

Women's claims to their bodies, social space and  
knowledge in Early Modern Spain:  
Redefining gender relations in the seventeenth  
century *novelas* of María de Zayas y Sotomayor  
and Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

Hayley Jane O'Kell

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*Abstract*

Marginalisation has many intersecting forms and historically, early modern Spanish women have suffered doubly. In their own time, they were silenced by the operations of patriarchy, subjected to control and surveillance in Renaissance manuals and centuries later, they are afforded liminal space in discussions of literature and culture in a European context. Considering that seventeenth-century Spanish women were marginalised in patriarchal society, they nevertheless found their bodies were placed at the centre of numerous discussions on women's conduct, initiating a process of alienation between women and their bodies that persists in contemporary contexts. In order to understand the machinations of androcentric society, we can examine the fictional subtexts of women that can be found in the popular literature of the period. The short stories of seventeenth-century writers, María de Zayas and Miguel de Cervantes, contest the treatment of women and their bodies as occupied, patriarchal territory and they demonstrate how women could begin to claim back the right to their bodies, social space and knowledge. Zayas's and Cervantes's defiant female characters can be located within a broader tradition of women seeking radical strategies to free themselves from situations of powerlessness and assume greater autonomy over their bodies and destinies. Illuminated by the Marxist materialist theory of Maria Mies, this thesis will explore both the subtle and the more apparent, female resistance strategies that interlace Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*. Dismantling the largely invisible, patriarchal concepts that were built into the mental constructs of early modern Europe, the texts strive to highlight the coercive male-female relationship for their contemporary readers. The imaginary realm of their *novelas*, discussed within this thesis, created a space for their fictional female survivors to voice the injustices committed to them and their bodies, in a context where such spaces were not historically available to seventeenth-century Spanish women.



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## In the Margins: Analysing Gender Relations in Early Modern Spain

Spain is somewhat exceptional in terms of how its culture and literature was, and still is, received in Europe. Deemed the 'woman of European culture' by Paul Julian Smith, she occupies a liminal position in which she can neither be excluded from European culture nor allowed to participate in it entirely.<sup>1</sup> Smith avers, '[Spain] is excluded from the main currents of political and cultural power [and] scorned for her supposed emotionalism and sensualism.'<sup>2</sup> The marginalisation of Spain and its writers translates into a national self-consciousness, as according to Smith, Spaniards often felt themselves to be different and frequently inferior from others.<sup>3</sup> In a more recent development in scholarship, scholars have recovered the profound influence of Spain on Renaissance English letters.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, Barbara Fuchs affirms that whilst the English turn to Spain has been periodically noted, 'traditional literary history has managed neither wholly to insert Spain into English studies, nor convincingly to explain the ongoing disavowal of Spain in the field.'<sup>5</sup> According to Fuchs, this is due to two key reasons. First, the English turn to Spain seems paradoxical due to the religious and political antagonism between the two countries.<sup>6</sup> Second,

<sup>1</sup> Paul Julian Smith, *Writing in the Margin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.204-5.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, p.204.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, p.202.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Fuchs, *The Poetics of Piracy: Emulating Spain in English Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Fuchs, p.4.

<sup>6</sup> Fuchs, p.4.

and more importantly, the early modern English rivalry with Spain has largely tinted Anglo-American cultural and intellectual histories, limiting our view of the Spanish connection.<sup>7</sup> It is the contemporary scholar's task then, to stop what Fuchs describes as '[t]he contemporary erasure of Spain [that] rehearses the early modern disavowal of the Spanish connection.'<sup>8</sup> To prevent the persistent marginalisation of Spanish literature and culture, this thesis places Spain at the centre of its focus, examining the national context whilst also providing a broader, regional context of capitalism.

The continuous marginalisation of Spanish literature and culture is also prevalent in women's studies. Stephanie Merrim lists numerous collections that have attempted to recover the subtexts of early modern women's experiences on social, cultural, historical and political grounds.<sup>9</sup> These collections include but are not limited to, King's *Women of the Renaissance*, Jordan's *Renaissance Feminism* and Lerner's *The Creation of a Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy*.<sup>10</sup> Such collections, albeit with their self-conscious declarations of inclusion tend to focus on England, France and Italy, often entirely excluding Spain or providing far less information on Spanish women.<sup>11</sup> Lamenting the Hispanic case,

<sup>7</sup> Fuchs, p.4.

<sup>8</sup> Fuchs, p.5.

<sup>9</sup> Stephanie Merrim, *Early Modern Women's Writing and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), xiii.

<sup>10</sup> Margaret L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of a Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). For the full list of valuable contributions to early modern women's studies that Merrim cites, see xiii-xiv.

<sup>11</sup> Merrim, xiv.

Merrim claims 'Spanish (and, more so, Latin American) women generally appear, if at all, in an ancillary, token, or underinformed and undertheorized capacity.'<sup>12</sup> A more recent addition to the scholarship, Nieves Baranda Leturio and Anne J. Cruz in their introduction to their 2018 research companion on Spanish women writers, state that the works written by Spanish women have been slow to be edited and published, both in their own lifetimes and by modern editors.<sup>13</sup> As Merrim stresses the lack of focus on Spanish women in European collections and even more so the lack of attention given to Latin American women writers, she carves out a space for her own research: a comparative analysis of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's work with other European women's writings that would give weight to Hispanic issues.<sup>14</sup> Aware of the marginalisation of Spanish women by the majority of European Renaissance manuals, Merrim fails to provide an exclusive focus on the experiences of Hispanic women, as she also focuses on English and French authors. Whilst Merrim provides due attention to early modern Hispanic women writers, she does not entirely satisfy the lacuna in the scholarship that she draws our attention to, that women's studies 'has not yet fully embraced the Hispanic context'.<sup>15</sup> When referring to Hispanic here, I am informed by the stance of Sarah E. Mangan and Jane E. Owen who state that '[t]hrough the locations might be as far apart as Lisbon and Mexico City,

<sup>12</sup> Merrim, xiv.

<sup>13</sup> Nieves Baranda Leturio and Anne J. Cruz, 'Introduction', in *The Routledge Research Companion to Early Modern Spanish Women Writers*, ed. by Nieves Baranda Leturio and Anne J. Cruz, (New York: Routledge, 2018), p.1.

<sup>14</sup> The use of this example is justified by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's consideration of herself as Spanish, in the context of Mexico City as a viceroyalty of the early modern Spanish empire.

<sup>15</sup> Merrim, xiv.

these areas had a unified set of laws and customs based on Iberian legal practices shaped in part by the medieval Spanish book of laws, the *Siete Partidas*.<sup>16</sup> When approaching the literature produced in Spain and its colonial territories, we have to break away from the traditional dichotomy of Spain and Latin America or Portugal and Brazil and move towards a more encompassing term such as Hispanic, a term that is conscious of the danger of excluding writers in colonial territories or those who were Portuguese and wrote in Spanish.<sup>17</sup> This term also acknowledges the imbrications of colonial powers in the metropolitan societies that are depicted by authors such as Zayas and Cervantes.

It is crucial therefore to briefly analyse the contributions of Hispanic scholars to women's studies, in light of Merrim's statement. The scholarship shifted significantly in the 1990s when there was a surge in the interest in women's studies and feminist literary theory that extended beyond the sole study of Santa Teresa de Ávila's oeuvre.<sup>18</sup> According to Judith A. Whitenack, the intense critical interest in María de Zayas was one of the most obvious indications of change in Golden Age criticism.<sup>19</sup> Since this critical juncture in early modern women's

<sup>16</sup> Sarah E. Owens and Jane E. Mangan, 'Introduction, Women of the Iberian Atlantic: Gendered Dimensions of Empire', in Sarah E. Owens and Jane E. Mangan, *Women of the Iberian Atlantic* (USA: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), pp.1-17, (p.2).

<sup>17</sup> Whilst my thesis does focus on two Spanish writers, I am aware of the developing criticism and the drive in current scholarship to bridge the gap between early modern Spanish and Latin American scholars and achieve a classification of the Iberian Atlantic that does not exclude women on the fringes of this concept. (Owens and Mangan, p.11)

<sup>18</sup> Judith A. Whitenack, 'Introduction' in Amy R. Williamsen and Judith A. Whitenack, *María de Zayas: The Dynamics of Discourse* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp.1-9, (p.1).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p.1.

writing, numerous edited collections have emerged such as Amy R. Williamsen and Judith A. Whitenack's edited collection of essays, *María de Zayas: The Dynamics of Discourse* (1995), Julián Olivares' *Studies on Women's Poetry of the Golden Age: Tras el espejo la musa escribe* (2009), Anita Stoll and Dawn L. Smith's *Gender, identity and representation in Spain's Golden Age* (1999), Anne J. Cruz and Rosilie Hernández's *Women's Literacy in Early Modern Spain and the New World* (2011) and more recently in 2018, Nieves Baranda Leturio and Anne J. Cruz's *The Routledge Research Companion to Early Modern Spanish Women Writers*, to name only a select few.<sup>20</sup> Although recent scholarship has made headway to begin to address this traditional deficit, further work still needs to be completed to broaden our understanding of women's diverse experiences in their social milieu, most notably the experiences of peripheral women. Hispanic women's studies therefore faces two challenges. First it must address the fact that dialogues between women's studies and Hispanic studies are intermittent. Second, as Baranda Leturio and Cruz state that the works of Spanish women have taken far longer than their European

<sup>20</sup> Amy R. Williamsen and Judith A. Whitenack, *María de Zayas: The Dynamics of Discourse* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995); Julián Olivares, *Studies on Women's Poetry of the Golden Age: Tras el espejo la musa escribe* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2009); Anita Stoll and Dawn L. Smith, eds, *Gender, identity and representation in Spain's Golden Age* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1999); Anne J. Cruz and Rosilie Hernández, *Women's Literacy in Early Modern Spain and the New World* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Nieves Baranda Leturio and Anne J. Cruz, *The Routledge Research Companion to Early Modern Spanish Women Writers* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

In terms of early modern female-authored plays written in Spanish, Valerie Hegstrom and Catherine Larson provide a thorough critical introduction to women's plays that are both extant and lost in the bilingual edition of Ângela de Azevedo's *El muerto disimulado / Presumed Dead* (2018). However, it still stands that in non-Hispanic specific texts and particularly in those works that address women's studies from a European perspective, Spanish women do still appear in an undertheorized capacity and women living in the viceroyalties of New Spain, even more so.

counterparts to be edited and published, research still needs to be done in order to bring Spanish women's studies to a similar calibre to the rest of Europe.<sup>21</sup>

In relation to the phenomenon of the literary and cultural marginalisation of Spain and its colonial territories, it has also been cast as a country where women were supposedly more oppressed, compared to other European countries of the same period. As scholars have duly noted, with the combination of early modern texts, particularly the wife-murder plays of Pedro Calderón de la Barca and the research of Mediterranean anthropologists, the complete social and sexual subordination of Spanish women seemed indisputable.<sup>22</sup> Taking account of the literature on gender relations in Golden Age Spain, there are two contrasting perspectives. First the prescriptive literature, bloody Golden Age drama and more recent anthropological studies all seemed to confirm the dominance of a pervasive culture of honour in early modern Spain.<sup>23</sup> Second, there is a more sceptical perspective which critiques the convenience of this neatly packaged bundle of social norms in which women were entirely subordinate to men.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, it seemed as if early modern Spain was completely averse to women's expression and emancipation. During the Counter-Reformation, women were suppressed with the implementation of order-restoring measures that increased central authority at the

<sup>22</sup> Allyson M. Poska, *Women & Authority in Early Modern Spain: The Peasants of Galicia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.5.

<sup>23</sup> Poska, p.5.

<sup>24</sup> Poska, p.5.

expense of their individual autonomy.<sup>25</sup> *Limpieza de sangre*, a notion at work in early modern Spain, was a religious principle that ensured the preservation of a Christian bloodline, legitimising patriarchal control over women and their bodies.<sup>26</sup> As any extramarital sexual encounters posed a threat to the “legitimacy” of a man’s lineage, namely the religious principle of *limpieza de sangre*, early modern Spanish society believed they could govern women and their bodies. Deconstructing the view that honour was bloody and entirely pervasive in Spanish society, it is more likely that honour may have been only one of many factors that defined the actions of Spanish men and women, to draw upon Allyson Poska’s research.<sup>27</sup> A jigsaw of different societal expectations which did not always fit the real women of the period, Spain was no bloodier than any other European country of that era.<sup>28</sup> Considering this jigsaw of different expectations, this thesis will consider the numerous oppressions that affected the lives of seventeenth-century Spanish women.

Just as Spain was marginalised as the ‘woman of European culture’, this marginalisation was paradoxically replicated at a domestic level

<sup>25</sup> Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp.6-7; p.177.

<sup>26</sup> Perry, p.58.

<sup>27</sup> Poska, p.9.

