he has not by any means reached the bounds of his versatility, he has recently produced two works in an entirely new form; they are La inmaculada de los dolores (1918) and Una señora (1920), novels in dramatic form. The former is a story of a waste of womanhood, a life which might

(1) Benavente: De sobremesa vol. II, p. 16.
have been very fruitful, but doomed to dry up in ineffectualness; and the later the pitiful story of the depths to which a woman's love will take her. _Campo de armiño_ (1916), _La ley de los hijos_ (1918) and _La honra de los hombres_ (1920), each dealing with a very peculiar phase of mother love, are the three strongest plays of this type. But with his wonderful versatility, shown in this type by contrasting settings ranging from Hell in _Mefistófeles_ (1918) to the far Northland in _La honra de los hombres_ (1918) who dares predict as to the next step in the evolution of the Benaventian theater?

Despite the fact that Benavente is the glory and pride of Spanish letters of the present day, and his position as the foremost contemporary dramatist is unassailable, he has continued to advance only by dint of unceasing labor. Perhaps this happy faculty with which he has imparted to his pages "a subtlety akin to that of exquisitely blended perfumes", which can be appreciated only

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(2) Mariano Alarcon: _Benavente as an Interpreter of Woman_, in _Poet Lore_, March-April, 1918, p. 203.
by the most refined taste, has been the barrier which has made the rise to popularity of this extraordinary genius of the theater so difficult. In spite of its seeming simplicity, his style is one of the most complex in literature. Primarily it is suggestive, because it is with the reader's thought that he contrives to convey the implication. The direct meaning is not the chief concern, but rather its connotation in the mind of the reader or spectator. "It has been said that every idea of Benavente is an idea and a half. We see not only the thought, but its reverse and its ramifications; its genesis, as well as the nature by which it was conceived, against the background of the common mind." His theater has been called a theater of ideas and so it is in so far as we consider the term idea to mean ideas in the making. Thus by showing us the formulation of his thoughts does he stimulate our minds to such an extraordinary degree as to make it possible for him to communicate to us what under more usual circumstances we would fail to perceive. This is what

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(1) John Garrett Underhill: Beneventiana, p. VIII.
(2) John Garrett Underhill: Introduction, p. XI.
he means when he says that he does not make his plays for the public, but the public for his plays. He creates the mental attitude which is necessary for their application, and then by the skilful revelation of the personal qualities of his characters induces the remainder of the train of thought.

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In an interview Benavente tells us that his affection for the theater was awakened at a very early age. He says that as a boy he took delight in fashioning little theatrical pieces in which he could act, and that his enthusiasm was aroused by the presentation rather than by the composition of such pieces. Although his drama at first glance may appear so subtle as to be far divorced from the stage, in reality this affection for acting has caused Benavente to become a master of histrionics. We must not forget that he was an actor and that as an actor he began at the bottom. The tricks of the pantomimist, the directness of the clown and the comedian, which lie at the foundation of his dramatic training, are altogether dependent upon the immediateness of the audience's perception and response. So it is with his effects in the

(1) La esfera, Madrid, (1916).
Teatro; they are perceived easily or not perceived at all. Indeed, few writers of the first reputation have been such practical men of the stage; and it is only as master of the theater that he has been enabled to ignore the common precepts of craftmanship. "The task of the actor in the Benaventian theater is to place his finger upon the minor effects, to catch the thought in the embryo, not so much to convey it as to hint its direction, to reflect the sudden flash, to pursue personality into its hiding-places, at the same time engaging the spectator and luring him along, until, passing over the facet of his subject, always moving, never still, he integrates at last this drama of the spirit with the actualities of the outward life."  

The danger which besets the reader of Benavente is not that he will fail to appreciate him, but that he will fail to appreciate him at his proper worth. His drama is a drama of character, not because it is occupied with character, but because the action takes place within the character, and the conflict is joined in the play and interplay

(1) John Garrett Underhill: Beneventiana, p. XI.  
(2) Idem p. X.
of thought and emotion. It is the struggle of modern life as it takes place in the individual, trying to accommodate himself to the complexities of society and environment. Although all classes of men and women are reproduced in his works, there are no types; through all his scenes one will search in vain for a hero or for a villain. The success of his satire is in great measure due to the easy ability with which he makes his characters an intimate blending of good and evil; even with this intermingling of qualities he seldom leaves the audience doubtful as to his exact position in a satire; In conveying this vivid sense of the reality of his characters, he never describes them; he has not the least inclination to serve them as tailor, he never even mentions their ages. In his plays, there is no description either of persons or of local. He does not set his scenes; the settings are implied, and the effect attained by an acute perception of the mental processes of the characters which in themselves suggest the environment.

Benavente does not satirize individuals, but

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(1) William Haynes: op. cit. p. 130.
puts his finger upon inherent inconsistencies which need only to be presented in their native contradiction to appear what they are. The suggestion of the conflict between the individual and his environment is always present; in fact the subject of his Teatro is the struggle of "love against poverty, of obligation against desire, of imputed virtue against the consciousness of sin." His point of attack is where the individual and the social problem join, when society touches the individual to the quick and he ceases to be his conventional self and becomes for a brief space a free agent. His are par excellence social dramas, in a word, of man in society, yet whose action is conceived never for its effect on society, but always for its meanings and implications in the character of the individual.

In passing, let us note briefly the most important changes which have come in his dramatic career. His first plays are more purely satirical and are reduced principally to the descriptions of manners and customs; the naturalness of the characters and the skill in the easy flow of dialogue

(1) John Garrett Underhill: Introduction, p. XXIV.
constitute their chief charm. Later the interpretative element becomes more and more evident, and his satire and irony become tolerant enough to lend to his plays a certain human sympathy which keeps us from considering him as an acrid satirist. Yet always, in whatever form it may appear, his drama is a drama of character, seldom of character in its superficial aspects, but of human motives which underlie and determine its individual manifestations, without which it would cease to be. His drama is of the same content as life itself, and it is this influence which makes his Teatro in its totality "one of the human documents that literature has known".

Difficult as it is to define with generalization the significance and tendencies of so versatile a writer, a conception of the personality of Benavente is of help in this effort. Onís says of him: "Es un hombre pequeño, pulcro, refinado; sus ademanes tienen una elegancia casi femenina; su perfil aguileno y su barba en punta dan a su fisonomía una expresión netamente española; pero su

(1) John Garrett Underhill: Beneventiana p. XV.
carácter reside sobre todo en su frente, ancha y espaciosa como la de Cervantes, y en sus ojos vivos y burlones en los que hay, sin embargo, una ligera sombra de melancolía. Hombre de mundo, gusta del trato social y de los viajes, a lo que debe su amplio conocimiento, no sólo de la sociedad española, sino de la sociedad cosmopolita. Es un conversador de mucho ingenio, a veces malicioso y mordaz; pero su espíritu es bueno y tolerante como lo muestran sus bien acreditados sentimientos humanitarios especialmente respecto de los niños. Hay una semejanza bastante grande entre el retrato que Cervantes ha dejado escrito de sí mismo y la fisonomía de Benavente; salvo el color del pelo, que en Cervantes era rubio en la barba y castaño en la cabeza y que en Benavente es más bien negro, hay una notoria coincidencia en los demás rasgos. Cervantes era "de rostro aguilguillo, de cabello castaño, frente lisa y desembarazada, de alegres ojos, y de nariz corva aunque bien proporcionada....., los bigotes grandes, la boca pequeña, los dientes ni menudos ni crecidos,......

(1) Federico de Onís: op. cit., p. XXXIII. 
(2) Ibid.
We are again told of his exceptional brilliance as a conversationalist by Rubén Darío who characterizes Benavente as aquel que sonríe. Dicen que es mefistofélico, y bien pudieran ocultarse entre sus finas botas de mundano, dos patas de chivo. Es el que sonríe: ¡temible!

Probably the most penetrating and satisfying analysis of his personality has been made by Martínez Sierra, himself a great dramatist, scholar and contemporary man of letters. "Benavente does not compose, he creates. The impelling force of his works comes wholly from within, and proceeds from the inside out, as a seed germinates, or perhaps more properly, as a crystal takes form. Naturally, good seed which has fallen on good ground produces good fruit, harmonious in development, luxuriant in bloom. There are in consequence, upon occasion, amazing achievements of technique in the total output of this great artist, but I will take my oath that, while writing,

(1) Cited by Onís as Cervantes, Prólogo a las Novelas ejemplares.
(2) Rubén Darío: op. cit. p. 86.
he has never for a single moment concerned himself
with these, nor sought to contrive an effect for
a curtain, nor a situation in the course of an
act. Is it urged, then, that he has chanced upon
many? Beyond all question. As it is written:
"But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his
righteousness; and all these things shall be ad-
ded unto you."

"I should say that the varied qualities which,
when fused, constitute his genius, are susceptible
of almost any adaptation. What are they? First
of all, astounding clearness of mind. Few per-
sons understand so quickly or so well as Jacinto
Benavente. It might be said that he jumps from
the first point to the conclusion without any inter-
mediate process. To talk with him is the great-
est possible rest to the mind. He needs no proof.
He comprehends at a glance, without the necessity
of waiting for the completed word to reach his
ear. He sees ideas coming, and it is the same with
events; he sees persons as well. This is why noth-
ing astonishes him. If sometimes the course of
events has been such as to give him pain, as must
befall all of us who make this journey through life,
I am confident that at least he has never been sur-
prised. Hence his readiness at repartee, his irony; hence what has been called his 'detachment,' the oscillations of the moral sense backward and forward through his works. He understands everything, and while possibly he does not excuse it, he concedes it by virtue of the mere fact that it exists, a right to existence. Of what use to deny, since what is must be?"

In the opinion of the writer no other single factor has contributed in so great a degree to Benavente's success as his singular ability to reveal the heart and soul of woman. As we turn to his drama we find an unusual apprehension of and sympathy with woman. In bringing these emotions to the Spanish stage, he has redeemed the theater from another condition, which was not so intellectual, but with which the public has been regaled, the exhibition of unadulterated feminine sex instinct. Women owe to this distinguished dramatist a tremendous debt because the study and appreciation of woman has been one of his principal occupations on the stage. He is considered an unrivalled psychologist who first revealed the

(1) John Garrett Underhill: Introduction, p. XX.
(2) Mariano Alarcon: op. cit. p. 203.
hitherto but ill-understood, bewildering feminine consciousness, not only to man but to woman her-

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A rare insight has guided his hand in his creation of woman. He seems to have caught something of the mastery of the seer, as he shows himself versed in every emotion of the feminine temperament. Here too, his versatility is clearly evident, because each woman is absolutely individual and distinct in spite of the wonderful profusion in which they occur throughout his work. Each is different from each other, each has her own character apart, and yet although there are so many, few are lacking in elusive feminine charm. "He has practised the precept of Leonardo de Vinci in his Treatise on Painting, giving to each character the maximum force and truth of expression, and illuminating them all outward from within with the light of a varied intelligence, always diverse yet always beautiful, for the simple reason that every one of them has been endowed by his hand with something that is his own."

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(1) Mariano Alarcon: op. cit. p. 203.
(2) Idem. p. 204.
Chapter I.

Sacrifice and Resignation.

When the prince Gotama was asked by his disciple Ananda, "How are we to conduct ourselves, Lord, with regard to womankind?" the great teacher answered, "Do not see them, Ananda."

"But if we should see them", continued the disciple, "what are we to do?"

"Abstain from speech, Ananda."

"But if they should speak to us, Lord, what are we to do?"

"Keep wide awake, Ananda."