<sup>28</sup> The mistaken notion that Golden Age Spain was an exceptionally bloody, patriarchal period is rooted in the wife-murder plays of Calderón de la Barca that feature blood-tinged plots of honour. Merveena McKendrick explains how Calderón’s wife-murder plays, *El médico de su honra*, *El pintor de su deshonra* and *A secreto agravio a secreto venganza* convinced critics until the twentieth century that domestic slaughter flourished there. However, the evidence of contemporary observers shows that this was not necessarily true. (Merveena McKendrick, *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age: A Study of the Mujer Varonil* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p.3))

through the machinations of patriarchy.<sup>29</sup> Early modern Spanish women therefore, suffer a tripartite case of marginalisation: first, they must endure the stifling of their expression from the operations of patriarchy; second they are also subjected to the liminal, cultural position that Spain was placed in compared to the rest of Europe; and third, centuries later by extension of this context, they are not given the same textual space in Renaissance manuals as other European women. To redress the tripartite marginalisation of early modern Spanish women, who serve as indexes of marginality, this thesis will focus exclusively on the issues that directly affected these unjustly marginalised women. To address the lacuna in the scholarship, this thesis will focus entirely on the Golden Age short stories or *novelas* of María de Zayas y Sotomayor and Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, using their texts to investigate the more lenient attitudes towards the concept of woman in Renaissance Spain.<sup>30</sup>

Mary Elizabeth Perry lists possible sources that could give us a closer historical insight into the experiences of early modern women for example, Inquisition cases, salaries paid by the city government, hagiographies of female saints and the literature of the time.<sup>31</sup> Perry states that we can read these sources as subtexts, as they provide clues of real women's experiences that lie beneath 'the words that men

<sup>29</sup> Smith, p.204.

<sup>30</sup> María de Zayas y Sotomayor, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2004); María de Zayas y Sotomayor, *Parte segunda del Sarao y entretenimiento honesto [Desengaños amorosos]*, ed. by Alicia Yllera, 8<sup>th</sup> edn (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2017); Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Novelas ejemplares I*, ed. by Harry Sieber, 27<sup>th</sup> edn (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2010); Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Novelas ejemplares II*, ed. by Harry Sieber, 17<sup>th</sup> edn (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> Perry, p.21.



used to describe a male-dominated world'.<sup>32</sup> Whilst historical evidence is clearly fundamental to improving our understanding of women's lives, early modern literature has the potential to capture the zeitgeist of the period. Namely, McKendrick states that literature is our most important source of information with regard to '*attitudes towards the concept of woman. [...] And while these attitudes are often highly personal, they equally often reflect general trends which, however stylized, always have some psychological truth.*'<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Zayas's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637), *Desengaños amorosos* (1647) and Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares* (1613) afford us privileged access to a mediated gateway into early modern female experience.<sup>34</sup>

Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas* allow the reader to tune into subversive female voices who rather than accepting the restrictive gender norms prescribed to them, subversively noted the gulf between the real women they knew and the ideal women constructed by the prescriptive literature.<sup>35</sup> Just as Zayas and Cervantes provided an unprecedented, imagined space for women to air their most intimate and traumatic experiences with men, this thesis will place early modern women's voices at the centre of its analysis. It will consider

<sup>32</sup> Perry, p.21.

<sup>33</sup> McKendrick, p.4.

<sup>34</sup> Whilst I do recognise that Zayas originally called her second collection of *novelas*, *Parte segunda del sarao y entretenimiento honesto*, I will use the name coined by Amezúa y Mayo in his 1950 edition of the text, *Desengaños amorosos*. This title is also used for the front cover of Alicia Yllera's more recent edition of the text (2017), due to its acceptance by the majority of scholars. I will also refer to the titles of each *desengaño* given in the 1734 Barcelona edition of *Desengaños amorosos*.

<sup>35</sup> Perry, p.13.

how Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas* began to deconstruct the wall of silence surrounding violence against women and how their texts provided narcissistic identification for female readers who may have experienced similar ordeals. It argues first, that Zayas's and Cervantes's texts can be read as historical artefacts that convey interpretations of women's lived, embodied experiences in seventeenth-century Spain and second, that in doing so, they dispense advice to their readership in negotiating gender relations as these are imbricated in colonial power dynamics.

Maria Mies's *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* strives towards the transcendence of capitalist-patriarchy and the construction of a reality in which neither women, men, nor nature are exploited.<sup>36</sup> In addition to considering the particularities of the Spanish case, it is imperative to note general European trends. Reflecting on what Mies defines as the 'oppressive, unequal man-woman relationship' that was typical of early modern Europe, this thesis will examine how Zayas and Cervantes nuanced and even contested, the early modern consideration of women and their bodies as occupied, patriarchal territory and how their female characters began to reclaim their bodies, social space and their access to knowledge.<sup>37</sup> In Mies's Marxist materialist feminist theory, women's bodies feature in almost every chapter, a focus that aligns her theory

<sup>36</sup> Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed, 1998), p.23.

<sup>37</sup> Mies, p.6.

with the demands of Zayas's and Cervantes's characters for bodily autonomy and the right to make decisions regarding their bodies and lives.<sup>38</sup> In *What is a Woman?*, Toril Moi turns to reappraise the second-wave structuralist theory of Simone de Beauvoir and she suggests that the excessive focus of post-structuralist feminist theorists on the difference between sex and gender, fails to achieve a fully-fledged understanding of 'what it means to be a woman (or a man) in a given society'.<sup>39</sup> Moi's statement that the distinction between sex and gender is irrelevant to the task of producing a concrete, historical understanding of what it means to be female in any society, aligns with Mies's focus on the female body as the starting point for many of the concerns she addresses as a Marxist materialist feminist theorist.<sup>40</sup>

Mies avers in her first chapter 'What is Feminism?', that the main issues that sparked off the rebellion of the new women's movement in the 1970s were all in one way or another connected to 'the *female body*'.<sup>41</sup> Italicised in the opening of Mies's subsection 'Discontinuities: Body Politics', the female body threads through Mies's international feminist demands for a male-female relationship not characterised by exploitation and a non-hierarchical, non-centralized society where no elite lives on the exploitation of others.<sup>42</sup> It is this approach of focusing on women's flesh-and-blood experiences that sets Mies

<sup>38</sup> Mies, p.222.

<sup>39</sup> Toril Moi, *What is a woman?: and other essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.4-5.

<sup>40</sup> Moi, pp.4-5.

<sup>41</sup> Mies, p.24.

<sup>42</sup> Mies, pp.36-7.

apart from the post-structuralist feminist theorists, an approach that maps particularly well onto Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas* as they investigate issues for the real women of seventeenth-century Spain. Using Mies's female body focused theory as an inspiration for the seventeenth century *novelas*, this theory will aid in achieving a more nuanced and exhaustive analysis of the early modern texts and a comprehensive examination of how the operations of patriarchy affected the flesh-and-blood experiences of seventeenth-century women.

A German Third-Wave materialist feminist who focuses on women in the international division of labour, Mies has a particular interest in the period which precedes the fully-fledged capitalist mode of production. With an unflinching connection to their social reality, Zayas's and Cervantes's texts were both produced during this critical period, more commonly referred to as the early modern period. Mies's intrigue for this historical juncture is due to the link between three phenomena: the unrelenting European witch-hunts, colonialism and the emergence of modern science. From the fifteenth-century, Europe embarked onto a period of '*primitive accumulation of capital*'.<sup>43</sup> Namely, before the capitalist mode of production could successfully establish itself, enough capital had to be accumulated in order to begin the process.<sup>44</sup> In her theory, Mies examines the trilateral connection between the persecution of witches in Europe, the emergence of European science

<sup>43</sup> Mies, p.88

<sup>44</sup> Mies, p.88

and technology and the slave trade.<sup>45</sup> These lucrative sources of blood-money allowed patriarchal capital accumulation to be built upon the tortured bodies of marginalised groups, women of all ages, races and origins notable among them. In particular, the persecution of witches was a constructed control mechanism to persecute women who according to Mies, 'in their economic and sexual independence constituted a threat for the emerging bourgeois order.'<sup>46</sup> Mies's theory focuses on women in the international division of labour, therefore Spain becomes part of a pan-European discussion developed within the theory.

It is Mies's view then, that capitalism had to reinforce or even invent patriarchal male-female relations if it wanted to maintain its model of accumulation.<sup>47</sup> The violent subordination of women under men and the mass confiscation of property during the early modern European witch-hunts laid the groundwork for capitalism to be built upon.<sup>48</sup> According to Mies, the violent male-female relationship can only be changed by men, '[m]en have to start movements against violence against women if they want to preserve the essence of their own humanity.'<sup>49</sup> Such a vision is also supported by the opinions of Zayas's and Cervantes's characters, regarding men's responsibility to remove the exploitation at the heart of the male-female relationship. In *El celoso extremeño*, Cervantes's male protagonist Carrizales, shows an

<sup>45</sup> Mies, p.77.

<sup>46</sup> Mies, p.81.

<sup>47</sup> Mies, p.170.

<sup>48</sup> Mies, p.170.

<sup>49</sup> Mies, p.222.

awareness of his faults in violently restricting his wife's social space and her subsequent life stating, '[y] fui el que, como el gusano de seda, me fabrique la casa donde muriese'.<sup>50</sup> In Lisis's final commentary at the end of the *Desengaños amorosos*, she calls upon men to respect women in order to restore their lost honour, '[e]stimad y honrad a las mujeres y veréis como resucita en vosotros el valor perdido'.<sup>51</sup>

### Thesis Outline

Over the course of three chapters, this thesis will examine how Zayas's and Cervantes's female characters reclaimed the autonomy of their bodies, their social space and their access to knowledge, informed by Mies's theory. With regard to the scholarship on Zayas, my stance deviates from that of Marina S. Brownlee in *The Cultural Labyrinth of María de Zayas* when she states that construing Zayas's *novelas* as a gender manifesto, while at times tempting, diminishes the complexities she offers and reduces her readers to one-track minds.<sup>52</sup> Rather in a similar vein to the more recent monograph of Lisa Vollendorf, *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism*, I consider Zayas as an early modern feminist who calls for the removal of the deeply permeated gender inequalities in early

<sup>50</sup> Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Novelas ejemplares II*, ed. by Harry Sieber, 17<sup>th</sup> edn (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1997), p.133.

<sup>51</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.506.

<sup>52</sup> Marina S. Brownlee, *The Cultural Labyrinth of María de Zayas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p.11.

modern Spain.<sup>53</sup> As Vollendorf suggests Zayas's 'fiction marks one step forward in the centuries-long development of feminist consciousness in western Europe.'<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth Rhodes's approach to Zayas's *novelas* in *Dressed to Kill: Death and Meaning in Zayas's Desengaños* (2011) involves accepting the difficulties the text poses as part and parcel of Zayas's aesthetic itself.<sup>55</sup> Rhodes avers that Zayas's female characters in *Desengaños amorosos* could do more to defend themselves, focusing more on how Zayas's virtuous wives 'remain devoted to [their] husbands and go down without a word'.<sup>56</sup> Here, Rhodes narrowly focuses on women's individual actions, rather than the structural issue of patriarchy at hand and the social structures that encourage women to remain silent about domestic abuse.<sup>57</sup>

The first chapter will provide a Marxist materialist feminist analysis of Zayas's *La esclava de su amante* and Cervantes's *La fuerza de la sangre*, that both feature cases of sexual assault. Using a taxonomy of violence to classify the types of violence used against women, the chapter centres on the legal injustice surrounding rape cases in early modern Spain. Focusing on how the heroines construct coping mechanisms to overcome the sexual assault they suffer in the *novelas*, the chapter affords textual space to two marginalised women who are consistently put down by their androcentric society. Numerous studies

<sup>53</sup> Lisa Vollendorf, *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism* (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Dept. of Romance Languages, 2001).

<sup>54</sup> Lisa Vollendorf, *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism* (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Dept. of Romance Languages, 2001), p.17.

<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth Rhodes *Dressed to Kill: Death and Meaning in Zayas's Desengaños* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p.12.

<sup>56</sup> Rhodes, p.7.

<sup>57</sup> Rhodes, p.7.

of Cervantes's *La fuerza de la sangre* do not analyse the *novela* entirely by historical or social standards, for example Ruth el Saffar and A.K. Forcione analyse the religious and ceremonial symbols interweaved throughout the *novela*.<sup>58</sup> Ruth el Saffar begins to explore what she defines as 'scattered hints of social criticism' within *La fuerza de la sangre* in 1974, as she states that the female protagonist's father has no faith in social justice.<sup>59</sup> This dimension of social criticism within *La fuerza de la sangre* has been recently developed by Elizabeth Rhodes in her article, 'Living with Rodolfo and Cervantes's "La fuerza de la sangre"', as she argues that Cervantes's *novela* is deeply rooted in the injustice of its social reality, particularly the silence that surrounded sexual violence and the privilege that protected rapists.<sup>60</sup> My analysis of this *novela* in Chapter 1 is informed by Rhodes's analysis of how Cervantes attends to contemporary, pan-European attitudes towards rape.<sup>61</sup> I also draw upon David Boruchoff's argument that the female protagonist Leocadia, directs attention towards her discernment and self-control, qualities that early modern society did not expect to find in its younger and female members.<sup>62</sup>

The second chapter will explore how the men in Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*, specifically in Cervantes's *El celoso extremeño*

<sup>58</sup> Ruth el Saffar, *Novel to Romance: A Study of Cervantes's Novelas ejemplares* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974), p.129; A.K Forcione *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1982).

<sup>59</sup> Ruth el Saffar, *Novel to Romance: A Study of Cervantes's Novelas ejemplares* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974), p.132.

<sup>60</sup> Elizabeth Rhodes, 'Living with Rodolfo and Cervantes's "La fuerza de la sangre"', *MLN*, 2 (2018), 201-218.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> David A. Boruchoff, 'Unhappy Endings: *La fuerza de la sangre* and the *Novelas ejemplares* of Cervantes', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (2016), 461-477, (p.473).



and Zayas's *Tarde llega el desengaño* and *La inocencia castigada*, strategized to invade women's space, a reflection on the patriarchal encroachment on women's spatial freedom in early modern Spain. My analysis of Cervantes's *El celoso extremeño* is informed by Michael and Jonathan Thacker's critical introduction to the *novela* and Ruth el Saffar's analysis in *Novel to Romance*.<sup>63</sup> However, moving past the prior emphasis on Carrizales's solipsism and psychological development, I focus on the significance of Carrizales's immoderate reduction of his wife's social space and his conflation between the violability of the home and the female body. By reflecting on how the violent circle of patriarchy begins in the family unit, this chapter will also examine how Zayas's suffering heroines figuratively overflowed the limits placed on their bodies by the patriarchal order. The final chapter will reflect on the intellectual confinements of women in early modern Europe. Examining the power behind women's surreptitious concealment of knowledge, we can visualise a more subtle rebellion of the female characters against the male-presumed monopoly on knowledge. Retaliating against the decisions that white, upper-class men make about women's bodies and the consistent suppressing of women's voices, Zayas and Cervantes satisfy Mies's definition of feminists, as 'those who dare to break the conspiracy of silence about the oppressive, unequal man-woman relationship and who want to change it'.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Ruth el Saffar, *Novel to Romance: A Study of Cervantes's Novelas ejemplares* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974); Michael and Jonathan Thacker, 'Introduction: The Jealous Old Man from Extremadura', in Barry Ife and Jonathan Thacker, *Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra: The Complete Exemplary Novels* (Oxford: Aris & Phillips, 2013), pp.337-341.

<sup>64</sup> Mies, p.6.



‘Desasiéndome de sus infames lazos’: Responses  
to violence against women in María de Zayas’s *La  
esclava de su amante* and Miguel de Cervantes’s  
*La fuerza de la sangre*

The primary aim of this chapter is to analyse how Zayas and Cervantes map out the resistance strategies of suffering, violated heroines. Examining Zayas’s *La esclava de su amante* and Cervantes’s *La fuerza de la sangre* as focal points for my Marxist materialist feminist analysis, I will posit that the writers created a textual space to reflect on the impact that sexual, physical and psychological violence had on women, their bodies and their subsequent lives. In early modern Europe, the opportunity for women to voice the injustice of violence was not historically available to those who suffered at the hands of a patriarch. Considering Julius R. Ruff’s assertion that early modern domestic violence was similar to modern violence in that it ‘flourished behind a wall of silence maintained by all affected by this behavior’, it becomes apparent that Zayas’s and Cervantes’s texts attempted to break down the wall of silence regarding violence against women, both within the home and outside of it.<sup>65</sup> Imbuing their female protagonists with rhetorical and physical strength, *La esclava de su amante* and *La fuerza de la sangre* began to deconstruct the silence surrounding the female victims of gender-based violence in early modern Spain.

<sup>65</sup> Julius R. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.131-2.

Intersecting in the characterisation of their protagonists as rhetorically assertive and physically defensive women, Zayas and Cervantes unveil the multifaceted resistance strategies of their respective heroines, doña Isabel Fajardo and Leocadia. The fictional women in Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas* are faced with what Gerda Lerner describes as, 'a functioning system of complex hierarchical relationships [that] transformed sexual, social, economic relations and dominated all systems of ideas', namely, patriarchy.<sup>66</sup> Emerging as the dominant form of societal order prior to the formation of European civilization, patriarchy gradually institutionalised the rights of men to control and appropriate women's sexuality and their reproductive role as mothers. Patriarchal concepts were built into the mental constructs of early modern Europe as Lerner posits, in such a way as to remain largely invisible.<sup>67</sup> To overcome the ubiquitous cluster of patriarchal forces that attempt to confine their self-determination, Isabel and Leocadia construct various coping mechanisms in the aftermath of their violations. I will argue that Isabel and Leocadia are not passive victims of sexual violence but they fight with their bodies, voices and through other means of agency to claim back their violated bodies. In *La esclava de su amante*, Isabel's resistance strategies include violence, the use of money in order to choose her own master and her final flight to the convent. An analysis of how Leocadia's body in *La fuerza de la sangre* becomes 'occupied territory' to use Mies's phrasing, as a result of the egocentric desire of Rodolfo and how she

<sup>66</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle-Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.3.

<sup>67</sup> Lerner, p.3

uses violence and language to ensure her body is free from any further coercion, will serve as a crucial comparison point to Zayas's violent tales.<sup>68</sup> By declaring the space of their bodies as *their* property, they move towards what Mies defines as the first and most fundamental demand of the international feminist movement: autonomy over our bodies and lives.<sup>69</sup>

Zayas and Cervantes first, contest the consideration of women and their bodies as occupied, patriarchal territory and second, they provide fictional examples of how women could reoccupy the contested space of their bodies. Whilst both authors align in their strategy of endowing their women with rhetorical and physical strength, they differ in their focus on either female empowerment or emasculation in these examples.<sup>70</sup> These notions have a clear correlation, namely, if you reduce patriarchal control ultimately, women will have more opportunity to assert their self-determination. Whilst Zayas has a sole focus on empowering Isabel with agency, Cervantes also works to disempower his rapist Rodolfo, exposing his brutish nature as a stark contrast to Leocadia's discernment. What they both do achieve however, is the creation of an unprecedented space for their fictional female survivors to voice the injustices done to them and their bodies. In her narrative, Isabel laments, '[m]as por una violencia estar sujeta a tantas desaventuras, ¿a quien le ha sucedido sino a mí?'.<sup>71</sup> The fictional accounts in *La esclava de su amante* and *La fuerza de la*

<sup>68</sup> Mies, p.25.

<sup>69</sup> Mies, p.222.

<sup>70</sup> Mies, p.25.

<sup>71</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.141.

*sangre* confirm to real early modern women that in fact, they are not alone as victims of sexual assault, physical violence or emotional abuse. Replying affirmatively to Isabel's rhetorical question, the *novelas* of Zayas and Cervantes provide narcissistic identification for seventeenth-century women who were socially encouraged to stay silent about the continuous abuse they suffered.

### A taxonomy of violence against women

Sexual assault, domestic violence, restricted access to knowledge and psychological abuse, are just some of the pervasive patriarchal forces that directly affect the women in both Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas* and early modern Europe. As defined by the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the 1993 General Assembly, the term 'violence against women' is understood as:

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.<sup>72</sup>

Whilst legal definitions such as this did not exist in the seventeenth century remarkably, they provide a gateway into analysing the distinct categories of violence that have been used to victimise women for centuries. Using the UN's definition as a springboard, we can separate violence against women into three principal categories, namely, physical, sexual and psychological violence. Whilst we can attempt to categorise the different types of violence that women of any age, race

<sup>72</sup> United Nations, 'General Assembly' (1993) <[https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.21\\_declaration%20elimination%20vaw.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.21_declaration%20elimination%20vaw.pdf)> [accessed 22 March 2019].

or class may face, the men in Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas* often use a trilateral strategy of violence. Namely, they exert physical force over their victims, show little remorse for incidents of sexual assault and they subject women to consistent psychological abuse, belittling their sense of self-worth. Therefore, in the *novelas*, often all three forms of violence become entangled and are used as a ubiquitous strategy of patriarchal exploitation.

Rape, an act that unquestionably results in sexual harm, often results in additional physical harm and psychological suffering for the violated woman. The archaic definition of rape constructed by ancient patriarchs, primarily relied on the universally-accepted notion that women were property.<sup>73</sup> In *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, Susan Brownmiller affirms that rape was a property crime of man against man in which woman of course was viewed as property.<sup>74</sup> Contrary to the archaic definition of rape, an exploitative notion that we can see at work in early modern Spain through arranged marriages and the dowry, the contemporary understanding of rape is based solely on the experience and consent of the victim. According to current Spanish organic law, Isabel and Leocadia are subjected to 'la agresión sexual [que] consista en acceso carnal por vía vaginal, anal o bucal', namely the most violent phallic intrusion of private, bodily

<sup>73</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Fawcett Books, 1975), p.18.

<sup>74</sup> See Brownmiller *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Fawcett Books, 1975), pp.17-18, 'A crime committed against [a woman's] body became a crime against the male estate'.

space.<sup>75</sup> In contrast to the current Spanish prison sentence of six to twelve years for such an offence, this assault in early modern Spain often went unpunished.

Second, a man can use the force of his own body to assault a woman. This category may also include spatial violence for example in *La esclava de su amante*, Isabel is physically confined by her rapist don Manuel, both in the restrictive grasp of his arms and within his locked room. In *La fuerza de la sangre*, Leocadia is confined by the animalistic squeeze of her rapist, Rodolfo and he prevents her movements by confining her to his room. A more clear-cut example of physical violence can be found in Zayas's *desengaño*, *Mal presagio casar lejos*. The tragic heroine of this short story doña Blanca, suffers regular domestic abuse from her Flemish husband. As a consistent result of doña Blanca's private life, her body is left with bruises from her husband's 'atrevidas manos'.<sup>76</sup>

The third category of violence against women is the most difficult to identify in Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*. Psychological violence can be identified as acts that diminish a victim's idea of self-worth through methods of intimidation, dehumanisation or isolation. As early examples of prose fiction, Zayas's and Cervantes's collections of *novelas* belong to the genre of the seventeenth-century Spanish short story, that was driven by narrative rather than providing complex

<sup>75</sup> 'Ley Orgánica 10/1995, de 23 de noviembre, del Código Penal', *Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial de Estado* <<https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/1995/11/23/10>> [accessed 11 April 2019].

<sup>76</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.356.



insights into the psychology of the characters themselves. This genre is invariably different to the novel which has disparate formal characteristics and moves towards the subjective complexity of characters. Considering this, it is more difficult to pinpoint the psychological suffering of characters in Zayas's and Cervantes's short fiction. By grasping evidence from the narrative and the language employed within the texts rather than any internal monologues, we can see how Zayas and Cervantes provide insights into cases of gendered psychological abuse, on both an individual and structural level. Judith A. Whitenack and Gwyn E. Campbell state that one of the most often mentioned theories on the origin of the seventeenth-century Spanish *novela corta* is the Oriental tradition of the "cornice" or narrative frame, a technique which provides structural unity to a series of otherwise unrelated stories, for example Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.<sup>77</sup> Whilst Zayas chose to employ a frame narrative, Cervantes deviated from this tradition of the genre. By employing the frame narrative of the evenings of entertainment, Zayas is able to create another fictional space in which the impact that violence had on women is discussed and the implied reader is able to see how the frame characters respond to these cases. As Lisa Vollendorf suggests, through the choice of the framed novella 'Zayas reproduces an accessible narrative structure that encourages gender inclusion both for delivery and reception.'<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Judith A. Whitenack and Gwyn E. Campbell, 'Introduction' in Leonor de Meneses, *El desdeñado más firme*, ed. by Judith A. Whitenack and Gwyn E. Campbell, pp.1-63, (p.12).

<sup>78</sup> Lisa Vollendorf, *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism*, p.164.

In *Tarde llega el desengaño*, Zayas shows a clear case of psychological abuse inflicted on the undeserving Elena. The *novela* opens in Gran Canaria, where don Martín and his comrade find refuge ashore the island, following a three-day tempest at sea. Lost and seeking sustenance, they are approached by don Jaime de Aragón and invited to stay at his castle. Sitting down to dine, they are completely astonished to see a small door in the hall opened with a key, from which an emaciated woman crawls out. In stark contrast to this emaciated woman who is fed the scraps from don Jaime's plate, the maid of the household is ceremoniously guided to her place at the table and showered with affection. Described by don Martín as 'más muerta que viva', the reader discovers as the story advances that the gaunt woman who emerged from this narrow cell is the man's wife, Elena.<sup>79</sup> Astonished by what they have seen, don Jaime provides the men with a lengthy rationale for why he has subjected Elena, a woman whom he desperately loved to such calculated psychological abuse.

After eight years of happy marriage, the maid of the household accused Elena of having an affair with a young cousin who lived with them. Believing the maid's words as undeniable fact, don Jaime commits various horrific acts to punish his wife and her cousin. Moving the entire household from the city to the isolated castle, he burns Elena's cousin alive. Announcing that the maid would become his wife, taking command of his possessions, servants and occupying him in his bed, don Jaime subjects Elena to two years of dehumanising

<sup>79</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.236.

abuse in which she is quarantined in a locked cupboard with only straw for a bed and kept alive by rations of food by don Jaime. This is a very clear example of gendered psychological abuse, as don Jaime employs several strategies to diminish Elena's idea of self-worth. Furthermore, don Jaime never gives Elena a chance to defend herself. During his testimony, the men question how he could take such an account as truth without any proof of his own, 'juzgando, como discretos, que también podía ser testimonio que aquella maldita esclava hubiese levantado a su señora, supuesto que don Jaime no había aguardado a verlo'.<sup>80</sup> Subjecting his wife to two years of psychological abuse without ever questioning his wife's innocence has to make this *novela* one of Zayas's most distressing.