In the consideration of the genius of Jacinto Benavente, of his conceptions, to an extent of his opinions, also of the personality which underlies them, it is not difficult to recognize that he has obeyed this command to the letter. How has the foremost of the contemporary Spanish dramatists been able to attract our minds with such magnetic power that he dominates and captivates and plays with them as his own, when and how he will? Simply by letting women talk. To gain such noteworthy insight

(1) Mariano Alarcon: op. cit. p. 201
into the heart and soul of woman assuredly implies distinct sympathy with her problems and trials and a wide-awake observance of the characteristics of her sex.

Starting with the natural contrast between the sexes, he has encouraged the variation of the mental processes with a rare subtlety until he has produced two distinct creations, not merely two duplicates of a single theme. Taking these details all together, they are sufficient to create two markedly antithetic and supplemental forms of human character. These adventures may be called ventures in psychology because all of them are indisputably within the province of the mind. In the wide profusion of portraits which he has drawn, those of women are the most apt and the most suggestive; "they are almost fleshly in the sense of bodily presence conveyed".

His sense of the importance of a study of the feminine temperament is partially explained by the blending of his three most important creeds: (1) glorification of true love, (2) sincerity in art for art's sake, (3) idealization of feminine love

(1) John Garrett Underhill: Introduction p.X.
"En moral, como en arte, sólo hay una expresión honrada: la sinceridad. Si somos buenos, la expresión de nuestra arte será la belleza, pero seamos sinceros, ante todos."
and constancy. The interdependence of these creeds has been significant in his writings from the beginning with a later growth of more evident emphasis upon the love-life of women. His own expression regarding them is of concern to us.

---mujeres, cuando sois bonitas, estáis dispensadas de ser buenas; cuando sois buenas no necesitáis ser bonitas, y cuando sois bonitas y buenas, no hay sino adoraros de rodillas como a trasunto de la Divinidad en la tierra. Sin vosotras no existiría el Arte, porque el Arte es el amor, y Arte sin amor fuera el culto de una religión sin Dios a quien consagrarle. ---

¡Bendito el Arte, porque es Amor, pero bendito el Amor antes! Y vosotras, mujeres, eterno femenino del Amor y del Arte, ¡benditas sobre todo!

To Benavente, woman's mind proves more interesting than man's because woman's logical mechanism is less likely to run by a kind of internal combustion; there is less of thought for mere thought's sake. In fact women have so much heart and so much imagination that they usually act more from the heart than from the intellect. Women are ever in extremes; they are either better or worse than men.

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So it is with their emotions; they are closer to tears or closer to laughter than men. Their emotions are either lively, lightly on the wing, or they take the almost negative form of fortitude and patience. The emotions which women manifest beyond those of men are therefore not merely those that are transitory and lie upon the surface, they are also deep and constant, showing them to possess both in serious and in trivial things something of character marked by lasting attachments and antipathies.

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Often as Benavente deals with women, he seldom strays from the realm of her emotional life in its various aspects. Evidently he considers with Byron that "man's love is of man's life a thing apart; 'tis woman's whole existence". For him a woman's whole life is a history of the affections; hence it is as personalities governed by certain dominant emotions that we come to view his array of feminine characters.

One characteristic of woman's strength, which Benavente emphasizes, is that it almost always increases in proportion to the obstacles which are im-

(1) Teatro, Vol. XI, Rosas de otoño-p. 70. "Las antipatías y las simpatías son instintivas."
posed upon it. He considers the courage of sac-
rrifice and resignation as peculiarly a woman's
prerogative, and portrays many admirable characters
as excelling in that sort of courage, courage en-
abling the gentlest of womankind to suffer what
would cause terror to the boldest of men. In con-
sidering the women dominated by this spirit of self-
sacrifice we discover that the objects of affection
for which these women are willing to suffer so much
are either husbands, sweethearts, or sisters. (1)

Among the foremost of Benavente's women who
are dominated by the courageous spirit of resigna-
tion for husband is Isabel in Rosas de otoño. The
intimate revelation of her feelings show her to be
a woman who long ago has lost all the illusions of
youth and settled down to an acceptance of con-
ditions as they exist, but whose bigness of soul
has prevented her nature from becoming warped by
any feelings of bitterness. In order to plumb the
ture depth of her resignation with an insight born
of sympathy, it is necessary to realize the extent of
her love for Gonzalo, her husband. He is an exceeding-
ly genial sort of Don Juan addicted to very violent

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(1) The subject of mother-love with its sacrifices is
treated in Chapter IV.
(2) Teatro, vol. XI, pp. 7-163.
flirtations; and it is her consciousness of his questionable conduct with any women who happen to strike his fancy upon which the drama hinges. Her marriage with Gonzalo was not the unstudied culmination of a short love-affair; in fact even when he was courting her, she hated in him this infidelity which was later so largely to shape her character. She realized then as now that hers must be a love which would be capable of much forgiveness, for by nature he was not a one-woman man, else she could never have come to take the place of his first wife in his heart. Why she loves him so sincerely that she must have him to bring happiness into her life, although she knows that unhappiness will stalk there too, is the usual inexplicable why of woman's love. As the twenty years of her life and association with Gonzalo wear on, she does not sink into a maudlin self-pity in the contemplation of herself and her sad state, but so deepens her philosophy as to be able to accept existing conditions with gentleness and sweetness. She subjects herself to such stern rigor in the repression of her natural emotions as to appear almost indifferent. Such a conquest of self could have come only to
a woman of maturity, a woman in the mid-season of life, whose sadness is tinged to some extent with a certain buoying optimism. That hers was not by any means an easy conquest is shown by the struggles of a heart which cries out for love and yet is too modest to assert this longing; it is not the nature of women to accept such things without jealousy and struggle. She shows her natural jealousy when she confesses that she would be perfectly happy and content if only he were so old and ugly that other women would pass him by as altogether uninteresting and she could feel that he belonged wholly to her. We realize that the bigness of her soul is not a quality evident only in her relations with Gonzalo but with all those with whom she comes in intimate contact. Does it not help in the understanding of her strength of character to know that she is a woman to whom another woman has repentingly confessed a passionate love-affair with Gonzalo, in the knowledge that Isabel will understand and forgive the sin? This is her relationship with Carmen, her best friend

(2) Idem, p. 17.
for whom she so sincerely lies in order to keep her virtue unspotted in the estimation of Carmen's husband. Gonzalo with the blunt insight of the ordinary man judges Isabel only by appearances, and never bothers to discover the true state of her emotions; if she does not cry, surely she is not sad and there is no pain in her heart. Judging by the directness of his own nature, he interprets her silence as a symptom of indifference, thinking that she would display her feelings if her love for him were intense. But when baseless rumors are circulated about María Antonia, the daughter of Gonzalo by his first marriage, and Gonzalo defends Pepe, her delinquent husband, Isabel conquers all modesty in the righteousness of the cause and her love for María Antonia and severely reproaches her husband with his utter selfishness. She is resigned to her own lot but refuses to allow the daughter to have all her youthful enthusiasm crushed so early in life, because she realizes that María Antonia is of such a character as to become embittered. Nor does she hesitate to tell Gonzalo that the unhappiness of his daughter is in a large measure due to his sin with Carmen and the

(2) Idem. p. 157
consequent doubt concerning his parentage, which was the cause of the separation of María from Carmen's son, Enrique. She realizes that Enrique was the one for whom María really cared, and to that attributes her actions of the present. Now for the first time Gonzalo comes to the understanding of all that Isabel has endured for him, of the grievous wrong that he has done her. Of course he knows that he has been far from a model husband, but he has never before apprehended the utter unselfishness of her love. If she had ever made necessary for him, the choice between her and other women, there would have been no hesitation in his choice of her, but when he felt the necessity of no sacrifice he contented himself by going along according to his natural inclinations. There is no evidence of his particular enjoyment of her humiliations, it is rather that in his own satisfaction he is not conscious of any particular resentment on her part. So well has she mastered her role that he has had no reason to try to look under the exterior. She has never given him the least reason to doubt of her virtue, so that he has simply taken her for granted. Now as he comprehends the agonies that
she has suffered during these long years without the sure confidence of his fidelity, he realizes her importance in his life. When he tells of the sacred light in which he holds her affection, there comes to her heart and soul a contentment and satisfaction that repay her for all her struggles and suffering. Hers is a happiness that can come only after long years of patient resignation, of duty fulfilled in an unselfish manner. In the revelation of their love for each other, there is little of the passion of a love born in the springtime of life, but much of the devotion of a mid-season love. As Isabel says, it is a love born of duty cultivated by the tears of resignation, and she is made supremely happy in the possession of her "Autumnal Roses".

To love, to suffer and to sacrifice herself is the text of Isabel in *Alma triunfante*. As the tragic result of the horrible death of her only child by an accident for which she considers herself largely responsible, her mind is so affected that she has to be sent to a sanitarium. Such a

(2) *Idem*. p. 163.
(3) *Teatro*, vol. VII, pp. 7-64.
shock would indeed be enough to upset the reason of any woman, let alone a soul with the intensity of that of Isabel. The loss of the baby is made all the more irreconcilable because of the knowledge that she can bear no more children, that she is doomed to be forever childless. Her case is a mystery to science; hers is a condition that can be improved only by her will to return to her former state of mind and living. At the end of five years of seclusion, altogether contrary to every expectation, her health has been so much improved that her mind has been restored to normalcy. At the opening of the drama we see her upon her return to her loved ones with every expectation of happiness for the future. During this period of long absence, her husband, Andrés, almost frantic in the loss of his child by death and his wife by insanity, has sought solace for his misery in a new love with Emilia. Of this passion a baby girl has been born, upon whom he has lavished the affection of his long pent-up father-love. Upon Isabel's return Andrés is torn

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to distraction in the effort to choose between the two duties which confront him, a distraction which is doubled by the dangerous illness of the baby. Isabel, sensitive in the extreme after her long imprisonment, is made unhappy by his lack of attention and instinctively feels his misery. She feels as one come back from death, and resents the close watching of her actions for signs of (1) returning insanity. Finding such small faith in her recovery in the attitude of those around her, the strong desire to show herself entirely sane causes her to fall into extravagances which are easily misjudged as signs of the insanity which in reality she has overcome. She feels that they are so protecting her as to keep the real truth of things from her and that this truth will never be hers. She lives as if in a sepulchre, apart from those who really live, who love and are loved, from mothers with children and husbands with wives; she is put in a world apart, put there in spite of all her efforts.

Naturally curious about the happenings of

(1) Teatro, Vol. VII, p. 41
(2) Idem. p. 44.
the period of her absence, her questions are many. In the clumsy attempt of Petra, the faithful old servant, to make Isabel happy in the realization of Andrés' love, she learns that one of his chief consolations has been to gaze at two pictures, one of herself and one of a baby. Now Isabel knows that there has been no picture of their dead baby, and almost immediately a realization of the true situation comes to her. In the loving words and caresses of Andrés, she finds only grief because she feels that they are meant for another. This tragic realization almost destroys her heart for it makes her conscious of her complete uselessness. She longs to feel that she is a necessary part in the life of her husband, that her place in his heart is one which no one else can ever fill, just as every woman wants to feel necessary to the happiness of the man she loves. Now she is neither wife nor mother, and life is empty. To have the emotions of mother-love so crushed, and then to rise above that blow only to find that she is not necessary as a wife--what could be more purely tragic? When these ideas come flooding

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upon her, her first reaction is the natural one of hate against those who have caused her to drink so deeply of the bitterness of life. She plans to fight, to conquer and to win back that love which rightfully belonged to her. Is not that the instinctive protest against the deprivation of happiness? But when she has overcome enough of the jealousy and offense which has rankled in her heart, she realizes the cruelty of letting André's live on with her without love and without joy. Her love for him overcomes her other passions so that she decides to sacrifice herself by ending her life, or as she puts it, by fleeing from this life, not to death, but to the birth of another life. Why should she hesitate to perform the simple act that will give him liberty and happiness? Then, too, there comes the thought of the baby which will bless his life as though it were the returned spirit of their own child. With this thought, her spirit soars until she even forgives the other woman and considers her a sister in sorrow, bound by motherhood—and now is her soul truly triumphant over all earthly passions.