On a more structural level, Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas* show awareness of the psychological abuse at the roots of early modern Spanish society. Historically, men as a structural unit have exercised an invisible power over women, ensuring that their patriarchal vision of the world remains accepted as truth. The current Spanish legislation regarding integral methods of protection against gender-based violence avers that violence against women is no longer '<<un delito invisible>>, sino que produce un rechazo colectivo y una evidente alarma social.'<sup>81</sup> As suggested by this statement, violence against women can only become visible by individuals acknowledging

<sup>80</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.250.

<sup>81</sup> 'Ley Orgánica 1/2004, de 28 de diciembre, de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género', *Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial de Estado* <<https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2004-21760>> [accessed 15 April 2019].

and scrutinising its existence, namely a vital first step is for both men and women to collectively reject the violent, coercive male-female relation. The same advice is proposed by Mies in her chapter, 'Towards a Feminist Perspective of a New Society'.<sup>82</sup> However, Mies suggests that it is men who must start movements against violence against women 'if they want to preserve the essence of their own humanity'.<sup>83</sup>

Some of Zayas's narrators attempt to initiate this collective refusal of violence against women. Filis who narrates *Tarde llega el desengaño*, begins to dismantle the invisible crimes of patriarchy. For example, she laments that early modern fathers considered it unnecessary that their daughters needed to read and write, yet they accepted the prevailing assumption that their sons needed to, 'si las enseñan a leer, es por milagro, que hay padre que tiene por caso de menos valer que sepan leer y escribir sus hijas, dando por causa que de saberlo son malas.'<sup>84</sup> Depriving their daughters of the same educational opportunities as their sons, early modern fathers helped to construct a one-way career path for their daughters: a house-bound mother and wife. Both Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas* begin the process of exposing what the current Spanish legislation deems as the 'delito invisible' of gender-based violence, simultaneously calling for a

<sup>82</sup> Mies, pp.205- 235.

<sup>83</sup> Mies p.222.

<sup>84</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.238.

collective rejection of this unacceptable behaviour and placing the blame on men's shoulders.<sup>85</sup>

### Historical Context

In the seventeenth-century context of Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*, the right to self-govern one's body and life was difficult for contemporary women to achieve. This is a right still demanded in the social context of Mies's twentieth century theory, as she states that more and more women discovered that their own bodies had been alienated from them and had been turned into objects for others.<sup>86</sup> Seventeenth-century Spanish women had to withstand the pan-European notion that they *were* patriarchal property. Following the logic of capitalism, if women *were* property, they could not be owners of property. Mies summarises this viewpoint from a Marxist materialist feminist perspective:

women [...] have never been defined as free historical subjects in a bourgeois sense. Neither the women of the class of owners of means of production, nor the women of the class of proletarians were owners of their own person. They themselves, their whole person, their labour, their emotionality, their children, their body, their sexuality were not their own but belonged to their husband.<sup>87</sup>

Exploited as a piece of property, the right for women's bodies not to be violated is a concern entrenched in Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*. As asserted by Mies, in the 1970s feminism moved its focus from the public, patriarchal structures of politics and the economy to

<sup>85</sup> 'Ley Orgánica 1/2004, de 28 de diciembre, de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género', *Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial de Estado* <<https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2004-21760>> [accessed 15 April 2019].

<sup>86</sup> Mies, p.25.

<sup>87</sup> Mies, p.169.

the empirical experiences of women and their own bodies.<sup>88</sup> The experiences of twentieth-century women, who recognised that their democratic constitutions failed to guarantee women the right to the inviolability of their own bodies and the experiences of women in early modern Spain, are therefore not as different as they initially appear.<sup>89</sup> What is at stake then for Mies, Zayas and Cervantes is the patriarchal disregarding of women's basic human rights.

In early modern Europe, attempts to adequately punish cases of *estupro*, the violation of a chaste woman, were notoriously ineffective according to Elizabeth Rhodes with 'a minimum number being accused, even fewer condemned, and almost none subjected to the consequences of a guilty verdict.'<sup>90</sup> With little scope to publicly address their grievance, Lorenzo considers how powerless violated women were in seventeenth-century Spain:

La indefensión en la que solían quedar las mujeres violadas conducía, en muchos casos, a que éstas intentaran solucionar su problema al margen de los tribunales y de sus familiares, aferrándose a la esperanza de que su violador se casara con ellas y quedasen así encubiertos los hechos.<sup>91</sup>

Here, Lorenzo refers to early modern women clinging to the hope that their rapists would marry them as the most viable solution to their ordeal, a concept that was frequently investigated in Golden Age drama. To a modern-day reader, this social reality is difficult to digest. Often violated women and their families attempted to deal with the

<sup>88</sup> Mies, p.24.

<sup>89</sup> Mies, p.26.

<sup>90</sup> Elizabeth Rhodes, 'Living with Rodolfo and Cervantes's "La fuerza de la sangre"', *MLN*, 2 (2018), 201-218, (pp.203-4).

<sup>91</sup> Pedro Luis Lorenzo Cardarso, 'Los malos tratos a las mujeres en Castilla en el Siglo XVII', *Cuadernos de Investigación Histórica*, 15 (1989), 119-136, (p.126).

situation without recourse to the authorities due to the infamy it often produced. As supported by Rhodes in her article on *La fuerza de la sangre*,<sup>92</sup> Cervantes attends to this social reality when Leocadia's father articulates that he and his wife were afraid to report the case to the authorities, 'temerosos no fuesen ellos el principal instrumento de publicar su deshonor'.<sup>93</sup> In *La fuerza de la sangre*, the *novela* ends with the marriage of Leocadia to her rapist and in *La esclava de su amante*, Isabel pursues don Manuel in order to try and secure the marriage she was falsely promised by him. Therefore, both *novelas* provide an accurate depiction of how sexual assault was dealt with in early modern Spain. Considering this, we cannot critique Zayas and Cervantes for not legally punishing don Manuel and Rodolfo, as the legal injustice was a key part of their social reality.

'Me hallé perdida': Loss and female agency in María de Zayas's *La esclava de su amante*

In her *novelas*, Zayas probes the failure of her society to provide adequate protection for women and explicitly calls for an equal male-female relationship not characterised by systematic sexual violence.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Rhodes, 'Living with Rodolfo and Cervantes's "La fuerza de la sangre"', p.204.

<sup>93</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.78.

<sup>94</sup> I have chosen to use the term 'sexual violence' instead of 'gender violence', to keep in line with Maria Mies's statement that: 'If, instead of 'sexual violence', we talk of 'gender violence', the shock is somewhat mitigated by an abstract term, which removes the whole issue from the realm of emotionality and political commitment to that of scientific and apparently 'objective' discourse.' (Maria Mies,

Particularly in her second collection of *novelas*, *Desengaños amorosos* (1647), Zayas's unflinching focus on the patriarchal violence that infiltrates the private sphere, demonstrates a feminist strategy of exposing the countless forms of male violence which according to Mies, 'were not just expressions of deviant behaviour on the part of some men, but were part and parcel of a whole system of male, or rather patriarchal, dominance over women.'<sup>95</sup> In *Desengaños amorosos*, each *novela* has at least one female character, who is sexually, physically or emotionally abused by a man. The fictional women, doña Isabel, Camila, Roseleta, Elena, doña Inés, Laurela, doña Blanca, doña Mencía, doña Ana, Beatriz, doña Magdalena, are respectively sexually violated, poisoned, bled to death, starved, imprisoned, executed by a falling wall, killed by exsanguination, stabbed to death, beheaded, blinded and stabbed. Each of these female characters are testimony to the violence that characterises the male-female relationship and as Vollendorf suggests, contribute to Zayas's layered treatment of women's emotional and physical suffering.<sup>96</sup> Zayas's audacious, blood-soaked *novelas* are a symptom of the unjust, seventeenth-century historical treatment of women and their bodies, namely, an imaginative response to the gender inequality that permeated early modern Spain.

*Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed, 1998), p.23)

<sup>95</sup> Mies, p.26.

<sup>96</sup> Lisa Vollendorf, *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism* (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Dept. of Romance Languages, 2001), p.159.



*La esclava de su amante*, the first *novela* of Zayas's *Desengaños amorosos* and the first account of sexual violence to be told amongst the audience of noblemen and noblewomen, sets the tone of violence for the rest of the collection. "Zelima", the female protagonist of *La esclava de su amante* is the only character who tells her own story to the fictional audience of noblemen and noblewomen invited by Lisis, the noblewoman who has organised the evenings of entertainment.<sup>97</sup> Before beginning the narrative of her 'desdichados sucesos', "Zelima" who the audience previously knew as Lisis's slave, reveals that her real name is doña Isabel Fajardo.<sup>98</sup> As doña Isabel is the only character to tell her own story in the twenty *novelas* that span Zayas's two collections, the implied seventeenth-century reader would have felt a stronger affinity towards her as a character. Even though doña Isabel is the only character to tell her own account, this cannot draw away from one of Lisis's stated rules of the *sarao* in *Desengaños amorosos*, first that only women were to tell stories and second, that the accounts told should be true cases, 'que los que refiriesen fuesen casos verdaderos y que tuviesen nombre de desengaños'.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, Lisis's stated rules of the *sarao* place veracity at the centre of the frame narration and the audience is prepared to hear ten true accounts from only female speakers.

<sup>97</sup> Unlike Cervantes's collection, Zayas's *novelas* are encased within a frame-story, an aspect which aligns her *novelas* with the Boccaccian model. Namely in Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1353), the reader encounters a frame-story of seven women and three men who withdraw from a plague-wrecked Florence to the countryside, where they choose to entertain themselves by telling stories, they tell ten stories each day over a period of ten days. (Margaret Rich Greer, *María de Zayas Tells Baroque Tales of Love and the Cruelty of Men*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p.37)

<sup>98</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.125.

<sup>99</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.118.

Breaking her self-constructed identity as a slave, Isabel reveals that she is the daughter of one of the most prominent Catholic families in the city of Murcia and she begins to describe the disquieting moment that a sexual assault strips her of the autonomy of her body and her life.<sup>100</sup> Sharing her story amongst an empathetic audience, Isabel begins a conversation about sexual violence with the women surrounding her at the *sarao*, calling for others to share their own personal stories and speak out against the misconception of a male-female relation not characterised by direct and structural violence.<sup>101</sup> As suggested by Vollendorf, here ‘the frame tale models a space in which women are encouraged to speak up and, in the *Desengaños*, to speak out.’<sup>102</sup> The respect for the autonomy of Isabel’s body, stated by Mies as essential to achieving ecological, economic and political autarky, is completely disregarded by don Manuel.<sup>103</sup>

As a result of her father serving in Zaragoza during the Catalanian revolt (1640), Isabel and her family lodged in the house of ‘una viuda, principal y rica’, who had a son named don Manuel.<sup>104</sup> Before the Mardi Gras masked ball, don Manuel assaults Isabel’s autonomy, coercing her into his bedroom with brutish force:

si bien ya habían llegado a tenerme asida por una mano, y viéndome divertida, tiró de mí, y sin poder ser parte a hacerme fuerte, me entró dentro, cerrando la puerta con llave. Yo no sé lo que me sucedió, porque, del susto me privó el sentido un mortal desmayo.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.127.

<sup>101</sup> Mies, p.8.

<sup>102</sup> Vollendorf, p.167.

<sup>103</sup> Mies, p.222.

<sup>104</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.11.

<sup>105</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.137.

Don Manuel physically invades Isabel's space in three principal manners: first, he locks the door to his room to ensure Isabel is unable to escape her imprisonment; second, he quashes her freedom of movement by enclosing her into 'sus infames lazos'; finally, he phallically invades her body.<sup>106</sup> As Isabel faints during the culmination of the horrific violation, it is through her subjective exclamations of loss and alienation that we discover Isabel has been raped. Through the violation, Don Manuel exerts two of the eight characteristics of male power in archaic and contemporary societies that Kathleen Gough discusses in her essay, 'The Origin of the Family'.<sup>107</sup> First, he forces his sexuality upon Isabel, subjecting her to sexual violence and second, he schemes to confine Isabel physically, through his three aforementioned strategies of enclosure. In this episode, Isabel's body, physically enclosed in a locked room and confined within the prison of her rapist's arms, is forced to be an object for don Manuel to force his aggressive sexuality upon.

In addition to criticising the exploitative behaviour of 'Man-the-Hunter', to use Mies's term, *La esclava de su amante* critiques men's disrespect for the emotional and physical labour of women.<sup>108</sup> In her narrative, Isabel emphasises that don Manuel's bedroom is directly next to his mother's, 'su traidor hermano, que debía de estar

<sup>106</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.137.

<sup>107</sup> Kathleen Gough, 'The Origin of the Family' in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. by Rayna R. Reiter (London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp.51-76, (pp.69-70).