Embodying something of patient resignation and more of passionate sacrifice is the extreme compassion of Carmen Valdequejido in *Más fuerte que el amor.* In the beginning we find Carmen enjoying the hospitality of the marqueses of Ondarroa, a family of the industrial aristocracy which has risen to these heights by the initiative of the Marqués. The epigram "woman is a miracle of divine contradictions" must have been written with some such proud and passionate, yet pitying, creature as Carmen in mind. It is when she hears of the suicide of her father, and realizes that she is left alone without any fortune, that we first feel the pulsings of her heart. As she sees the snobbishness of her supposed friends, their either frigidity and lack of sympathy, there comes the first hint of cynicism in her life. In love with Carmen is Guillermo, a cowardly egoist who avoids speaking of marriage to her because she has no money; although aware of her love for him, he arranged a marriage of convenience with Felisa, the only daughter and heiress of the marqueses of Ondarroa. With disdainful sadness she comes to realize that he prefers to decorate his heraldry with the gold of the family of Ondarroa.

than with her love; and thus she becomes decidedly skeptical. While she loves the unworthy Guillermo, Carmen is loved by Carlos Tolavere, only son of a great noble family. Carlos is intelligent and distinguished, yet his temperament is very evidently melancholic, due to his misfortune of having been a victim of paralysis since childhood. Because of the exaltation of this great love, his condition is so improved that he is able to return from the sanitarium; now it is that his mother urges Carmen to make Carlos happy and content by marrying him, assuring her that she alone can help him regain his health and that she will end (1) by truly loving him. At first she cannot make up her mind to the sacrifice, and she wonders what people will say. "Before when I was rich", she says, "I rejected him. What must people think of me if I now accept him for a husband? They would suspect, with due foundation for the suspicion, that I am merely saving myself from poverty by a marriage of convenience." Soon, however, she accepts the sacrifice of marrying Carlos with (2) sort of a proud resignation. When Guillermo, now the husband of Felisa, reappears and tells

(2) Idem. p. 276.
Carmen that he still loves her, she refuses his advances with the righteous indignation of her loyal soul. It is not that she has conquered her love for him, in truth her love is as intense as ever, but it is rather that her dignity and compassion are stronger than her love.

Now that Carmen and Carlos are married, do we find them in the happy, contented state which his mother had predicted? Certainly not under these circumstances. Carlos gives way to taciturn jealousies and cruel silences; he does not trust Carmen, and like all jealous people starts a system of spying which only serves to make both of them miserable. This proves most disagreeably humiliating to the independent soul of Carmen. Feeling such offense at the continual watching of Carlos and the disdainful treatment of his mother, it is natural that a fervent hate against the son and mother should take root in her heart. She married as a sacrifice to the impulse of passion, hence hers was a marriage utterly devoid of natural human passions. She has gloried in the pride of the indomitable strength of her

(2) Idem., p. 518.
will, in the assurance that she is so certain of herself that she need fear nothing, neither love, danger, or sadness. It might be said that she felt as though she had somehow risen above all sufferings and temptations to a glorious resignation. Now that this independence has been stolen from her, the very basis of her pride has been torn away. Of what use is it for her to carry a cross, if she helps no one by the burden? The philosophy of happiness tells her to abandon the paralytic husband, throw herself into the arms of Guillermo and drink of the enjoyment of life, for every being has a right to the love and happiness that come from the free play of normal instincts. Why should she be condemned to waste her life at the side of an imbecile who tortures her at every turn? She fluctuates and wavers between the respect that she owes herself and the fascination of Guillermo, a wavering that is one of the most frequent in a guilty love; and eventually resolves to flee, to evade the responsibility which by her marriage she has incurred. 

(1) Teatro, Vol. XIII. p. 371
But she has not counted on the sudden attack of paralysis which prostrates Carlos at this time; and when she hears him call and sees him lying there, weak and hopeless, she conquers her desire for happiness and remains at the side of her sick husband. Now her soul dominates the situation, and she renounces the love of a man and her chance for freedom and enjoyment of that love for the sadness that it will bring to another's life. The sacrifice seems greater when Carlos himself, in one of his lucid intervals, begs her to enjoy life without any care or worry for him. "You have a right to life and happiness, for you are young and beautiful, while I am only a wreck of a man, one who should have died long ago but does not want to die." Conquering her other instincts and renouncing them all for the one instinct of compassion and pity for this invalid who needs care and tenderness, she remains at his bed-side, not in joy but in sacrifice. Yet according to logical reasoning, is there not sufficient room to wonder if this same struggle will not be repeated again and again in the soul of Carmen, if she will not find that her compassion and her avidity for love and independence are scarcely compatible?
Motivated by this same emotion of compassion is Emilia in Por qué se ama; she clings through thick and thin to the object of her affection. To be sure this is not a compassion identical with that of Carmen, because the elements of love and compassion are so blended that it is not a fight between the two, each pulling a different way, but rather a combination of their forces with only a slight dominance of compassion. In Nell in La Fuerza Bruta we are shown a similar combination of love and pity with the difference that here love seems to be slightly dominant. Of all the paths that lead to a woman's heart, Benavente considers pity as one of the straightest.

The portrait of Elisa in Una señora is aptly drawn to show the sacrifices to which a woman's love will lead her. When Enrique comes to Madrid and is introduced to Elisa by a letter of recommendation from a friend of her dead husband, she welcomes him into the hospitality of her home. Having been wretchedly unhappy in her marriage, she becomes fascinated with this man with whom

she is thrown into such intimate contact, and soon discovers that she is madly in love with (1) him. He asks her to marry him, not because he loves her in a deep or sacred manner, but rather because that happens to be the best solution of (2) his problems. But Elisa does not wish to marry him because she unselfishly argues that her love can not be the love of his whole life since he is young and she will soon be old. With the passing of time, she hopes to be able to learn to love him in a different way, and she does not consider it fair to keep him from happiness with some younger woman. For him she sacrifices her reputation and social position, for she compromises herself in such a way as to be completely disqualified among women of her own circle. Enrique spends her fortune in an election and in gaining influential friends in the most aristocratic circles. In his base ingratitude, he does not hesitate to sacrifice her to his ambitions, unmindful of all that she has done for him, and contract a

(1) Teatro Vol. XXVII, pp. 99-159.
(2) Idem. p. 103.
marriage with the daughter of one of the wealthy families of Madrid. At first she is enraged by his heartless abandonment and resolves to win him back. Then comes the sickening horror of the realization that she has no weapons with which to fight, for youth, beauty and money are no longer hers; she knows the uselessness of depending on his heart for mercy because he has never had a heart. She sees the inevitability of it all, and the impossibility of resigning herself as she had always thought she could do. Resignation is impossible for her, she wants to die. Why should she care to live to face this complete ruin of her life from which there is no salvation? For her his desertion is the catastrophe of her life; it is also the beginning of abject poverty. Her pride prevents her from accepting from anyone what she could never hope to repay, least of all from him, for from him she does not want a lie from a sense of duty or compassion. This desperation turns into a serene grief which seems to harden her, and yet her heart fights against the

(1) Teatro, Vol. XXVII, p. 108.
(2) Idem. p. 112.
horrible reality. Her sadness is not in the realization that she still loves him, but rather consists in thinking how she will come to hate him when she has convinced herself of its absolute truth. When he comes to see her in an effort to get her to accept the situation as it is, like the hypocrite for which we know him, he tells her that he has done it for her. The lie however is plainly evident to Elisa, for she knows that love does not save or sacrifice in this manner; if he loved her, he would want her love to help him fight against adversity, and would be willing to face complete poverty with her. Then and only then would he be loving her as she loves him. Passionately she appeals to him to wait just a little longer before leaving her in utter abandonment, she feels perhaps that this preparation will in time bring the resignation on which she has always counted. He disdainfully refuses to consider it, and leaves her to contemplate a life of hopeless emptiness.

Used to luxuries, she is now provided with only the barest necessities, and even this degree of prosperity is due to the unceasing efforts of

(1) Teatro, Vol. XXVII, p. 117.
(2) Idem. p. 119.
Susurrito, who strives to keep the true state of affairs from Elisa. She goes to church every day, for she feels that without the strength born of devotion she could not live. In the consideration of her love, she expresses a sentiment about the relationship of lovers which is found frequently in Benavente. "In every love affair there is one person who loves and one who lets himself be loved; there is always the glowing fire, and then the reflection which we choose to believe is also fire." Urged by the dire necessity that is engulfing them, Susurrito sends a last appeal to Enrique, sure that his memories will cause him to aid Elisa if he is aware of her extreme destitution; but this does not touch his mercy in the least and in answer she receives only a harsh frigid note of refusal. This somehow falls into the hands of Elisa in spite of the precautions of Susurrito to keep it from her knowledge. It is difficult to forgive her friend's action although she knows that it was for her. Anything is preferable to begging alms from him, for even in her horrible misery she loves him, and the only charity that her pride would allow

(1) Teatro, Vol. XXVII, p. 127
her to accept is the charity of his love. Now that her love brings upon her the lowest depths of humiliation, for the first time she stares the whole, bitter truth of the situation in the face. She resolves to punish herself for her pride which is bringing unhappiness into the life of others, by writing a letter to Enrique. Struggle as she does, she is unable to subject her pride and her love so as to humiliate utterly, herself in his eyes. That would be the absolute abdication of her moral force; and that is too much to ask of any human heart. Next we see her exhausted in a cheap cafe, so destitute that she must beg for enough money to get a drink. Every tie to her former life is gone now, because her two true friends have died—and they were the only ones who had helped her. So it is small wonder that she feels that she has completely lost her identity. To a great extent she has, but not in every respect because even in her degradation she always remains a señora. Dying as she is from poverty her pride keeps her silent; yet thus is a certain element of happiness in her life of these days, a satisfaction in the knowledge that she is not being deceived and that

(1) Teatro, Vol. XXVII. p. 130.
she is not deceiving anybody, that she is known and accepted for what she is. As she sits here, a messenger from a wealthy house brings her a letter from Enrique. Hastily tearing open the envelope, she finds money but nothing more, and why should she want that? Glancing at the envelope she sees only the handwriting of Enrique. The shock of hearing from him after these years of waiting, and then of finding only bank notes in the envelope instead of a word of kindness to recall their life together, proves too much for her broken heart. She falls dead. Loving as she did without any reason and with intense suffering, she gave in sacrifice her reputation, her social position and even her very life— all these sacrifices for the love of an ambitious, brute of a man. Could any woman give more?