<sup>108</sup> Mies, p.166.

aguardando esta ocasión, me detuvo a la puerta de su aposento, que, como he dicho, era a la entrada a los de su madre'.<sup>109</sup> Aside from the psychoanalytic connotation to which 'la entrada [...] de su madre' lends itself, the reference to the location of his mother's room renders an alternative reading of this passage. <sup>110</sup> Zayas highlights how this sadist can so easily violate Isabel in such close proximity to his female family members. Furthermore, this emphasises that Isabel's problem with don Manuel may also be a concern for his mother or for his sister, as he shows a general disrespect for all women. Zayas's choice to include these spatial details demonstrates an important issue that is highlighted by Mies, namely, that the 'unique' problem one woman may have with her brother, father or husband is representative of the 'general' problem of all women.<sup>111</sup> Isabel avers that men's general disrespect for women originates from their lack of respect for their mothers, '[p]ues si agradecerais los que recibís de vuestras madres, por ellas estimarais y reverenciarais a las demás.'<sup>112</sup> Namely, Isabel suggests that if men place little value on the physical and emotional labour of their mothers, they will have a lack of respect for all women. *La esclava de su amante* contributes to Zayas's vision that the subordination of women begins in the home and the lack of respect that sons have for their mothers is indicative of a wider patriarchal issue at work in the context of seventeenth-century Spain.

<sup>109</sup>Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.137.

<sup>110</sup>Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.137.

<sup>111</sup> Mies, p.25.

<sup>112</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.136.

The consideration of women's bodies as 'occupied territory' is at the centre of Mies's theory, as she exposes the links between women's exploitation and the patriarchal chain of capital accumulation.<sup>113</sup> In her theory, Mies examines the sexual economy that existed in the Germanic tribes that occupied Europe at the end of the Middle Ages. According to Germanic law, marriage was seen as a sales-contract between two families in which the woman, as an object, would be exchanged between patriarchs.<sup>114</sup> In this system of exchange, women as patriarchal chattel, were lifelong under the '*mund*-power' of men, whether that was their husband, father or son.<sup>115</sup> Mimicking the sexual exchange at the centre of Germanic law, Spanish legal codes insisted that the preferred resolution to rape was the marriage of the victim to the rapist. Rhodes summarises this preference that 'relie[d] on an understanding of the raped woman as used goods whose value is best redeemed by marriage to the human male who deserves her—the man who took her virginity—or God'.<sup>116</sup> Considering this, it would have proved extremely difficult for women to reject the prevailing system of the sexual economy of marriage, unless they sought refuge in a convent.

Isabel Fajardo experiences her body and her sexuality as belonging to a patriarchal figure. Namely, after Isabel is violated by the merciless don Manuel, her body is tied to two different patriarchs: her father as

<sup>113</sup> Mies, p.25.

<sup>114</sup> Mies, p.78.

<sup>115</sup> Mies, p.78.

<sup>116</sup> Elizabeth Rhodes, 'Living with Rodolfo and Cervantes's "La fuerza de la sangre"', *MLN*, 2 (2018), 201-218, (p.207).

she is unwed, and to don Manuel, the sadist who violated her. On finding that her body has been exploited for don Manuel's pleasure, Isabel feels completely alienated from her own body as *hers*. In this moment of panic, Isabel's dialogue consists of short, sharp clauses that reflect her terror to find her body violated, '[p]ues pasada poco más de media hora, volví en mi, y me hallé, mal digo, no me hallé, pues me hallé perdida, y tan perdida, que no me supe ni pude volver ni podré ganarme jamás'.<sup>117</sup> The repetition of 'perdida' in this extract communicates Isabel's distress that her body has been violated in a situation outside of her control. The first time that Isabel employs the adjective 'perdida', she refers to the discovery that her body has been damaged in some respect, including the loss of her purity. In her second use of the adjective, she moves to another nuance of meaning, the loss of direction. Namely, Isabel perceives her own identity to be in jeopardy, as she is forced onto a restricted path due to one man's actions and therefore, lost in her sense of purpose. Furthermore, this violation may also signify a loss of economic freedom. As a result of the *estupro*, Isabel is economically restricted to either marriage with don Manuel or refuge within a convent, as she is considered a 'used good' due to the loss of her virginity.<sup>118</sup> Isabel is unable to recognise herself as she has lost, due to seventeenth-century courting procedures, all of her free will to choose her spouse. Socially obligated to pursue don Manuel for his hand in marriage, even though he is the

<sup>117</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.137.

<sup>118</sup> Elizabeth Rhodes, 'Living with Rodolfo and Cervantes's "La fuerza de la sangre"', *MLN*, 2 (2018), 201-218, (p.207).

perpetrator of her horrific violation, doña Isabel is left seething with ‘un furor diabólico’.<sup>119</sup>

Violence and coercion are exposed by Mies as the ‘main mechanisms by which the unequal power relation in the area of body politics was maintained’.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, in order to reverse the unequal power relation between her and her rapist, Isabel must adhere to the violent standards set by don Manuel to gain power in this interaction. Seething with wrath, Isabel decides to take her fate into her own hands. She grabs his sword, ‘sacándola de la vaina, se la fu[e] a envainar en el cuerpo; hurtóle al golpe, y no fue milagro, que estaba diestro en hurtar’.<sup>121</sup> By attempting to stab don Manuel with his sword, Isabel attempts to subject don Manuel to a phallic penetration of his flesh, a non-consensual violation that mirrors the intrusion of her intimate, corporeal space. Therefore, Isabel tries to allegorically rape don Manuel and reverse the unequal, male-female power dynamic by attempting to invade his body with a phallic object.

In this particular passage, the etymology of Isabel’s words is imperative to her retaliation strategy of claiming back the space of her body and subjecting don Manuel to a similar invasion of private space. In Isabel’s narrative, she chooses to employ the noun, ‘vaina’ and the verb originating from the same root, ‘envainar’.<sup>122</sup> According to H. Patsy Boyer’s translation of the text, Isabel takes the sword from its

<sup>119</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.137.

<sup>120</sup> Mies, p.25.

<sup>121</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.137.

<sup>122</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.137.

sheath, 'vaina', employing the same verb to display how she attempts to 'sheathe' it in his body.<sup>123</sup> The etymology of the word, 'vagina', in both English and Spanish originates from the Latin word, *vāgīna*, signifying a sheath that serves to protect the blade of a sword or dagger.<sup>124</sup> By employing the noun and verb of sheath or 'envainar' in Spanish, Isabel triggers a symbolic meaning intrinsic to her resistance strategy. As she takes don Manuel's sword from its sheath and attempts to 'sheathe' it into his flesh, there is a symbolic transition from don Manuel's phallic invasion of Isabel's "sheath" to her attempts to place his sword into his own flesh essentially, a new corporeal "sheath" for his sword. Through the etymology of Isabel's word choice, she linguistically backs up her physical actions of phallically invading don Manuel's flesh.

To become more dominant in the male-female power relation, Isabel also resorts to similar tactics of spatial invasion. Isabel explains that don Manuel was taken on as chamberlain for the lord Admiral of Castile, 'le recibió el señor Almirante por gentilhombre de su cámara.'<sup>125</sup> Meanwhile, whilst Isabel lodges with Octavio, a servant whom her father had previously dismissed, she finds out specific information regarding don Manuel's movements as '[i]ba Octavio

<sup>123</sup> María de Zayas y Sotomayor, *The Disenchantments of Love: A Translation of the Desengaños amorosos*, trans. by H. Patsy Boyer (USA: State University of New York Press, 1997), p.53.

<sup>124</sup> '[VAINA]. Bayna. La caja dentro de la cual ponemos la espada, el cuchillo y otra cualquier arma, y más propiamente se dice vaina por ser del nombre latino *vagina*, *penúltima producta*. [VAINA]. Vayna. Del nombre latino *vagina*, la funda en que traemos cubierta la espada, daga, cuchillos y las demás herramientas agudas.' Sebastián de Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2006), p.1507.

<sup>125</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, pp.149-50.



todos los días adonde el señor Almirante posaba'.<sup>126</sup> Isabel ultimately discovers that in the Admiral's lodgings, the high steward was looking for a female slave.<sup>127</sup> In order to discover don Manuel's intentions, Isabel intends to satisfy the requirement for a female slave, '[y] fue que, fingiendo clavo y S para el rostro, me puse en hábito conveniente para fingirme esclava y mora, poniéndome por nombre Zelima'.<sup>128</sup> In doing so, Isabel seeks out don Manuel to physically show him what he has reduced her to by his cruel actions, 'siendo la causa de esa bajeza con que me baldonas, cuando por tus traiciones y maldades estoy puesta en ella'.<sup>129</sup> Once again resorting to the standards set by don Manuel, Isabel threatens to use violence to mete out don Manuel's deserved punishment, 'Dios hay en el cielo y rey en la tierra, y si éstos no lo hicieren hay puñales, y tengo manos y valor para quitarte esa infame vida, para que deprendan en mí las mujeres nobles a castigar hombres falsos y desagradecidos'.<sup>130</sup> Even though Isabel must resort to violent threats in order to gain authority in the area of body politics, there is a certain strength in Isabel proclaiming that she will use the power of her body to kill her rapist. Isabel refutes the early modern assumption that a 'man's rage was caused by a woman's fault', by actively seeking out don Manuel and declaring his accountability for his unscrupulous actions.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.153.

<sup>127</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.153.

<sup>128</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.153.

<sup>129</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.157.

<sup>130</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.157.

<sup>131</sup> Margaret King, *Women of the Renaissance* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.44.

To reflect further on the symbolic significance of Isabel's attire as a slave, Kathleen Barry affirms that '*[f]emale sexual slavery is present in ALL situations where women or girls cannot change the immediate conditions of their existence* [Emphasis in original].'<sup>132</sup> Barry's statement has a pressing relevance for the social hardships faced by seventeenth-century Spanish women and girls, as she avers that female sexual slavery is not limited to international trafficking networks, but it is pervasive throughout patriarchal societies.<sup>133</sup> Isabel is deemed a sexual slave according to Barry's definition, as she is sexually exploited by him and as a result, she is unable to change the social expectation that she must marry the man to whom she lost her virginity. Ultimately, as she finds herself unable to change her status as sexually tarnished, Isabel discards her identity as a noble woman. Counterfeiting the sign for slave on her forehead (\$) and referring to herself as "Zelima", Isabel manipulates how her body is read by others, insisting that her body must only be *read* as a slave. She draws the fictional audience's attention to the counterfeit brand, stating '*estos hierros que veis en mi rostro no son sino sombras de los que ha puesto en mi calidad y fama la ingratitud de un hombre.*'<sup>134</sup> Attacking the patriarchal structures that confine her right to individual choice, Isabel's logic is extremely similar to the way in which Susan Bordo imagines the housebound agoraphobic who lives the construction of femininity quite literally stating, "You want me in this home? You'll have

<sup>132</sup> Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p.40.

<sup>133</sup> Barry, p.40.

<sup>134</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.127.

me in this home --- with a vengeance!”<sup>135</sup> Rendered a female sexual slave by the social standards of seventeenth-century Spain, Isabel’s decision to sell herself as an actual slave to the lord Admiral’s lodging is an audacious statement.

Zayas interweaves an attack against the patriarchal system through her fictional heroine, Isabel. By allowing her female character to dress in the attire of a slave and sell herself on the market, Zayas legitimately questions, as contemporary women were viewed as subordinate to men with minimal autonomy and self-determination, is there any difference between the North-African slaves traded between noble families and the status of women in seventeenth-century Spain? This link reminds us that gender is not the only vector of oppression at work in the early modern world, as colonial subjects were subjected to similar strategies of exploitation. Through the rhetorical device of irony, Zayas indicates that Isabel must sell herself as a slave, asserting her agency and picking her own masters, to become less of a slave to patriarchal figures. This comparison is further provoked by the kinder treatment Isabel receives during her time as a slave to Lisis, than the abuse she suffers as a noblewoman at the hands of men. The third-person narrator states that Lisis had developed such affection for “Zelima” that the two seemed more like loving sisters than mistress and slave, whereas her life as doña Isabel Fajardo is tarnished with cruelty and sexual abuse.<sup>136</sup> If Isabel is treated more tenderly as a

<sup>135</sup> Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, Tenth Anniversary Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p.170.

<sup>136</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos* p.117; Zayas, *The Disenchantments of Love*, p.37.

slave to Lisis's family than as a noble woman, Zayas exposes the detrimental gendered abuse that her seventeenth-century women readers were possibly facing, whilst probing how these two vectors of oppression might function alongside one another in patriarchal Spain.

The patriarchal strategy of using women as objects in male transactions, a form of structural psychological violence, was exerted on a grand scale in early modern Europe through the sexual economy of marriage. As Mies highlights, the *mund* power of men over women that was established through marriage, was founded on occupation (kidnapping of women), or purchase (sale of women).<sup>137</sup> This pan-European context of the sexual economy of marriage sheds light on Isabel's desire to govern the economic transaction in which she will feature as an object. Lou Charnon-Deutsch analyses *La esclava de su amante* from the perspective of a sexual economy, maintaining that Isabel is a 'self-defined object in the master/slave discourse, [and she] nevertheless exerts uncommon control over the material conditions of her world. It is as if Zayas had used slavery as a smoke screen to obscure a power that might otherwise have inspired disbelief or disapproval.'<sup>138</sup> Isabel utilises money to her own advantage and to control the events of her life. To name but a few examples, she robs jewels and money to pay Octavio to sell her as a slave to the lord Admiral's lodging, she pays Octavio to sell her a second time into

<sup>137</sup> Mies, p.78.

<sup>138</sup> Lou Charnon-Deutsch, 'The Sexual Economy in the Narratives of María de Zayas', in Amy R. Williamsen and Judith A. Whitenack, *María de Zayas: The Dynamics of Discourse* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp.117-132, (p.121).

slavery to Lisis's uncle and she uses jewels at the end of the story to provide a sufficient dowry to enter the convent with doña Estefanía.<sup>139</sup> Money therefore, provides Isabel with a very specific agency. By selling herself as a slave and choosing her "master", Isabel maintains autonomy over her life by ensuring she is in control of economic transactions and that she will not be governed by the *mund-*power of a patriarch.<sup>140</sup>

Isabel's final decision to enter the convent is perhaps the most effective strategy to achieve autonomy, both in terms of freedom from coercion regarding her body and by rejecting her status as being a natural resource for individual men as well as for the state, as a mother and a wife.<sup>141</sup> As Lou Charnon-Deutsch succinctly puts it, '[b]y virtue of her rejection of earthly men, Isabel shows women how to resign from a power system that always has them coming up empty-handed.'<sup>142</sup> If she is not entitled to choose her spouse in her seventeenth-century society, Isabel ultimately elects the secure haven of the convent in which she can exert her autonomy without restriction. Reaching the conclusion that if don Manuel does not respect her, Isabel quite rightly states that he does not deserve her, 'éste es el mayor sentimiento que tengo, pues estaba segura de que no me merecía y conocía que me desestimaba.'<sup>143</sup> Realising her true worth and resigning from the patriarchal power system that failed to protect

<sup>139</sup> Charnon-Deutsch, p.121.

<sup>140</sup> Charnon-Deutsch, p.122; Mies, p.78.

<sup>141</sup> Mies, p.40, p.222.

<sup>142</sup> Charnon-Deutsch, p.120.

<sup>143</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.141.

her, Isabel chooses to join an 'idealized community of women' within the walls of the convent.<sup>144</sup>

Exploited objects and assertive subjects in Cervantes's *La fuerza de la sangre*

Cervantes's *novelas* often show minimal displays of violence, particularly in light of Zayas's *novelas*. Whilst Zayas's *novelas* have overt details of bodily suffering, the physical pain felt by Cervantes's female characters is left more to the reader's imagination. *La fuerza de la sangre* does include the sexual assault of an innocent woman and it addresses the issue of contemporary women's bodies being perceived as sexual objects to be exploited, 'a pesar de todos los inconvenientes que sucederle pudiesen.'<sup>145</sup> An analysis of how Leocadia's body becomes occupied, patriarchal territory as a result of the all-consuming, egocentric desire of Rodolfo will serve as a crucial comparison point to Zayas's *La esclava de su amante*. Both *novelas* address a complex case of violence against a woman and they focus on how these women readdress their grievances with startling authority.

Cervantes's violated female character Leocadia, was ruthlessly kidnapped from the security of her family as they walked back towards the city of Toledo. The insolent rogue Rodolfo overcome with desire after seeing the beauty of their daughter Leocadia, charged at the

<sup>144</sup> Stephanie Merrim, *Early Modern Women's Writing and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), xxxvii.

<sup>145</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, pp.78.

family along with his four friends and seized their young daughter. From the sheer shock of the circumstances, Leocadia ‘no tuvo fuerzas para defenderse y el sobresalto le quitó la voz para quejarse, y aun la luz de los ojos, pues, desmayada y sin sentido, no vio quién la llevaba, ni a dónde la llevaban.’<sup>146</sup> We are not given explicit details of the attack but merely told that, ‘a escuras [Rodolfo] robó la mejor prenda de Leocadia’.<sup>147</sup> Robbing Leocadia’s chastity, Rodolfo violently exploits what Judith Butler calls the ‘primary tie’, namely ‘that primary way in which we are, as bodies, outside ourselves and for one another.’<sup>148</sup> The thresholds between physical and emotional pain begin to blur when Leocadia has a sudden, emotional recollection of the physical suffering that she has endured when she reaches out to touch Rodolfo’s hand, ‘[p]ero como tocaba cuerpo y se le acordaba de la fuerza que se la había hecho viniendo con sus padres, caía en la verdad del cuento de su desgracia.’<sup>149</sup> By physically touching the body of her rapist, Leocadia is enlightened of the physical trauma her own body has suffered.

Responding to the physical “change” in her body, the loss of her virginity, Leocadia quickly changes the way that she addresses Rodolfo. Leocadia becomes far more assertive in her rhetorical demands, ensuring that Rodolfo does not disclose his acquired knowledge to a single soul:

<sup>146</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.78.

<sup>147</sup> Cervantes, p.79.

<sup>148</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), p.27.

<sup>149</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.80.

[a]trevido mancebo, que de poca edad hacen tus hechos que te juzgue, yo te perdono la ofensa que me has hecho con sólo que me prometas y jures que, como la has cubierto con esta escuridad, la cubrirás con perpetuo silencio sin decirla a nadie.<sup>150</sup>

Here, Cervantes insinuates a bodily connection, that by perhaps seeing or touching another body, we are reminded of our own physical and emotional trauma. By touching Rodolfo's hand, Leocadia is reminded that the 'primary tie' between her and Rodolfo has been violently exploited.<sup>151</sup>

The body, providing the facility to remind a woman of the physical and emotional trauma she has suffered, is also present for doña Blanca in *Mal presagio casar lejos*. Speaking to her closest friend doña María, doña Blanca reflects upon the life-long bond of marriage, 'como hemos visto a muchas, que se casan sin gusto, y viviendo sin él, se pasan de la vida a la muerte, sin haber vivido el tiempo que duró el casamiento'.<sup>152</sup> Thus, when her brother promises her hand in marriage to a Flemish prince, she orders that the prince must come to Spain and court her for an entire year. Each day she wept more tears, wishing that she did not have to marry despite the fact that she loved the prince dearly.<sup>153</sup> To confirm her anxieties about marriage, she is subjected to consistent domestic abuse by her new husband. Explaining to María, doña Blanca states that even though she loved her husband deeply, every time she saw him the bruises his rough hands had made on her body reappeared, 'aunque amaba

<sup>150</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.80.

<sup>151</sup> Butler, p.27.

<sup>152</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.340.

<sup>153</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.347.



ternísimamente a su esposo, todas las veces que le veía le salían las colores que le habían puesto en él sus atrevidas manos'.<sup>154</sup> Doña Blanca suggests that the visible signs of the physical and emotional trauma that she has suffered reappear in light of their creator.<sup>155</sup> Similar to the case of Leocadia in *La fuerza de la sangre*, upon seeing her husband, doña Blanca is reminded of the emotional and physical pain that she has endured as a result of her husband's 'atrevidas manos'.<sup>156</sup>

The renewal of emotional suffering and the return of the physical marks that the Flemish prince left on his wife's body is reminiscent of the Renaissance tradition of a murdered body bleeding afresh in the presence of the murderer. Shakespeare invokes this Renaissance tradition in his play *Richard III*. The wounds of the previous King, Henry VI, figuratively communicate the guilt of Richard, Duke of Gloucester who later becomes King Richard III. Lady Anne, who is grieving for the loss of her father-in-law Henry, states to Richard, 'Behold this pattern of thy butcheries./ O gentlemen, see, see dead Henry's wounds/ Open their congealed mouths and bleed afresh.'<sup>157</sup> In this extract, Henry's body becomes a signifying entity that shows a physical response to

<sup>154</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.356.

<sup>155</sup> Here, it should be mentioned that doña Blanca's reappearing wounds can be read in two distinct ways. First, the bruises could function as an allegory of the returning pain of doña Blanca's domestic abuse and second, the bruises could be understood in the context of seventeenth-century ideas of magic in which the implied seventeenth-century reader would have believed that her bruises did in fact, reappear in the light of their creator. Both interpretations presume the reappearance of a violent event that has come to pass in the past, but that still weighs down on the present of the subject.

<sup>156</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.356.

<sup>157</sup> William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. by John Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1.2.52-54.

the presence of his murderer, Richard. Reminiscent of this extract, doña Blanca's body also communicates the physical trauma that she has suffered at the sight of her abuser. The bruises on doña Blanca's body that reappear when she sees her husband communicate a similar message to the 'congealed mouths' on King Henry VI's body in Shakespeare's *Richard III*.<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, Leocadia's emotional suffering in *La fuerza de la sangre* is also initiated by touching the flesh of her rapist. Upon touch, Rodolfo's body provides her with the knowledge of the horrific events that have happened to her body whilst she was unconscious, as the narrator affirms that Leocadia came to an understanding of her misfortune, 'caía en la verdad del cuento de su desgracia'.<sup>159</sup>

Reaching an understanding of her misfortune, unfortunately Leocadia's psychological suffering is only augmented by the discovery that she is pregnant. Susan Brownmiller reflects on the several stages of trauma that women have to endure after a violation:

Not only might the female be subjected at will to a thoroughly detestable physical conquest from which there could be no retaliation in kind—a rape for a rape—but the consequences of such a brutal struggle might be death or injury, not to mention impregnation and the birth of a dependent child.<sup>160</sup>

Brownmiller's statement has a relevance for *La fuerza de la sangre* as after Leocadia attempts to psychologically come to terms with the violation, she discovers she is pregnant with her rapist's child.<sup>161</sup> The narrator informs us:

<sup>158</sup> Shakespeare, 1.2.54.

<sup>159</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.80.

<sup>160</sup> Brownmiller, p.16.

<sup>161</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.85.

Pero a poco meses vio serle forzoso hacer por fuerza retirada y escondida porque se sintió preñada, suceso por el cual las en algún tanto olvidadas lágrimas volvieron a sus ojos y los suspiros y lamentos comenzaron de nuevo a herir los vientos, sin ser parte la discreción de su buena madre a consolalla.<sup>162</sup>

The renewal of Leocadia's tears caused by her discovery of the pregnancy is starkly contrasted with Rodolfo's lack of psychological suffering. Before it is revealed that Leocadia is pregnant, the narrator emphasises Rodolfo's lack of concern for Leocadia's fate as he set off travelling to Italy, 'goloso de lo que había oído decir a algunos soldados de la abundancia de las hosterías de Italia y Francia, y de la libertad que en los alojamientos tenían los españoles.'<sup>163</sup> The lack of psychological impact that the rape has on Rodolfo's life is summarised by the statement, '[f]inalmente, él se fue con tan poca memoria de lo que con Leocadia, le había sucedido como si nunca hubiera pasado'.<sup>164</sup> By highlighting Rodolfo's complete lack of distress before revealing how Leocadia must deal with the long-term consequence of rearing a child, Cervantes places emphasis on the unjust aftermath of sexual assault that consistently leaves suffering women empty-handed.

In addition to his exploitation of the 'primary tie', Rodolfo also restricts Leocadia through epistemological strategies. In order to place himself in an epistemologically superior position to his victim, Rodolfo blindfolds Leocadia, 'por que no viese las calles por donde la llevaba, ni la casa ni el aposento donde estaba, en el cual, sin ser visto de

<sup>162</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.85.

<sup>163</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.84.

<sup>164</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.85.

nadie.’<sup>165</sup> After the violation, Leocadia recovers her consciousness and begins assessing her surroundings with a series of rhetorical questions, ‘Adónde estoy, desdichada? ¿Qué escuridad es ésta, qué tinieblas me rodean? [...] ¿quién me toca? ¿Yo en cama, yo lastimada?’<sup>166</sup> Depriving Leocadia of her sight by keeping her in darkness, Rodolfo retains epistemological control of the situation. It is significant then, that one of Leocadia’s resistance strategies involves controlling how Rodolfo disseminates the knowledge he has acquired of her body and his violation of it.

The violent attack deprived Leocadia of a voice with which to protest; she suffers from a corporeal reaction that deprives her of her senses. Therefore, when she regains consciousness Leocadia exerts the full power of her body and her voice as resistance strategies against Rodolfo. First, Leocadia subjects Rodolfo to a similar loss of voice stating, ‘como la has cubierto con esta escuridad, la cubrirás con perpetuo silencio sin decirla a nadie.’<sup>167</sup> By using the future tense of ‘cubrir’ rather than the conditional, Leocadia is assertive of the specific outcome of this affair rather than providing any choice for Rodolfo in the matter. Mirroring the loss of voice that Leocadia suffered during her violation, she perpetually silences the tongue of her rapist whilst reclaiming the power of her own. Secondly, as she stresses ‘[el] perpetuo silencio’ that Rodolfo must maintain about her violation, Leocadia highlights her own freedom of speech. In contrast to her use

<sup>165</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.78.

<sup>166</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.79.

<sup>167</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.80.

of obligatory language when she orders Rodolfo's silence, Leocadia demonstrates the choice she has in speaking or remaining silent, '[d]e cualquier manera, que yo calle o hable'.<sup>168</sup> In David A. Boruchoff's analysis of the contradictory postures of Leocadia that he claims are designed to compel the reader to question the dominant values of contemporary aristocratic society,<sup>169</sup> he avers that 'Leocadia herself directs attention to her discernment and self-control, a concurrent power of the intellect and will [...] that early modern society did not expect to find in its younger and especially female members.'<sup>170</sup> Through his boldly spoken female heroine and supported by Boruchoff's statement, it is evident that Cervantes began to contest the early modern consideration that discernment and self-control were exclusively male attributes.

After Leocadia's powerful appeal for freedom from Rodolfo's enclosed room, she gave him permission to respond to her speech, '[r]espóndeme a esto'.<sup>171</sup> In response to Leocadia's 'discretas razones', Rodolfo embraced her 'dando muestras que quería volver a confirmar en él su gusto y en ella su deshonra.'<sup>172</sup> As the animalistic brute forcefully embraced Leocadia, a similar patriarchal invasion of space that don Manuel inflicts on Isabel, Leocadia defended herself

<sup>168</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.80.