Likewise indicative of the power of woman to sacrifice in silence is the character of Doll in Sacrificios; (2) this sacrifice differs in that the motivating purpose of the sacrifice is the love of sisters. Here is a soul with an almost blind

(2) Teatro, Vol. IV, pp. 207-266.
child-like faith in her sister who has been a mother to her since the death of their mother. Alma, the sister, has sung to support herself and Doll, and has sung her way to fame. For a year she has not seen Doll and for five years they have been separated with only occasional brief visits bringing them together. Now that Doll has completed school and Alma is in a position to take life in a more leisurely fashion, Doll urges that she refuse all contracts and stay at home so that they may have a happy time together. Doll has just turned from a child to a woman in the last year, and she lavishes all the love of that impetuous period upon her sister. She says that there is no force or respect in the whole land that could make her do what she would do for love of Alma. The feeling of love for her sister and appreciation of the sacrifices which she has undergone is at the basis of her code of life. When Alma tells her that it would make for their happiness if she could learn to love Ricardo, never for a moment does she hesitate in giving that love; she strives to be capable of doing all that

(1) Teatro, Vol. IV. p. 221
(2) Idem, p. 219.
Alma wants her to do. Ricardo, dominated in a similar manner by Alma, married Doll, and for a while they are happy and contented. When Alma says that they do not seem happy to her, Doll is deeply grieved, not so much that she feels any unhappiness but more because she owes it all to her sister since Alma has sacrificed so much for her, and she does not want Alma to feel that her sacrifices have been useless. Hers is a soul without any pretenses or false appearances, and she thinks other people equally incapable of anything base. She accepts whatever of life her sister offers her with patient resignation, in the firm belief that these offerings must be the best of their kind; her beliefs or her ideas are based upon those of her sister. When she thinks that Alma still loves Ricardo, she begins to understand that life is not all music and happiness; but firmly convinced of the truth of this love, she feels that in payment of all the sacrifices which Alma has made for her there is no cause for hesitation in giving her that which her happiness demands. Her code of life permits no wavering in

(1) Teatro, Vol. IV. p. 231.
(2) Idem. p. 252.
anything which pertains to her sister's happiness; this creed of sacrifice is so much a part of her being that there is scarcely any sign of the least struggle in her decision to give her sister whatever she wants, even though the desired object is her own husband. Never a word of her knowledge of their guilty love passes her lips. They think her the innocent, happy child that she has always been, little suspecting that they have crushed out all her illusions of life and severely tortured her sensitive heart. Realizing that Alma can never be happy with any consciousness of the guilt of a sister's death on her soul, Doll plans her suicide so that it will look like an accident. As she leaps over the precipice that leads to death, we realize the sublimity of a soul so great as to suffer that supreme sacrifice in silence.

While Juana in _Los ojos de los muertos_ also sacrifices her life for sister-love, there is here evidence of intense struggles before she makes up her mind to the sacrifice. At the same time her sister-love is strongly tinged with a feeling of guilt in destroying her sister's happiness. Thus we see that her character forms a natural contrast to that of Doll; her emotional life is one of much greater complication, of an almost inextricable

(1) Teatro Vol. XV, pp. 163-259.
blending of selfishness and sacrifice. Confronted by the realization that Isabel's future happiness depends upon her voluntary breaking of the silence regarding the unaccountable suicide of Isabel's husband, Juana's heart is torn in agony. To confess the horrible truth, that her love was at the bottom of it all, means the sacrifice of everything of worth in life that is left for her. Blinded by the passion of the moment she had no thought of the bitterness of the consequences of her love, but when she is confronted by the tragedy which her revelation of the truth will bring she is truly repentant. In her soul there is the agonizing torment of guilt, of guilt that is devouring her heart, although her conscience is eased somewhat by the knowledge that love came before the sin. For a while she evades her responsibility, not strong enough to bear the scorn and hate of her sister and the disdain of her husband upon their knowledge of her sin and loss of virtue. Forced by circumstances, she finally rises to the heights of confessing the truth to her sister and then takes her own life in expiation for her sin.

In the opinion of the writer the simplest and yet the most forceful of the women who are dominated

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by sacrifices for sister-love is Gunna in La (1)
honra de los hombres, one of Benavente's late
plays (1919). Hers is a unique sacrifice, that of
staining her good name by accepting as her own the
illegitimate child of her married sister, a sac-
ifice heightened by the fact that she is in
love. In the beginning of the action we find
ourselves in the village of Reykyavik in Ice-
land on the eve of the return of Magnus and Toggi
from an absence of a year and a half. Gunna is
a trifle sad because of the sacrifice that she
is making for her sister and the baby, but that
sadness comes only from doubt as to Toggi's under-
standing of the situation. If he should think---
yes, but how can he when his parents know the
truth? Even if he should misjudge her, she
could never consent to the abandonment of the
child who has already cost her so much that she
loves him as her own. She swears that Magnus,
the husband of her sister Paula, shall never
know even though this silence may ruin her happi-
ness, even though it may mean her very life. She

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has sacrificed before the people that which a woman values most highly, but her own conscience is clear—and after all, what else matters so long as she retains her own self-respect? When the ship comes in, Gunna does not go to meet the men-folk, for there is the instinct of fear of their misunderstanding in her heart. She realizes too that Magnus will be harsh in his criticism of her, that he will hold the loss of her honor as the loss of his own because she has lived as a member of his household ever since the death of her father. She tries to console herself with the realization that if Toggi really believes in her and loves her more than ever there is nothing (1) to worry about. When, after some hesitation, Toggi comes to her and promises to be the father of the child and give it his name, Gunna's happiness is complete; for she has hoped and prayed for the joy and consolation of his help in her sacrifice.

When she decides to marry Toggi and tells Magnus of her decision to leave the child in the care of Paula, she suspects that he knows some-

thing of the truth because he looks at her so strangely and has such an unusual note in his voice. Since she must not allow him to learn the truth if she would not have suffered all her sacrifice in vain, she decides to refuse to be separated from the child and to make him believe that she cannot live without it in order to keep away from his mind any shadow of doubt as to the child's parentage. With purposeful intention, Magnus offends and makes fun of Toggi so that Toggi blurts out the whole truth. When Gunna sees the catastrophe that is descending, she tries to destroy Magnus' belief in Toggi's statement by declaring that it is all a lie.

What will Paula think? That Gunna has told, while in reality she has never broken the silence which she swore to maintain. Her resentment against Toggi for telling the truth of the situation is deep because she is the only one who had the right to say it; the sacrifice is hers to do with as she sees fit, and she is offended by his intrusion of her rights. Now that the damage is done she entreats Magnus to pardon Paula and explains that her hypocrisy has been for his sake as well as for her sister, because if he had never

known the truth he would have been just as happy as though the sin had never been committed. Himself incapable of departing from the way of honor, Magnus fails to understand the frailty which would permit such action on the part of his wife; he is utterly intolerant of her conduct and refuses to consider her as his wife. In bitter repentance for his hasty speech, Toggi tells Gunna that he is sorry and begs forgiveness because it was all for her. But Gunna silences him, "For me? To defend my honor? No, it was for you, it was to defend your own honor. You were not capable of resisting the temptation of showing that the blame belonged to some one else, that it was entirely divorced from your honor. While I—a poor woman, in order to evade the sadness and ruin that would fall on this house, claimed as mine a fault that did not belong to me. I sacrificed, well you know what I have sacrificed, and I would even have sacrificed your love if the necessity had arisen. I have endured the harshest words from Magnus, and have kept silent, assured by my conscience. But you have not kept silent, you have not been

(1) Teatro, Vol. XXVI, p. 207.
capable of helping me in my sacrifice. Now do you see what you have done? I can not esteem you, Toggi, I can not esteem you."

She was proud of her sacrifice, all the prouder because she thought that he appreciated and shared it with her, but now that he has made useless that sacrifice she can no longer love him. She sends him away, this difference in their conception of honor tearing them apart forever, while she remains with her sister and the baby, continuing bravely in her duty and sacrifice. "Oh, these men, when they think us offended they know nothing more than to destroy—we women, poor creatures, know how to suffer and atone for our faults, which never are ours alone. Here is my sister with her child, mine also, born of the sorrow of my soul—and here I will remain."

Similar instances of this dominant quality are found in María (El nido ajeno), Rosario (Lo cursi) (5) Luisa (Por las nubes), Juana (El collar de estrellas) (6), Angeles (La propia estimación) (7), and Asunción (La inmaculada de los dolores). (8)

(1) Teatro, Vol. XXVI, p. 208
(5) Teatro, Vol. XVIII, pp. 77-205.
Chapter II.

**Selfishness and Intrigue**

Women, all women, are treacherous, unfaithful and almost always disreputable. (1).

Belonging to a definitely contrasting group in Benavente’s Gallery of Women are the portraits with a dominant tone of selfishness and intrigue. The chief impediment to their happiness is the weariness of the things which they possess and the insatiable desire for the things which they do not have. For all women this exists as an impediment to their perfect happiness, but exaggerated to an extreme it becomes a mania leading to all sorts of selfishness and craftiness. When a woman becomes so self-centered that she desires only her own happiness with utter disregard for that of others, there are few wily tricks to which she will not stoop in her effort to obtain that happiness. She is capable of taking any road that leads to the desired object, only to find when she reaches it that

(1) Musset.
she is so weary after the detours that there is no enjoyment in the possession. These experiences do not make selfish women wiser; they only harden them. 

The portrait of Silvia (La gata de Angora) typifies the insidious, hypocritical attitude of a vain woman. Apparently sweet and gentle, at heart she is a selfish coquette desirous of love and attention without any inclination to return either. Her present plaything is Aurelio, a portrait painter of vogue among the women of the aristocracy. Passionate and sincere in his love for her, any symptom of indifference on her part tortures his sensitive heart. She deceives him into believing that she is a creature of gentle sadness, that even though her position in society permits only an appearance of frivolity, she wishes to be of use in somebody's life and that his is the one heart in which she chooses to reign. Vowing with the fondest of words that she can not bear to torment him, she straightway proceeds to do that very thing in a cruel and effective manner. The reason that she permits his

(2) Idem, p. 142.  
(3) Idem, p. 144.
attention is because of the pride of possession of an artist whom the world admires. As he sees her happy, proud and disdainful, he wonders what her true self can be. When is she sincere, in the role of gentle sadness or in that of proud haughtiness?

Toying and trifling with his affection, she unartfully fails to conceal her treachery from his observation. When the painful realization of the true state of affairs dawns upon Aurelio, disgust fills his heart. There appears in his mind a picture of Silvia, all in cold, shimmering white, her whole attitude and expression symbolical of the treachery of the feline spirit; he sees her as a veritable Angora cat. For an indifferent artist this would have been a brilliant inspiration, but for him it conveys only intense agony. When he faces her with the truth of her selfishness, she admits his accusations saying that she is not willing to sacrifice for him, that she is not capable of any great sacrifice, much less of enduring any scandal that may endanger her social position. She has the assurance that her conscience will soon be tranquil; it has been easy to still before, why

should it cost any effort now? She thoroughly enjoys mortifying him and in the indulgence of her enjoyment spares no irony or frigidity. Why then does she accept his love? Simply because it brings an experience of which she has never tasted before; and his admiration pleases her vanity. She is the finished portrait of a hypocritical, insincere trifler, of a woman without a soul.

Manni of El Dragón de fuego is a character of primitive passions, of treacheries, hate, and torments, that destroy both body and heart. Directed into some one useful channel instead of constantly changing ones, her energy would have led to marvelous triumphs. The destructive passion of hate is the emotion that motivates her life; it is the law by which she lives. Nobly patriotic she is willing to sacrifice to any limit for her country; this patriotism is dominated by hate of the conquerors rather than love of her fellow-countrymen. She rebels fiercely at being forced to breathe the same air as those who have overrun the country; and the butt of her concentrated hate is Dani-Sar, her husband, whom she holds res-

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(2) Idem. p. 178.
ponsible for existing conditions. Scathingly she renounces him as her husband declaring that she cannot endure a man with the soul of a slave and that it is her desire that he choose a new wife immediately. The gods have been gracious in not giving her any children, for it would have been cruel torture to have been the mother of children born of a slave. Hers is an imperious being; she has only to command and her desires are fulfilled. Born among the fires of battle, fierceness and courage have been her inheritance. During her years of marriage with Dani-Sar, she has never once breathed a word of love or tenderness, she has never been either the submissive slave or the loving wife. Her only thought is that they must triumph whatever the cost, and in this fight there is no treachery or vengeance horrible enough to satisfy her. When it appears that the enemy is victorious, she shows by her willingness to accept a quick submission that there has been no true nobility in her patriotism, that it has only

(1) Teatro, Vol. IX, p. 180
(2) Idem. p. 228.
been a selfish fight to gain her own ends. She must have life at any price, even at the cost of (1) slavery and cowardice. As the triumph again shifts, her treachery again becomes evident as she entices the leader of the enemy into her hands by the offer of the heart of the woman whom he loves. She schemes and conspires against every one, sparing neither her husband or her sister in her perfidy. Inspired by the black passion of hate, she indulges in atrocious vengeance against any one who happens to be an obstacle in the path of her selfish aspirations. She is not of those who die, she is of those who kill.