<sup>169</sup> David A. Boruchoff, 'Unhappy Endings: *La fuerza de la sangre* and the *Novelas ejemplares* of Cervantes', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (2016), 461-477, (p.461). In Boruchoff's article, his analysis of *La fuerza de la sangre* explains the contradictory postures of its heroine, Leocadia. His study argues that these contradictory postures are deliberate and moreover, designed to compel the reader to question the propriety of the *novela's* ostensibly happy ending and the dominant conventions and values of contemporary aristocratic society.

<sup>170</sup> David A. Boruchoff, p.473.

<sup>171</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares I*, p.80.

<sup>172</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.81.

‘con más fuerzas de las que su tierna edad prometían, se defendió con los pies, con las manos, con los dientes y con la lengua’.<sup>173</sup> Leocadia used the whole strength of her body to fend off Rodolfo’s advances, ensuring that he could not invade the intimate space of her body again. The third-person narrator states that Leocadia fought with such strength that the desire of Rodolfo weakened, after which he left her alone in his house to search for his friends. Adhering to the violent standards set by Rodolfo is the most effective strategy for Leocadia to ensure she is not a victim of an unequal male-female relationship, based on coercion.<sup>174</sup> Judith Butler, reflecting on the vulnerability of bodies states, ‘[t]he body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch and to violence, and bodies put us at risk of becoming the agency and instrument of all these as well.’<sup>175</sup> Whilst Leocadia’s body exposes her to the gaze of Rodolfo and his violent assault, having a body also means that Leocadia can fight back, ensuring that the vulnerability does not remain one-sided.

To further Cervantes’s contesting of prescribed gender norms, he ensures that after the violation, his two main female characters remain in cognitively superior positions to Rodolfo. As I stated in the introduction to this chapter, Cervantes works to disempower his brutish rapist Rodolfo in order to balance the self-control and rhetorical sophistication of his heroine. Towards the end of the *novela*, Rodolfo’s

<sup>173</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.81.

<sup>174</sup> Mies, p.6.

<sup>175</sup> Butler, p.26.

mother takes control of her son's life by constructing an elaborate plot to ensure his marriage to Leocadia to first, compensate for his error and second, to legitimise her grandson Luisico.<sup>176</sup> After Rodolfo is summoned home from Naples as his parents declare they have arranged a marriage for him with a beautiful woman, doña Estefanía takes complete control of her son's marital options, disempowering him and ensuring that Leocadia is reflected in the best possible light. By showing him a photograph of a woman, whom Rodolfo describes as 'la misma fealdad', doña Estefanía lays the groundwork for her shallow son, desiring only beauty in his potential wife, to be overcome with joy at the prospect of marrying Leocadia.<sup>177</sup> By failing to recognise Leocadia when she is brought to the dinner table, Cervantes subjects his male protagonist to the same blindness that he enforced on his victim with a blindfold. Symbolically blind from who he should be able to recognise in front of him, Rodolfo is only relieved of his epistemological blindness at the end of the *novela* when his mother chooses to reveal the circumstances to everyone that is present. Doña Estefanía's manipulation of Rodolfo's marital options has a two-fold purpose in terms of Cervantes's strategy of empowering his female characters and emasculating his male characters. First as posited by Rhodes, in an inversion of early modern social norms, it is Rodolfo's mother not his father who decides *who* he will marry and *when*, which also compromises her son's masculinity by association.<sup>178</sup> Second, by controlling the epistemological knowledge of her son, doña Estefanía

<sup>176</sup> Rhodes, 'Living with Rodolfo and Cervantes's "La fuerza de la sangre"', p.214.

<sup>177</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.90.

<sup>178</sup> Rhodes, 'Living with Rodolfo and Cervantes's "La fuerza de la sangre"', p.216.

manages to symbolically mimic the powerlessness that he subjected Leocadia to during the sexual assault. As doña Estefanía and Leocadia work to achieve their common goal of Rodolfo's agreement to marriage, they completely disempower the rapist who becomes the pawn in their game of emotional manipulation.

### Conclusion

As these fictional accounts shed light upon the milieu of Zayas and Cervantes, a society predicated upon the logic of ownership and exploitation, the *novelas* provide a textual space for seventeenth-century readers to see how fictional women voice their affronts, refute their status as patriarchal property and employ resistance strategies to assert self-determination. The *novelas* provided narcissistic identification for contemporary female readers who may have experienced similar ordeals, whilst breaking down the wall of silence that surrounded gender-based violence. As Isabel proposes the rhetorical question to her audience if this sort of sexual assault has ever happened to anyone else but her, the texts act as a sounding board for women who perhaps were too afraid to discuss their private torments. We might question if Zayas's and Cervantes's short stories sparked a debate between their early modern readers about cases of violence against women, perhaps they gave women the confidence to speak out or maybe they simply provided relief for survivors of violence that they were not on their own. These specific questions regarding the reception of Zayas's and Cervantes's texts by their Renaissance audience are difficult to answer with certainty. However, what we can



see from the texts is that Zayas and Cervantes were trying to open up a space to specifically discuss issues that negatively affected the lives of women, providing detailed ways of how women could attempt to overcome such tribulations when their society consistently failed them.

Not only do men claim that women and their bodies are 'territory' to be conquered within the early modern period, but they also forcibly extend their boundaries through violent means as a tactic of ownership.<sup>179</sup> As Brownmiller suggests, '[m]an's forcible extension of his boundaries to his mate and later to their offspring was the beginning of the concept of ownership'.<sup>180</sup> The notion of extending patriarchal boundaries is often paired with the restriction of female space, a concept that Zayas and Cervantes push to its forcible limits within their *novelas*. To extend their own boundaries, patriarchs within the texts of Zayas and Cervantes forcibly whittled down the space that women were able to occupy, by enclosing them into inhumane or barricaded spaces and by controlling their consumption. In light of Brownmiller's statement, strategies that aim to reduce the social space that women occupy and to forcibly extend patriarchal boundaries have significant political meaning, an aspect I intend to explore in the following chapter.

<sup>179</sup> Mies, p.26.

<sup>180</sup> Brownmiller, p.17.

## Masters/Mistresses of Space: Patriarchal Boundaries, Female Space and the Home

Considering the gendered double standard of valuing women through their bodies, Nirmal Puwar states that ‘woman [becomes] a place—a container, an envelope—through which man marks the limits of his identity.’<sup>181</sup> The previous chapter posited that early modern men viewed women through this lens of propriety. With their colonial outlook, early modern European men regarded women’s bodies as a territory to be ‘occupied’.<sup>182</sup> With this predisposition to view their wives, daughters or sisters as property, early modern European men were overwhelmed with advice on how to coerce women under their authority. The legal and religious structures of early modern Spain legitimised patriarchal ownership of women. Margaret King states that in the Spain of the *Reconquista*, if a woman married contrary to the wishes of her clan, it could result in her disinheritance.<sup>183</sup> King’s affirmation underlines the financial and legal control families could have over their daughter’s choice of husband, legitimising a certain level of control over women’s bodies and marital decisions.

Men could not only violate the intimate space of a woman’s body which ‘is a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all

<sup>181</sup> Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p.8.

<sup>182</sup> Mies, p.25.

<sup>183</sup> Margaret King, *Women of the Renaissance* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.34.

women in a state of fear', but men also governed the spaces surrounding women.<sup>184</sup> Ensuring that women did not entirely belong to the public sphere and that they were not in total control of any domestic space they inhabited, early modern men exerted numerous strategies to ensure that women felt like they were trespassers in society. By defining women almost exclusively by their bodies and whittling down the societal space which women could occupy, early modern men were able to mark the extended limits of their identity as a tactic of patriarchal ownership. This coercive extension of a patriarch's boundaries and the simultaneous reduction of female space has significant political meaning that cannot be overlooked.<sup>185</sup> To question its logic, Zayas's and Cervantes's texts push this concept to its limits, exploring how men establish the parameters of their own power through starving their wives and heavy-handedly minimizing the space that the women have to live in. In retaliation to these intense strategies of control, Zayas's and Cervantes's fictional women and their bodies show signs of rebellion and a refusal to succumb to these established boundaries. This chapter will investigate how men in Zayas's and Cervantes's texts spatially confine women through limiting the sustenance of their female victims and placing them into barricaded spaces. In the final chapter, I will explore how the texts subtly exposed the intellectual confinement of early modern women who were structurally deprived of large areas of their society's knowledge and excluded from certain public institutions. Considering the spatially and

<sup>184</sup> Brownmiller, p.15.

<sup>185</sup> 'Man's forcible extension of his boundaries to his mate and later to their offspring was the beginning of the concept of ownership.' (Brownmiller, p.17).

intellectually confining strategies exerted by patriarchs in Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*, the subsequent chapters will unpick how women and their bodies resisted the limits that were consistently imposed upon them, for example, through a surreptitious acquisition of knowledge and a refusal to keep to the conceptual borders of their bodies. This chapter will also discuss how the early modern home, as the base of the family unit, became a locus for violence and bloodshed.

Emaciated Bodies and Barricaded Houses: Whittling Down Women  
in the *novelas*

*Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* reveals that early modern patriarchs established their authority through the non-consensual penetration of spaces, both the penetration of 'virgin' colonial lands by European conquerors and the violation of women's bodies.<sup>186</sup> Mies's theory sheds light upon the colonial origin of the male need to control the spaces immediately surrounding them, namely, the public domain, the private sphere and even women's bodies. Puwar suggests that there is an intimate connection between bodies and space that is built, repeated and contested over time.<sup>187</sup> Pertinent to the period in question is the connection built between the male body and public space, a link that has been promoted and propagated over time. In this way, the early modern public sphere was not deemed a social space for any woman to freely enter, as averred by Puwar, 'while all can, in theory, enter, it is certain types of bodies that are tacitly

<sup>186</sup> Mies, p.75.

<sup>187</sup> Puwar, p.8.

designated as being the “natural” occupants of specific positions.’<sup>188</sup> Early modern women, as we have seen, were strongly advised to stay within the home, excluded from the public space as their ‘natural’ domain. Yet the early modern home conceived of as woman’s ‘natural’ space, was also forcibly controlled by men. Carrizales in Cervantes’s *El celoso extremeño* essentially constructs a barricaded prison for his fifteen-year old wife, Leonora, and controls the movement of bodies in and out of that space. If early modern women were not deemed as being the ‘natural’ occupants of the public sphere and they were immured in a domestic space where they may face the violence of their male family members, it is clear that women and their bodies were circumscribed as being ‘out of place’ in both the public and private spheres.<sup>189</sup> Consistently viewed as spatial intruders in their patriarchal society, included in the early modern disavowal of Spanish literature and culture and not given sufficient textual space in women’s studies, Renaissance Spanish women have been consistently pushed to the societal, cultural and literary margins. Whilst women were not given sufficient societal, cultural or literary space, they did find that their bodies were placed at the centre of numerous and often patriarchal discussions on women’s conduct.

Georgina Dopico-Black argues that in early modern Europe, the wife’s body and soul became subject to the scrutiny of an array of gazes, namely, that of inquisitors, theologians, poets, playwrights and

<sup>188</sup> Puwar, p.8.

<sup>189</sup> Puwar, p.8.

husbands.<sup>190</sup> However, it is not just the body and soul of married women that came under intense scrutiny as Dopico-Black argues, but the body and soul of *all* women, regardless of their marital status. In her chapter that interrogates Fray Luis de León's sixteenth-century treatise *La perfecta casada*, Dopico-Black summarises what she believes is Luis de León's agenda in his treatise:

The threat of feminine Otherness that haunts *La perfecta casada* is explicitly associated here with the threat of limitlessness; in some respects, Fray Luis's agenda throughout the treatise can be described as an unmitigating [*sic*] attempt to impose limits (of the perfecta casada's conduct, of her desire, of her geography, even of her anatomy), to contain, in some manner, the perfect wife he names.<sup>191</sup>

Identifying an early modern anxiety of female limitlessness, Dopico-Black highlights an agenda that is not solely exclusive to *La perfecta casada* but is relevant for the prescriptive literature genre as a whole: an attempt to straitjacket women into a limited identity. In Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*, they take this contemporary anxiety of female limitlessness and they probe how men may have tried to contain and control the women closest to them. The writers' textual exploration of how early modern men quash their fear of female limitlessness is infused with key Golden Age dramatic tropes such as distortion and exaggeration.<sup>192</sup> Examining the extremes of how men intemperately limit the social space that women occupy, Zayas's and Cervantes's fictional patriarchs resort to two key strategies of spatial reduction:

<sup>190</sup> Georgina Dopico-Black, *Perfect Wives, Other Women: Adultery and Inquisition in Early Modern Spain*, (London: Duke University Press, 2001), xiii.

<sup>191</sup> Dopico-Black, p.70.

<sup>192</sup> Melveena McKendrick, *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age: A Study of the Mujer Varonil*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p.4.

first, reducing the size of a woman's physical body and second, shrinking the social space she is able to occupy.