Belonging to the aristocracy of brains and (2) talent is Petra in Gente conocida; she makes fun of and plays both with the aristocracy of race and with that of money, using them equally to her advantage by virtue of the strength of her sheer nerve and shrewdness. She is a woman whom men like and whom women despise. Surprisingly frank in her denunciation of other women, she somehow manages to inspire a fervent jealousy in them. Men are as putty in her hands; she knows how

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(1) Teatro, Vol, IX, p. 244.
(2) Teatro, Vol, I, pp. 81-227.
to manage them so they do the things she wants done thinking that they are doing them of their own free-will. She is a true diplomat. Left a widow when very young, she has nevertheless continued to keep her interest in the world, and now at the age of forty-eight she has a fascination born of varied experiences. Typical of her audacity is her appearance at the home of the duchess only a few minutes after receiving an invitation to a dance from that dignified lady and her assurance that she would have considered herself invited anyway, even though she had been in receipt of no invitation, because of the intimacy of her relations with the family. Realizing that the duchess resents her presence because of her suspicious relations with Enrique, she takes peculiar pleasure in emphasizing this friendship. She particularly enjoys the writhing of the Condesa and in this conversation reveals the workings of an exceedingly active mind. The duke, Enrique, is the only man whom she has ever loved, but she does not desire to marry him because he has no fortune; such a marriage would mean the sacrifice of her liberty.

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(2) Idem p. 117.
without any gain. Now that Enrique is planning a
marriage of convenience, she announces her approa-
ching marriage to Montes, a man of the middle
class who has risen to high society by virtue of
his millions. In telling Enrique of her arrangements
she does not pretend that she is in love with Mon-
tes, but rather that she needs to be sincerely
loved if she is not to grow frigid and hard. She
says that her once passionate love for Enrique
has been changed into friendship, so that they
may now feel that they can trust each other com-
pletely and they can always retain this friendship;
but in reality this is only a pose, because she
always manages to retain something of her former
power over him. In order to overcome other sen-
timents which are not so advantageous to her,
Petra inspires in Montes the sentiment of father-
hood and induces him to recognize an illegitimate
daughter. Now she has placed the Condesa, her
mortal enemy, in exactly the humiliating position
in which she had hoped to see her; for the Condesa
has expected that her own daughter, Fernandita,

(2) Idem. p. 182.
would inherit the millions of Montes. Well does she know that the Condesa would prefer to see her continue her relations with Enrique, the future husband of Fernandita, than to see her married to Montes, managing affairs as she is. She brings the daughter, Angelita, to Madrid and introduces her into society. Even under these difficult circumstances and in spite of all that people have said about her, in less than a month these same aristocrats are vying with each other for the (1) honor of being received in her home. Now they speak of her as a distinguished woman of rare genius, and indeed she has displayed rare taste in the planning of her magnificent home. Coldly calculating, she plans to dispose of the heart of Angelita by marrying her to Enrique; by stationing Angelita as the bond of union between Montes and Enrique she has discovered the masterful combination of retaining the money of one and the love of the other without any evidence of her scheming. But for the first time in her life she feels afraid of the consequences after she has sent Enrique to propose. Well may she be afraid because misled by Angelita's sadness and reserve,

Petra is totally unprepared for the independence shown by the girl in her refusal to become the wife of the duke. Little has Petra reckoned with the strong, simple emotions of Angelita and her consciousness that she has been brought to Petra's care for the purpose of acting as a medium in the satisfaction of certain plans. She feels keenly the humiliation of this defeat, but her ambition is not quelled and at the last she plans to have Angelita sent to a convent; if she cannot use the girl as a tool for her own selfish aims, she certainly does not desire to sacrifice her own liberty. Clever climber that she is, guided only by selfishness in her struggle for the delights and luxuries of life, she nevertheless compels a reluctant admiration because of her independence and self-reliance.

The feminine trait of firm insistence upon details is delightfully portrayed in the character of Emilia in De pequeñas causas. To her the satisfaction of her vanity looms as the most important thing in the world, and the strategy to which she resorts is worthy of a brilliant general.

(1) Teatro, Vol, I, p. 216.
(2) Idem. p. 226.
(3) Teatro, Vol, XVIII. pp. 7-34.
She begins her campaign by telling her husband, minister of finance, of the arrival of a new dress from Paris. Of course men do not know how to appreciate such things, but this is a veritable dream of a creation with rare eloquence of details (1) which must be seen to be appreciated. When will the minister have the privilege of seeing it? What a question, when she has had it made for the dinner which they are giving for the Turkish prince. Persian? Oh, well, small difference about his nationality so long as she gets to wear the new gown at the dinner. When her husband tells her that he does not expect to be the minister in a couple of days, that a crisis has arisen in which his ideas do not conform with those of the government, she thinks that he is doing her a grievous wrong. That he has reached his limit of concessions and can only refuse to compromise by sending in his resignation is of little importance to the vain Emilia. So he thinks it more important that his enemies should recognize his sincerity than that his wife should be happy? For him she has sacrificed her relations with her best friends, has

endured even the awful heat of a Madrid summer, and yet he does not think her worthy of the least sacrifice. It is not a mere whimsy or caprice, she says, that she must display her gown on just such an occasion as this dinner; in fact it is an absolute necessity because she must prove to a certain cabinet member's wife that she is elegant instead of cursi. When he accuses her of sacrificing his convictions to a mere satisfaction of her vanity, she says that she is no more vain than he. The only reason that he is resigning is because he said one thing and is too vain about his sincerity to say something else; he is unable to accommodate himself to circumstances. Aware that opposition is gaining her nothing, she changes her course saying that they will go to some bore-some village, that she will sacrifice anything rather than see him in this frame of mind, willing and ready to make her suffer because he is disgusted with others. These tactics are better than twenty discourses of opposition and almost immediately he promises not to send in his resignation. With the assurance that she will have the coveted pleasure of wearing her marvelous

(1) Teatro, Vol. XVIII, p. 27.  
(2) Idem. p. 30.
gown, she is supremely content; and surely he will understand as soon as he sees his wife in
the creation. Even though the women petition for the right to vote, (as if they did not already
govern the world) he need not grant the petition. Emilia is not the first woman who has decided a
crisis by her wheedling and cajoling; hers is the effective method of getting what they want
that most women employ.

In Josefina of La gobernadora, Benavente shows a woman of ungenerous soul, capable of the
wiliest schemes in order to gain her own ends. She goes so far as to persuade her husband to use
his authority against his better judgment. Persuaded by the moneyed classes, devoted to reaction,
she induces her husband to forbid the performance of a play extolling liberal tendencies, and the
next moment begins her intrigue to compel him not to interfere with the spectacle. Mature as she is,
there is no manifestation of the maturation of any of the noble qualities that often come to
women in middle-age. Something of her nature may be shown when she tells Santiago, the governor,

(1) Teatro, Vol, XVIII, p. 33.
(2) Teatro, Vol, V, pp. 7-181.
that the first thing a man needs in order to fill an office of importance is character, and to have character is to do whatever one thinks is right, no matter what comes of it; if it turns out to be wrong, all the more reason for sticking to it.

Yet somehow she fails to exhibit any evidence of that character which she thinks so essential; she wavers as the wind, never sticking to any course of action except one of selfishness and ambition. Incapable of a great love for anyone except herself, she constantly chides Santiago with a lack of love for her because he does not always pay heed to her wise counsel. She likes to feel her own importance, to feel that she is, so to speak, the veritable power behind the throne. Manolo may have seemed to her to be a real love. We must give her credit for being skilful in her intrigue however because she keeps her husband totally ignorant of her relations with Manolo; she desires the pleasant combination of the position in society which Santiago gives her linked to the pleasures and emotions which Manolo furnishes. However, she is faithful to neither, she is simply

non-committal in her affections. After Manolo has saved the whole situation of her position as gobernadora and her position in her husband's eyes and asks her if she is now satisfied and if he is not deserving of her confidence and respect, she petulantly answers that she doesn't know, that he is bothering her. Her decision to have Manolo sacrifice a brilliant future in order to keep him in her power is obviously characteristic of her selfishness and egoism.

Charmingly unique among the portraits is that of Mefistófela 2 in the play of the same name. She is a fantastic creature born of Benavente's fertile imagination and is pictured as the woman whom the devil is using to create patronage for Hades. The only way that she can enjoy the privileges of the devil's nobility is to marry one of their number; Mefistófeles, a devil of the world with much experience in society, becomes her husband. Immediately she is sent away to Earth to steal the formula of a serum which has been discovered to prevent love. She had diverted herself while she was in the world and she is disposed to continue the process with great enjoyment. Having divorced

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five husbands, she feels qualified to undertake almost any new experience. She becomes enamored of the young helper in the office of Dr. Faust, and is miserable in the fear of awful condemnation and torture when she discovers that she is not a woman superior to all weakness, endowed with supernatural power but that she is only a woman of those who fall in love. Why must she have the heart of a woman, if she has to be a Mefistófeles? Woman of intrigue as she is, she is herself a victim of intrigue, because in reality her lover is none other than Mefistófeles in earthly form. And what worse fate could befall a woman than to be in love with her own husband?

Although the ones already discussed are chief among the selfish and intriguing women who are the characters of prime interest in the plays in which they appear, Benavente introduces many minor characters dominated by these characteristics who serve as contrasts to his noble and generous women. Among these are Felicia (El marido de la Téllez), Felisa (Por la herida), Alma (Sacrificios) Countess

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(1) Teatro, Vol. XXV, p. 28.
(4) Teatro, Vol. IV, pp. 207-266.
Rinaldi (La noche del sábado) Countess Diana (La princesa Bebé), Emilia (Por las nubes), Leonor and Estela (La losa de los sueños), Carolina (Campo de armiño), Paula (La honra de los hombres), and Countess of Nottingham (La vestal de occidente).

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(2) Teatro, Vol. X, pp. 115-266.
(3) Teatro, Vol. XVIII, pp. 77-203.
(4) Teatro, Vol. XX, pp. 27-146.
(7) Teatro, Vol. XXVII, pp. 5-97.
Chapter III.

Mother-love.

Mighty is the force of motherhood! It transforms all things by its vital heat; it turns timidity into fierce courage, and dreadless defiance into tremulous submission; it turns thoughtlessness into foresight and yet stills all anxiety into calm content; it makes selfishness become self-denial, and gives even to hard vanity the glance of admiring love. (1)

To fulfill the entire and holiest end of her being, a woman must be a wife and mother, for only thus can she become of the greatest importance to the race and nation as well as to herself. Mother-love is the complete type of love in another's life which is the essence of real human love. There somehow seems to be a unique virtue which comes only with being a mother, a fortitude and hardiness which are denied other women. A mother is able to face hardship and sacrifice with much more courage than the childless because she has learned that it is possible to endure great discomfort, to look forward to certain agony, and it may be, death, and to look steadily since the end is good. She has learned that suffering and pain are not insuperable.

(1) George Eliot.
portable or degrading, but that after great suffering comes marvelous peace and joy.

Not only to a mother in the flush does the feeling of maternal tenderness come, but the ideal woman feels the presence of the cherished child in all the children of want, bodily, mental, or moral want. Over a wide and ever-widening circle ranging from the innocent infant of a few days to the base, degraded man, is spread the protecting fondness of her mother instinct, and she becomes in a sense a mother to all humanity. Mother-love is so immense and unmeasurable that of necessity a woman's soul must enlarge to contain it. Spotless motherhood is a thing more tinged with divinity than any other earthly emotion.

Maternal tenderness is often manifested by a woman for her husband when their marriage has not been blessed by children. A manifestation of this feeling is shown by Victoria in *La comida de las fieras*. Mother-like she does not want Hipólito to feel that he is at all her debtor, for that would detract from the pleasure of her sacrifices. Her love for him is all her life, and this great

(1) Cartas de mujeres., p. 55.
love has come to be something like a child of her own soul that she fondly caresses and carries within her heart. Often in her thoughts between crying and smiling she says the same sweet absurdities that mothers whisper to their tiny babies. On her husband she lavishes all the gentle fondness of a mother's love.

This affection and tenderness well up in almost every woman's heart, and somehow must find an outlet if their growth is not to be impeded. In Irene, the haughty marquise of Montalbán, Benavente pictures maternal love as overcoming the almost unsurmountable obstacle of cold pride. She is so proud in fact that she has never married because nobody has seemed sufficiently noble. When quite young she fell in love with a man who was far below her equal in rank, and as it is to be expected, her family opposed the match with violence. At length, won over by Irene, the family gave in, but when she offered her heart and nobility and beauty, the young man fled unappreciative. This was her only love affair because her pride rose up and prevented her from becoming interested again, and the love of her older brother became the only great love of her life. Now that

(1) Teatro, Vol. II, p. 241
(2) Teatro, Vol. XXII, pp. 105-268.
(3) Idem. p. 141.
she hears that her adored brother has left a child, a boy of about eight years, she feels that she has found somebody to restore the love of her dead brother. She alone in her family is disposed to believe that the boy really belongs to Augustín, all the others think that he is only an impostor. Impetuous in her judgments, deciding largely by first impressions, she trembles in her impatience to see the child. An expression, a gesture or an inflection of his voice will be enough to gain instantly either her sympathy or her antipathy, for in spite of her earnest desire to love the boy, she could not overcome her repulsion if she saw anything in him that disgusted her. It would then be useless to pretend that she wanted to care for him because pretense and deceit are utterly foreign to her frank, sincere nature. Always in extremes, her whole heart opens for him as soon as she sees the gentle sadness of the little lad. When her sister is furious with her for taking the child and accuses her of staining the nobility of their blood, she insists that the fruits of true love do not leave the slightest stain upon a name

(1) Teatro, Vol. XXII. p. 159.
but the fruits of a marriage of convenience, not
consecrated by love, make the blackest kind of a
stain. By this viewpoint of hers, she shows her-
self a revolutionary aristocrat, decidedly frank
in the expression of her opinions. Opposing
her family and defending Gerardo, as she is, she
nevertheless wishes to be open-minded about ac-
cepting the evidence of both sides. When evi-
dence proves that the boy is not the son of her
brother, her pride conquers her affection for him
and she sends him back to his mother, realizing
all the while that the child has no fault, and
it is not justice to him, but that it is impos-
sible to punish the guilty without also punishing
the innocent. Yet somehow after she has made her
decision according to what she thinks she should
do, she experiences a bitter loneliness. Until
now her pride has conquered all, and for the first
time she realizes that her heart is not so strong
as she had thought it. Her sadness overcomes all
else and she is miserable in the grand solitude in
which she has previously been so content. As she
realizes that she has torn away the thing by which
she has hoped to justify her useless life, her

(2) Idem. p. 232.
(3) Idem. p. 247.
last illusions disappear. Her soul is like a sea of grandeur, great in itself, but absolutely sterile in its surroundings, the sand and the rocks. Of what use is life if love does not add life to life? Her heart is somehow as though it were sealed; it has treasures of love and affection that could enrich her life, but by keeping them so hidden, it is as though they had been robbed. That is a sin against the spirit, a sin which deserves no compassion. The knowledge that he was of poorer lineage had created an instinctive hate caused by the jealousy of the purity of the family blood; it was as if she felt jealousy against those who were not worthy of her consideration and that this jealousy overshadowed any idea of forgetting or desire of pardoning. When the news reaches her that Gerardo has not appeared at the home of his mother, that he is lost, Irene comes to understand how immense her love for him is, that she has arrived at the point where her love for this child is the most important emotion of her being. She feels that among them all they have spoiled the boy’s life and that the chief fault rests with her. She realized his misery, and after all what difference

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Should it have made to her that he was not of her blood so long as he needed her? She had loved him because she thought that he was unhappy, and yet caused him much added unhappiness by her own actions. Her mother-love overcomes her respect for the ordinary conventionalities of life as she grows almost frantic with the knowledge that he is lost. Great is her relief when she receives a scribbled note from him telling of his sadness and asking for a place to work; into that note he had put his very heart. When he comes to her in response to her summons, mother-like she notices in the first moment that he is pale and hungry and cold, and she now obeys the impulse of her love at the cost of her name and honor and claims him as her son. Whatever the cost of banishing those treacheries and passions she will do it for his sake, and the purpose of her life will be to ennoble his and to be worthy of his love and the confidence which he gives so whole-heartedly. Maternal and compassionate love so completely overcomes her false pride of family and so purify her love that a glorious redemption comes to her soul.

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(1) Teatro, Vol. XXII. p. 255.  
(2) Idem. p. 257.  
(3) Idem. p. 259.
In the opinion of the writer, the most powerfully realistic and supremely fine feminine portrait in Benavente's Gallery is Dominica in Señora Ama. Truly marvelous is his harmonious blending of noble serenity and subtle inner passions in this woman as he brings them out of the shadows into the high-lights. Her readiness to sacrifice, her belief in pardon in the religion of matrimony, her brave accomplishment in carrying what the villagers so aptly call her cross, are logically tempered with the natural jealousies of a loving heart. Particularly typical of the maxim of heathen antiquity "Reverence thyself if thou wouldst hope to be respected" is her attitude toward life. She pays little heed to the gossip that goes around even when the subject of the gossiping tongues is the intimate relationship of Feliciano, her husband, with María Juana, her sister. People realize that she is the most honorable of women, and although she permits dishonor it is only for love of her husband and not that she herself would ever want to stoop to such a thing. She is much beloved by the peasant people of this district; in fact they think

(1) Teatro, Vol. XVII, pp. 5-155.
of her as a veritable saint, (1) for she shares their joys and troubles in a most sympathetic way. When one of the girls gives her a blue ribbon for her hair, she says that she would much prefer to have some other color which did not signify jealousy, for that is a passion against which she must fight. In spite of all that she has endured and suffered for Feliciano, she thinks there is no other man quite like him. Then she first thought that he could love other women, she was absolutely desperate but now there is a partial satisfaction in the conviction that the women love him. She has sometimes made up her mind that she will leave Feliciano, but she has always failed to subdue her love enough to be able to accustom herself to live without him. (3) Whenever she has told him that she could endure no more, that she was going back to her father, he always made fun of her and told her to go right ahead, that he could go off with another woman just as well as she could go away with her father. She knew that he would do as he promised, and she certainly did not want to play a losing game. When

(1) Teatro, Vol. XVII, p. 11.
(2) Idem. p. 44.
(3) Idem. p. 48.
(4) Ibid.
she married him she expected to be with him all her life and accept with patience any suffering which might come. She consoles herself slightly with the assurance that there are many things, much worse than philandering, to which she might have been forced to accustom herself. She continually affects a feeling of pride in the conquests of her husband, but deep in her heart there burns jealousy of these other women. Probably one of the most humiliating experiences that can come to woman is to recognize the features of her husband when she looks at many of the urchins of the neighborhood. So far as she herself is concerned, she is glad that they have no children, but she prays for a child for the sake of Feliciano, thinking that children might impress him with something of the sanctity of the home.

Instead of feeling hatred for the women with whom her husband has had affairs, her bigness of soul breeds sympathy for them. Although she keenly realizes his enjoyment of other women, she reflects that he has given her the greatest proof of con-

sideration because he has made her his wife. Surely a wife could not be jealous of any other woman, and yet what wife would not be under similar circumstances? When María Juana confesses that she has loved Feliciano, that that love almost killed her because it was for the husband of the only other person in the world whom she has ever loved, Dominica is all sympathetic compassion and overcomes all the germs of hate for her sister which were beginning to take root in her heart. She completely forgives María Juana, surer of her love than she has ever before been.

Suddenly we see her in an obviously different mood, one in which her friends have never before seen her or even thought to see her. The knowledge that she is to be a mother gives her the right and privilege to demand things that she could never before demand. Now she has nothing for which to envy any woman in the world because she is the happiest of them all. It is such a supreme joy that

(2) Idem. p. 121-22-23.
she is almost afraid to believe that it is true, because if it should prove not to be the disappointment would be unbearable. She begins to look at everything through changed eyes. Again and again she pictures in her mind that supreme moment of her life when Feliciano will come to her bedside asking for their child. She will love the child all the more knowing all that its father has cost her, and things will be changed because he will not want to give a bad example to their child. While she is waiting to tell Feliciano the wonderful way in which they are soon to be blessed, she hears that he has been wounded and womanlike, straightway arrives at the conclusion that José has shot him while he is on the way to see María Juana. Nobly she blames herself for throwing them together, practically into each other's arms. The relief is so great when she learns that he is uninjured, that he was only thrown from a horse that she can scarcely believe the commonplace explanation. But when he swears to the truth by his child that is to be born, she is content. Truly feminine is her insistence that their child is the

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(1) Teatro, Vol. XVII. p. 128
(2) Ibid.
(3) Idem. p. 137.
(4) Idem. p. 145.
only one that he can call his because it is the
only one that is hers too, for a mother always
wants first place for her own child. Now that
she is to be a true wife to him and bear him a
child, she feels privileged to require of Feliciano
all the rights of a real wife.

That the mighty force of motherhood transforms
natural timidity into fierce courage is shown in
the character of Fermina in *Una pobre mujer*. She
is accused of stealing a gold pin from the house
where she is working, and all her efforts to es-
establish her innocence prove futile. She must ac-
cept in silence the brand of thief upon her for
the rest of her life, and of necessity will have
great difficulty in earning a living for no woman
will want a thief in her house. This brand will
cost her dearly, and her soul revolts against the
injustice of it. She has not told her employers
that she has a daughter because they usually do
d not want servants with children; they know that
mothers will do anything—even steal—for their chil-
dren. When they ask about her daughter, she replies
that her daughter has been ill and that her baby,
only four months old, prevents her from going back

to the factory to work. Theirs is a miserable existence of poverty, lacking most of the bare necessities of life. The daughter is not married, but the mother says that it is just the same as if she were because she has lived with this man for more than three years. She considers this manner of living absolutely decent for the poverty-stricken, because marriage with its incurred responsibilities costs too dearly for the poor. Those in the world who can live as God has commanded are indeed blessed because there are so many who do not have enough money to live in matrimony. Although the pin is found, the mistress feels that it is somehow not quite the proper thing to make explanations to servants, but never stops for a moment to consider the misery and agony that such an explanation would save Fermina. Branded as a thief, having an intense hatred of inspiring pity, too proud to beg, what is Fermina to do to earn a living?

To add to their misery, her daughter's husband has deserted her. He said that he was going out to find work and would return soon, but instead he has gone to another woman's house, a rich woman with whom he had once lived. When Carmen learns that

their existence has been made possible by gifts from this woman and that her husband has never worked a single day to give anything to their support, she insists that she would never have touched a bite of the food if she had known. Now she will accept nothing even though she should die from hunger; she would rather die from hunger than from pity. Ricardo returns for a short time, and they discuss the futility of trying to live together without any means of support. During the conversation Ricardo says that it would all be possible if Fermina would give them her money. Taunted thus when she has spent every cent of her money for her daughter and the baby, she becomes furious and turns on Carmen and Ricardo in a rage. When Ricardo starts to leave and Carmen sees that she will never get him back again, she implores her mother to detain him. Fermina's deep mother-love overcomes all other emotions, and she promises to get money somehow, even to rob if necessary in order that her daughter may have happiness. When her daughter turns on her with the reproach, "Would that you had never brought me into this world", the mother's heart is torn with

(2) Idem. p. 189.
(3) Idem. p. 198.
(4) Idem. p. 199.
grief. When a mother has lived only for her child, has made her life a veritable sacrifice for her, it is the cruelest punishment to have the child reproach her as the cause of the misery for having brought the child into life. It would be almost better to kill a child than to have it grow up ungrateful and abusive.

During her daughter's illness, she never leaves the bedside; for five days and five nights she has remained there without sleep and without food. It is a wonderful love which makes up her whole existence. Her grief at seeing her daughter die thus after all that she has sacrificed is absolutely beyond consolation; she has no comfort. They can scarcely force her from Carmen's side. Why should she live now? She calls on the merciful God to take her with her daughter for that is the only way she can find comfort. Suddenly she is reminded of the baby and strength is given poor Fermina to resolve to live, to begin again and make the sacrifices for this child that she has already made for her own daughter. Her mother-love turns her grief and hopelessness into courage to continue the sacrifices even though her only reward in the

(2) Idem. p. 204.
(3) Idem. p. 214.
end may be a bitter reproach "Why did you bring me all this misery?"

Rosina in _La løsa de los suenos_ is a soul of great loves. She cannot understand how one can truly love without having implicit belief and trust in the person whom she loves; she does not know how to love and mistrust at the same time. Because of that faith she now is the mother of a child without a name and the love of that baby is the supreme thing in her life. Her child is for her above all else, but she has nobly consented to separate herself from it for the sake of her mother and sisters. This she does because she realizes that her sin is deserving of punishment, and that the virtue of her family is deserving of privileges. She thinks that it is probably the best thing for her that they accuse her of the sin, because her own conscience accuses her so little, and the love of her child is worth so much to her that she would be happier than ever before if she could not see the pain that her fault was costing her sisters and her mother. It is not just that she should be completely happy when she is guilty. She has grown to despise Enrique; For nothing in the world, not

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(1) _Teatro_, Vol. XXVII, p. 215.
(2) _Teatro_, Vol. XX, pp. 27-146.
(3) _Idem_. p. 116
(4) _Idem_. p. 117.
even for the sake of her baby, that will never bear the name of its father, will she consent to become his wife, for that would be a punishment beyond her strength. She could pardon him if he had thought of her as a woman unworthy of bearing his name, could have pardoned all torments and cruelties, could have pardoned him even if he had separated her from their child, thinking that she would not be a good mother; but she could never pardon a man who refused to see his own child and is incapable of feeling any love or compassion for the defenseless little creature. How can she feel that such a man is other than wholly despicable? On mere sight of the baby she has forgotten all her shame and felt that this poor life is worth more to her than anything else in the world, more than honor or happiness. There are many reasons and pretexts which are sufficient to tranquillize a man's conscience in the abandonment of a woman, but there is never any reason to abandon a helpless child. Rosina accepts the painful consequences of her sin, consequences that might easily make a coward of her, with strong courage, while Enrique for whom there is no painful duty, no dishonor, flees like the coward that he is. Whenever a woman has reason to call a man a coward, ______________________

(1) Teatro, Vol. XX, pp. 119.
(2) Ibid.
he sinks to the lowest depths of her disdain—she has bought dearly her right to despise him. Tired of the insults of her sisters, she decides to leave home, to go and earn her bread or else die of hunger. Cipriano comes to bring her news that her sick baby is getting better and to offer her again his love and name. This good news about her child cheers her because she could bear the thought of losing the only valuable thing left for her in life. The only time when she can forget her misery is when she holds the child in her arms and looks into its innocent eyes, the only eyes into which she can gaze without seeing cruelty or sadness. Much as she loves Cipriano she can not consent to marry him and accept his name for her baby; she can not consent that his honor may be questioned. If they could go away together, she could marry him; but he has no money, and thus they are separated by the chasm of poverty. She courageously decides to stay in her own home, endure the continual insults; this house shall be the graveyard of her dreams. Content to sacrifice love, honor and happiness for her baby, the fortitude and strength of her love is almost a thing divine.

(1) Teatro, Vol. XX, p. 121
(2) Idem. p. 145.
La malquerida is an emotional drama in which "the landscape and action are exteriorized from the realm of character and conscience and partake of its nature, vague and blurred of outline, seemingly painted in broad but ill-defined strokes, which harmonize with a pervading sense of doubt and uncertainty, bewilderment of conscience and impending doom." Intense in her passion both for her husband and her daughter is Raimunda. Her chief desire in life is that her daughter, Acacia, be on good terms with her step-father, Esteban; and her disappointment is very keen because of Acacia's continued aversion, in spite of all Esteban's kindness to her. At the time of the play Acacia is betrothed to Faustino, son of a neighboring farmer; she had previously been engaged to her cousin, Norberto, but the engagement had been broken for no obvious reason. One night, just after a visit in company with his father at the house of his sweetheart, Faustino is murdered. Raimunda's sympathy goes out to the mother, for she feels that they are bound by the common tie of motherhood. The community is aroused and the finger of suspicion is pointed against the unfortunate Norberto, but Raimunda can not believe

(1) Teatro, Vol. XX, pp. 147-277.
(2) John Garrett Underhill: Introduction, p. XVI.
that he is guilty of the crime. She feels as though a curse has fallen upon her household; if there were only some explanation, she could resign herself, but with this mystery she can not rest easy, try as she will. She feels the responsibility of her motherhood and prays for some solution of her daughter's life. For a long time she was afraid that Acacia was going to get married and leave her, and now she is afraid that she will never marry. She is more than anxious to have the truth known, because she realizes that her daughter has nothing to gain by this silence; she would pray for justice even if it were her own son who had done it. Doubts and fears torture her until she feels as though some one were always pursuing her with death in his heart. Unable to stand the suspense any longer she decides to talk to Norberto in the knowledge that he will not lie to her. From him she learns the horrible truth, which she had begun to suspect, that Esteban, her husband, had planned the death of Faustino, because he had long been in love with Acacia and could not bear the thought of losing her. She realizes then that all this has been taking

(1) Teatro, Vol. XX, p. 197.
(2) Idem. p. 192.
(3) Idem. p. 222.
place before her eyes, but that she had been blind to it. Her husband has robbed her of all that she held dear and as she assures him of the crime she displays all the loathings of an enraged mother-heart. She would not hesitate to shoot him if he dared to lay his hands upon her. In her utter despair she knows that the peace of God has flown forever from their home; and her heart is filled to overflowing with sad bitterness. Yet always she holds her head high in pride because she wants to hide their shame. Although she despises him, she longs to see him, and when he comes back to defend himself she takes pity on him. She feels that Esteban might have confessed to her because he might have known that she would have held her tongue for her daughter's sake, and yet she partially forgives him because she realizes Acacia's fault in the matter. She assures him that this has been as a vengeance sent from heaven for the sin, but that they will live happily after sending Acacia away for a while. She insists that Acacia throw her arms around Esteban's neck and call him father. When she sees them embrace and realizes that Acacia is also a participant in this guilty love, her jealousy over-

(1) *Teatro* Vol. XX, p. 231.
comes all other instincts and she curses her daughter. She throws herself in their way to prevent them from leaving together, and in his passion Esteban shoots her. Now her mother-love again rises supreme and the sacrifice of death seems not too great to her triumphant soul. Even at the cost of life she is willing to save her daughter; she is satisfied with her final conquest of the love of her child.

Acacia is the character in Benavente's Gallery of Women which is most productive of discussion. She is a puzzle, which may be pieced together in countless ways, a character to whom every person will give a somewhat different interpretation. She was only a child when her mother married, and she became intensely jealous of this man who came to take her own father's place with her mother. She felt that he was stealing her mother's affection from her and she felt resentment every time she saw them together. She did not love her mother as much as she had before Esteban came, and toward him she always maintained an air of cold haughtiness. This insolence toward her step-father also partook of an unconscious resistance to her passion for him, although in her

consciousness there was only horror of him and hate because he had stolen her mother's love. As she comes to love her mother less, this unconscious passion for Esteban grows, until in turn she is jealous of her mother. She is the victim of a double jealousy, jealousy of Esteban's place in her mother's heart and jealousy of her mother's place in Esteban's affections. When her mother forces her to kiss Esteban she can not call him "father" because with that kiss comes the consciousness of her great passion for him. This denouement demonstrates Benavente's theory, stated elsewhere, that hate is a form of love.

Other splendid pictures of mother-love are found in Imperia (La noche del sábado), Carmen (La casa de la dicha), Carmen (Por las nubes), Justa (De cerca), Marquise of Encinar (La inmaculada de los dolores), Paulina (La ley de los hijos), and Gunna (La honra de los hombres).

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(2) Cartas de mujeres, Prologo, p. 10. "El odio es una forma del amor en las mujeres."
(5) Teatro, Vol. XVIII, pp. 77-203.
(8) Teatro, Vol. XXVI, pp. 7-80.
Chapter IV.

Revolt

"Revolt is so delightful! It was in heaven, next to God. There was a rebel angel, even there,(1) who for mere love of it, exchanged heaven for hell."

Life is either accepting the conditions and environment in which we find ourselves and living on peacefully and quietly, resigned to our fate, or it is protest, struggle, rebellion against the world. There is but one virtue in a rebel, which is courage; the other qualities are nothing but ghosts of cowardice and fear, and are all that prevent people from running to meet happiness with a light heart. Throughout all the world there is the eternal struggle of life, force against force, the hand of those who seek to live their own lives as individuals in the name of human instinct against the hand of those who would maintain the social fabric in the common name of all. It is so often hard to reconcile the necessities of the heart with existing social conditions, that people who really live, who struggle and fight for their

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lives, will use all their courage and ingenuity
to outwit the social laws. Most men and women
who calmly submit to fate are either such shallow
thinkers that they do not feel the necessity for
revolution or else they behave discreetly from
cowardice, because they do not have the courage to
face public opinion; but men and women with inter-
est and necessities, with flesh and blood and nerves
crave something beyond a life of stagnation, a per-
petual act of self-repression. Although Benavente
sympathizes with this longing for independence, and
admits that we are something in ourselves, he gives
more importance to the environment which surrounds
us—he paints this as the landscape in which we are
figures. For him the scenery is half of the play,
in life as it is upon the stage. 

Indicative of the spirit that questions accepted
truisms is the character of Mané in El hombre
cito. She is known among her friends as el hombre
cito because of her strong spirit and her independence of
ideas; of all the girls and women of her set she a-
alone is always sincere, always searching for the ver-
ification of truth. Hers is a frank, loyal nature

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without the taint of hypocrisy. She fails to understand why other girls are so anxious to marry; men all seem alike to her, they dress the same, think the same, and talk the same. In fact they are not worth the effort of selection. She despises their capability of marrying with such lightness, their proneness to ignore the responsibilities which marriage should incur. She thinks that the bond which unites two lives forever is worth the trouble of serious consideration; that both the man and the woman should be firm in the knowledge of their love. She may become infatuated with a man and not know whether he loves her or not, but she will know most certainly whether she loves him. (2) She is absolutely intolerant of the attitude of these society women toward marriage; they say that it is much better not to have a strong love for a husband because if a woman marries being wholly in love with her husband it is clear that she will be greatly disillusioned, while if she is indifferent her happiness is kept intact. The usual manner of marrying without love, of marrying for financial reasons, arouses all the indignation of her sincere

(2) Idem. p. 60.
soul. When she realizes that there are human beings who die of hunger and cold and who see their children die, even the most terrible crimes seem excusable for them; but when fortune has been generous with people, when it has given them the right to live with a clear conscience without committing treachery to any of their sentiments, there is no excuse for people who deceive themselves, who sell themselves. She severely censures her brother for marrying without love, for deceiving a woman without any experience in life, a woman who will not doubt of his loyalty because she does not understand the things that make him lie. What can be expect of a woman who marries him without any illusion of love? He insists that Nené has no right to interest herself in the verification of these evils, that she reveals a spirit that is not fitting in a woman. He then confronts her with his knowledge of her love for Enrique, and tells her this man who seems to her so superior, so incapable of the infamies which she says contaminate other men, is obliged to renounce his love for her for one of those relations of which she is so intolerant.

(1) Teatro, Vol. VIII, p. 77.
(2) Idem. p. 78.
Enrique has asked him to tell Nené why he does not return, because there is another woman in his life. Surely she will admire the bigness of soul of a man who sacrifices a great love, the hope of his heart, to his scruples of conscience. Soon Enrique comes to confess that it is neither love, respect, nor hate that unites him to any other woman, but that he is married. He realizes that he ought not play with his own heart, much less with hers, by being near her and that he must leave. He would rather that she had never come to know of his love, rather have seemed indifferent; but his knowledge of the sincerity or loyalty of her heart would not permit him to allow her to suffer that uncertainty. He leaves her with a horrible sadness in her soul, a knowledge of the wonderful love that is to be sacrificed on the altar of convention.

Enrique and Nené continue seeing each other frequently with the belief that they have established a firm friendship. Nené resents any intimation that she should not be friendly with him; she has definite ideas of her own and the ideas of other people do not matter. She says that this friendship is so loyal and sincere that there is no reason to hide it.

(1) Teatro, Vol. VIII, p. 82.
(2) Idem, p. 97.
If she had suspected anything else she would never have seen Enrique again; she would not change this truth of a sincere affection without jealousy and without lies, one in which she can implicitly trust, for any other relationship. So many people suspect friendship between men and women simply because they can not understand it; they can not believe in a noble sentiment because they are incapable of feeling it. She admits that there may be a danger in their friendship; that there is the danger that they will come to understand that the truth of their friendship is worth more than the lies which surround them, imposing the sacrifice of their hearts. As the smouldering fires of love flame up she sees (1) that she is in danger of loving too much; but what woman's heart would fly from such delightful danger? Along with the consciousness of their love comes the realization of the sacrifices of home, family, and social position that this love will demand. As she sees clearly into her heart, she knows that her heart and life are his. Then comes the fearful struggle, the inevitable question whether to sacrifice their love or the conventions of the society

to which they belong. Strong rebellion arises in her soul; surely she has the right to love and happiness; she can not reconcile existing social conditions with the necessities of her love. What shall they do, be happy in their love or fight against it? If love conquers, they will turn their back on convention and be happy; if duty conquers, they will accept the sacrifice and live resigned. She decides to go away with him, but her courage is not strong enough and she adopts the wretched compromise of continuing a part of the society which she plans to deceive. Environment has suppressed the rebellion of her strong independent spirit and made her a victim of its deceits and artificialities.

Brilliant is the portraiture of the Princess (1) Bebé. Benavente shows us the natural rebellion and hesitation of a mind which has not yet found itself. She is the embodiment of the struggles encountered in a search for truth amid falsities, of the progressive advance of a curious spirit. If she should overthrow a monarchy because it was tyrannical and establish a republic which should

likewise prove to be a failure, instead of restoring the monarchy, she would promptly declare for a state of anarchy. While quite young, she had been forced into a marriage with a Prince who was a veritable brute, incapable of inspiring love in her heart. A woman might resign herself to living without being loved, but never to living without loving; Love is the principal motive of a woman's heart; without it, duty, ambition, sacrifice, the moral law, even religious faith have no meaning, but with it she can accomplish all things without so much as a thought of punishment or reward. She tries to prevail upon the Emperor to grant her a divorce, and when he sternly refuses, she leaves her husband to live a new life. Herr Rosmer was the only person who had brought to the Palace the atmosphere of the world which Bebe was so anxious to explore; the opportunity of living a new life attracted her to him and together they fled. Again she applies for a divorce so that she can dispose of herself freely, as her heart dictates, and again her application is refused, this time with the sentence of banishment from Suavia imposed upon her. Banished because she wants to live

her own life in the sincerity of her love, because she refuses to learn hypocrisy. Rebellion flames forth in her heart; her parting words are portentous of her later actions. "From this hour forth, I give fair warning: I, Princess Elena, have become a ferocious anarchist. The world, your Empire, your precious society, the whole of it with its laws, its morality and its lies—well, let it remain as it is. A bomb has burst in my heart, in my life, that has blown into a thousand fragments all this world with its laws and its lies!"

The Casino amuses her only for a few nights, and she is ready to find some place more amusing, or as she puts it, some place more wicked, which is the same thing. She has always noticed that places which everybody agrees are wicked are by far the most amusing; that is the reason that she is inclined to believe that hell, which certainly has the worst reputation must be exceedingly funny. She has made up her mind to say what she thinks and do what she pleases, to be absolutely free and independent. Knowing that her every action is watched from Suavia, she is unwilling to appear sad or

(2) Idem. p. 175.
weary for a single moment. Her conscience does not trouble her in the least, because she has no children to influence by her behavior, which after all is the only consideration which would have made it inexcusable. She feels that she has struck the balance and settled her account, but yet she feels a reluctant dissatisfaction with herself and wonders if it is not idle to attempt to change herself so long as she continues in a similar environment. "Life is a forest many centuries old, and our souls are rooted in it like secular trees. The wind rustles the branches, and we imagine that we are spreading our wings about to fly, to soar upward into the air and liberty and light." (1) She wanted to renounce her old life absolutely, altogether, but everyone around her insists upon reminding her that she is the Princess of Suavia, that she can not cease to be so. It is utterly useless for her to say, "I am merely a woman, like any other woman, who is in love, who wishes to be happy, to be forgotten, without being responsible for her conduct to anybody." She no longer gives divorce a second thought because it leads nowhere; it only destroys the one certainty that there is in marriage, the certainty that you will never be able to do it again. She will not consent to marry Herr Rosmer after all this talk, because it

(2) Idem. p. 177.
would be too much like the table of errata at the end of a book after you have read the book; this corrects nothing and recalls all the mistakes. When Herr Rosmer reproaches her with the lessening of her love, and asks if she will love him forever, she answers that she is not certain; she will if his love is the love for which she has been searching in this world. To her, love is a beautiful thing, the most beautiful thing in the world; but it is like the sun, beautiful because it shines on so much that is lovely and beautiful which appears more fascinating in its light, not beautiful because of the light itself. She loves happiness above everything else in the world, and she has no intention of saddening her life by resignation, by renunciation of love, nor by doing penance because she loves. She has a heart, a soul, a life to live, and it is her duty to fight, to rebel against circumstances which would impede her full development. She has renounced her rank because of Herr Rosmer, only to discover that he is first among those who force her to an imitation of that rank. She mourns a lost paradise, only because she has not found that for which she has been seeking. She realizes that

she has made a mistake, because she has not found love to be what she thought. Why should she resign herself to a second mistake when she refused to resign herself to the first? She has thought herself among real people who are not afraid to face the facts of life, only to find herself surrounded with the same hypocrisy, the same stupid dignity, and the same lack of liberty that had been in the Palace.

Continuing her search to find the revelation of absolute truth, she goes to an open-air restaurant where she sees people of the lowest class. Even here the deceits and lies are still prevalent. In these few hours with Prince Esteban in the mutual confidences of their hearts, she finds a time of happiness. She wonders if she shall ever reach a permanent state of happiness. "Can it be that all our efforts and struggles to obtain even a small part of that which we desire are fruitless? Is it that life admits no violence, and only when we have ceased to hope and struggle and strive, lets fall upon us as if by chance, a little of the great store of happiness which it treasures? If it is, then probably when we think we are shaping life most

(2) Idem, p. 233.
surely to our purposes, we are submitting blindly to the immutable laws of fate." She has such ideas because she has never allowed herself to be frightened by any truth, has never become so enamored of any that she has been afraid to see it transformed into a lie. If she could only look into her soul and discover a new truth every day, which when found would disarrange her life completely, she would not hesitate to destroy her life every day so as to live a new life with a new truth. We leave her with her soul stretching out toward infinity, still seeking for truth amid environments that are most thoroughly false.

Among the other women partially inspired and dominated by the spirit of rebellion and independence are Petra (Gente conocida), Catalina (La farándula), Rosalína (Amor de amor), Imperia (La noche del sábado), Teresa (Los malhechores del bien), Lolilla (Hacia la verdad), Irene (Campo de armiño), and Valentina (El mal que nos hacen).

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(2) Idem., pp. 263-264.
(5) Teatro, Vol. VI, pp. 7-70.
(8) Teatro, Vol. XVIII, pp. 35-75.
(10) Teatro, Vol. XXIV, pp. 5-144.
It is impossible to attribute one absolute womanly ideal to Benavente, one type that will satisfy all his fancies, for what would be perfection in one character would be imperfection in another, according to the special bent of the individual. It would be absolutely contrary to his opinion of human nature to create any woman who can be regarded as entirely perverse or entirely admirable. His keen observation has taught him that no matter how noble the woman, she is not all sweetness—for even the rose has thorns. He paints no perfect woman because his knowledge of life tells him that if she were perfect she would be admired the more but loved the less. Above all else his women are supremely human.

Although it is impossible to write of one womanly ideal as absolute for Benavente, it is very possible to detail the fundamental virtues of the portraits in his Gallery of Women. There are certain solid virtues that go to make up the
character of his noble women, but these fundamentals are always mixed in such varying quantities that no two are exactly alike. In spite of the wonderful profusion with which they occur throughout the range of his work, the whole force of each woman's personality lies in her essential individuality.

The great fundamental requirements that go to make up his noble women are loyalty, sincerity, greatness of devotion, courage of resignation, and vigor of purpose. These are women who do their work faithfully whatever that work may be, women who can and do sacrifice themselves for love and duty, but who put force and energy into that expression of service. The woman who most nearly approaches the composite of Benavente's diversity of ideals is Dominica in Señora Ana, combining as she does mother-love with her great breadth of nature. Mother-love is his highest expression of the sublimity of woman.

Sympathizing with these strong souls, he does not by any means discount women dominated by other emotions, women who partake of the struggles of life and can not submit with quiet resignation. He adds a dash of vivaciousness to give piquancy,
and does not frown upon a virtuous coquetry; he realizes that there must be a little spice in life if interest is to be maintained at a high pitch. Benavente's gift of versatility in the creation of living women and his singular ability to understand the subtleties have won for him the position of the foremost contemporary dramatist of Spain.
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