'Casarse he con ella; encerraréla y haréla a mis mañas': Immured wives in Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*

Cervantes's *El celoso extremeño* focuses on how a 68-year-old patriarch resorts to extreme tactics of spatial reduction to maintain control over his young wife, forcibly shrinking the social space that she is able to occupy and reducing nearly every opportunity that men have to interact with his wife. Taking Luis de León's advice quite literally that nature 'hizo a las mujeres para que encerradas guardasen la casa', Felipo de Carrizales, the elderly protagonist who gives the title of Cervantes's *El celoso extremeño* its urgency, constructs the perfect prison for his fifteen-year-old wife.<sup>193</sup> In Cervantes's prologue to the *Novelas ejemplares*, he posits 'no hay ninguna de quien no se pueda sacar algún ejemplo provechoso; y si no fuera por no alargar este sujeto, quizá te mostrara el sabroso y honesto fruto que se podría sacar, así de todas juntas, como de cada una de por sí.'<sup>194</sup> Stating that each *novela* has '[un] sabroso y honesto fruto que se podría sacar', the moral lesson that Cervantes provides in *El celoso extremeño* is one that concerns patriarchal systems.<sup>195</sup> As affirmed by Michael and Jonathan Thacker, Cervantes's rendition of the May-December

<sup>193</sup> Fray Luis de León, *La perfecta casada*, ed. by José López Navarro (Ediciones Rialp: Madrid, 1968), p.139.

<sup>194</sup> Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, 'Prólogo al lector', in Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Novelas ejemplares I*, ed. by Harry Sieber, 27<sup>th</sup> edn (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2010), pp.50-53, (p.52).

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, p.52.

marriage theme in *El celoso extremeño* is serious, bypassing the light-hearted, comic tradition typically associated with this narrative conceit.<sup>196</sup> Returning from the so-called New World with a fortune worth more than one hundred and fifty thousand solid-gold *pesos*, Cervantes's *novela* focuses on Carrizales's search for a wife: his primary motivation is to have an heir to his wealth.<sup>197</sup> Being the most jealous man in Christendom however, Carrizales's search for a wife becomes centred around finding an inexperienced young woman, whom he could mould into his own *perfecta casada*. Informed by a sudden resolution to change his ways at the beginning of the *novela*, he decides 'de tener otro estilo en guardar la hacienda que Dios fuese servido de darle, y de proceder con más recato que hasta allí con las mujeres.'<sup>198</sup> Fuelled by a restrictive attitude towards any future relationships with women, Carrizales sets his sights on the adolescent Leonora as she walks down the street, affirming '[c]asarse he con ella; encerraréla y haréla a mis mañas y con esto no tendrá otra condición que aquella que yo le enseñaré'.<sup>199</sup> Naïve and vulnerable, the fifteen-year-old Leonora becomes the perfect piece to fit into Carrizales's restrictive vision of marriage, that seems to both mirror the advice given in the prescriptive literature and reflect the colonial attitude of early modern men to govern the spaces surrounding them. Pushing the suggestions provided in the contemporary conduct literature to

<sup>196</sup> Michael and Jonathan Thacker, 'Introduction: The Jealous Old Man from Extremadura', in Barry Ife and Jonathan Thacker, *Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra: The Complete Exemplary Novels* (Oxford: Aris & Phillips, 2013), pp.337-341, (p.337-8).

<sup>197</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.100.

<sup>198</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.100.

<sup>199</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.102.



their limits, Cervantes's *El celoso extremeño* is an exemplary, cautionary story from which most seventeenth-century Spanish men could extract '[un] sabroso y honesto fruto'.<sup>200</sup>

One statement of advice that Carrizales pushes to its limits within *El celoso extremeño* is Juan Luis Vives's infantilising recommendation in *De Institutionae Feminae Christianae* that, '[i]f she is a good woman, it is best that she stay at home and be unknown to others. In company, it is befitting that she be retiring and silent, with her eyes cast down so that some perhaps may see her, but none will hear her.'<sup>201</sup> With his extreme methods of imprisonment and isolation, Carrizales ensures that Leonora is unknown to others. When creating the separate home for his wife, Carrizales blocked off all street-facing windows, in addition to raising the walls high above the roof. The only exposure that she gets to the outside world is during her excursions to mass. But even this does not fully reveal Leonora to the outside world: because they attend so early in the morning, it is only on the way home that there is enough light to make out the streets, also indicating that there is barely enough light for passers-by to see Leonora's face clearly. Carrizales attempts to avert any potential reciprocal relation that Leonora could have with another man, he ensures that she is almost never the object of another man's gaze and that her voice cannot be heard by other men. In this way, Carrizales thinks he can safeguard his marriage from the threat of another man. Ironically, it is the secretive and controlling

<sup>200</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares I*, p.52.

<sup>201</sup> Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman*, ed. and trans. by Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.72.

barriers that Carrizales surrounds the house with that lures Loaysa, a young bachelor, to discover what is being hidden behind its four walls.

Dopico-Black highlights how early modern conduct literature stipulated that a woman should remain at home in order to protect her from the perceived threat of premarital or extramarital sexual encounters. She avers, '[I]like the house to which she is spatially confined, the woman's body—especially the body of the wife as definitive icon of her husband's private property—must be protected against (sexual) traffic between interior and exterior.'<sup>202</sup> In *El celoso extremeño*, Carrizales takes this advice to the extreme, conflating the interior space of the home and his wife's body into a singular space that he meticulously governs. When analysing Luis de León's *La perfecta casada*, Dopico-Black states that the conflation between the violability of the home and the female body is corroborated in the treatise, by the inclusion of images such as doors, windows and padlocks that attempt to keep the inside of the house separate from the external world.<sup>203</sup> The conflation between the "rape" of the house and the "rape" of the female body which Dopico-Black reads as crucial to Luis de León's treatise, is also central to the moral message of *El celoso extremeño*. Obsessively regulating the entrance and exit of people from his house by using a revolving door and placing double locks on the entrances, Carrizales resorts to extreme measures to ensure that no other man can step foot within his property. By controlling the traffic of individuals who pass between the boundaries of his house, Carrizales believes he is

<sup>202</sup> Dopico-Black, p.91.

<sup>203</sup> Dopico-Black, p.92.

concomitantly protecting the body of his wife, a territory he forcibly 'occupies' to use Mies's phrasing.<sup>204</sup> When Carrizales is on his deathbed at the end of the *novela*, he gives a summary of his controlling measures to Leonora's parents:

quise guardar esta joya, que yo escogí y vosotros me diste[i]s, con el mayor recato que me fue posible. Alcé las murallas desta casa, quité la vista a las ventanas de la calle, doblé las cerraduras de las puertas, púsele torno, como a monasterio; desterré perpetuamente della todo aquello que sombra o nombre de varón tuviese.<sup>205</sup>

By banishing anything with the semblance of a man from his property, Carrizales is able to ensure that no other man can have any kind of access to Leonora. Fundamentally, Carrizales comes to view his house and Leonora as a twisted ensemble of property that become inseparable in his mind. If he can keep trespassers behind the narrow revolving door, Carrizales believes his wife will not be unfaithful to him.

Loaysa notices the secretive Carrizales's house and 'viéndola siempre cerrada, le tomó gana de saber quién vivía dentro; y con tanto ahínco y curiosidad hizo la diligencia que de todo vino a saber lo que deseaba.'<sup>206</sup> When Loaysa finally manages to trick his way into the guarded house, Carrizales erroneously conflates the violation of the locked door as a violation of his wife. As readers we know that this is not the case, as Leonora uses her strength to fight off Loaysa's advances and he eventually gives up the fight. In this instance, she is left victorious and in control of her own body. It is not a completely invalid assumption for Carrizales to presume his wife has been

<sup>204</sup> Mies, p.25.

<sup>205</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.132-3.

<sup>206</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.107.

unfaithful, as he finds Leonora asleep in Loaysa's arms after her successful attempts to fend him off. Here, Cervantes makes use of the rhetorical device of irony, as what seems to be the case here is radically different from the truth. This moment is also illuminated by Mies's statement that every woman has the 'enemy' in her bed.<sup>207</sup> Namely, Cervantes provides a literal image of Leocadia, sleeping with her male enemy, as she physically rejects Loaysa's advances but cannot muster the energy to move from the bed afterwards.

Carrizales seems unable to treat Leonora any differently to how he would treat a valuable possession, behaviour that he recognises as wrong when he has a moment of anagnorisis at the end of the *novela*. Identifying himself as the main culprit for the extra-marital affair he *believes* has happened between Leonora and Loaysa, Carrizales affirms, 'pues quiero que, así como yo fui estremado en lo que hice, así sea la venganza que tomaré, tomándola de mí mismo como del más culpado en este delito'.<sup>208</sup> From the extreme moral example, Cervantes reveals the error in men treating women with the same vigilance and irrationality as a valuable possession. From controlling every circumstance in Leonora's life, Carrizales at the end of the *novela*, is left completely in the dark about the truth of Leonora's fidelity. Cervantes reminds his readers not only that women deserve unregulated freedom to make decisions about their bodies and lives, a demand that Mies states is intrinsic to the international feminist movement, but also that the decisions they choose may be

<sup>207</sup> Mies, p.25.

<sup>208</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.133.

substantially better than the choices men make surrounding them.<sup>209</sup> As the narrator remarks, steering the reader's response towards condemning Carrizales's controlling actions, 'ejemplo y espejo de lo poco que hay que fiar de llaves, tornos y paredes cuando queda la voluntad libre.'<sup>210</sup>

In comparison to Carrizales's imprisonment of Leonora in *El celoso extremeño*, the examples of female imprisonment in Zayas's *Desengaños* are completely inhumane. The immoderate reduction of women's social space in favour of extended patriarchal boundaries is most extremely shown in the *desengaños*, *Tarde llega el desengaño* and *La inocencia castigada*. In these *novelas*, patriarchs resort to two key methods of spatial reduction to reduce women to a state of powerlessness. First, they shrink the social space that the woman is able to occupy in her day-to-day life; in these extreme examples, this is little more than a cupboard or a human-sized cavity in a wall. Second, they work to reduce the size of the woman's physical body, forcing her to the point of emaciation. In *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, Susan Bordo reflects upon a group of gender-related and historically localized disorders: hysteria, agoraphobia and anorexia nervosa.<sup>211</sup> Bordo states that the symptomatology of these disorders reveals itself as textuality:

Loss of mobility, loss of voice, inability to leave the home, feeding others while starving oneself, taking up space, and whittling down the space one's body takes up—all have symbolic meaning, all have

<sup>209</sup> Mies, p.222.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, p.135.

<sup>211</sup> Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, Tenth Anniversary Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

*political* meaning under the varying rules governing the historical construction of gender.<sup>212</sup>

This sheds significant light upon the spatially confining strategies of the men who carry out the torture of Elena in *Tarde llega el desengaño* and doña Inés in *La inocencia castigada*. In the same way that the bodies of the women who suffer with the aforementioned disorders offer themselves as an aggressively graphic text that demands to be read as a cultural statement about gender, the torturers in Zayas's *novelas* force the bodies of Elena and doña Inés to be read as a statement about the restrictive, seventeenth-century gender ideals.<sup>213</sup>

A theme that crosses both of these *desengaños* is the forced starvation of the female protagonists by a husband or family member. As don Jaime de Aragón and doña Inés's husband, brother and sister-in-law forcibly whittle down the space that the respective women's bodies occupy through methods of starvation, they force the fictional audience of the *sarao* and the real reader of Zayas's *Desengaños*, to interpret the bodies of these women as a political statement about gender. By reducing the size of Elena and doña Inés's bodies, their persecutors were able to forcibly reduce the social power that these women had in society, as starvation leads to a state of fragility, organ damage and in extreme cases like that of Elena, death. Starvation in these two *novelas* then, has a two-fold political meaning for its perpetrators. First, it reduces the social space that these women are

<sup>212</sup> Bordo, p.168.

<sup>213</sup> Bordo, p.169.

able to occupy, a clear political statement about women's lack of power in the face of men's decisive occupation of space.<sup>214</sup> Second, it ensures that Elena and doña Inés have little strength to defend themselves from their punishment, maintaining them close to the brink of death. Elena's husband, don Jaime de Aragón and doña Inés's husband, brother and sister-in-law force the relative women into a state of powerlessness that exceeds even the contemporary prescriptive literature, which makes these *novelas*, two of the most unsettling of Zayas's oeuvre.

In *Tarde llega el desengaño*, Elena's imprisonment takes place in an isolated castle, off the coast of Gran Canaria and as don Jaime states, don Martín and his comrade are the first people to see what is happening behind the castle walls. As I explored in the first chapter, this *novela* is one of the clearest examples of psychological abuse, as don Jaime spends two years attempting to diminish Elena's self-worth. Responding to the assumption that his wife has defied their marriage nuptials, don Jaime reacts with a patriarchal need to regain control of the spaces surrounding him that he perceives as *his* property, namely, the domestic space and his wife's body. Don Jaime exerts meticulous control over Elena's imprisonment behind the small, locked door and over her movements to and from that space, the same control that Carrizales ensures he has over Leonora before she moves into his barricaded house in Seville. Whilst her husband is able to roam free throughout the castle, Elena is confined to an inhumane, "domestic"

<sup>214</sup> Bordo, p.171.

space and she is fed crumbs and bones ‘que aun para los perros no eran buenos’.<sup>215</sup> Here, Zayas shows a prison-like ideology, as Elena is locked in a cell-like space; she is only allowed to leave her circumscribed space when the door is unlocked and she is given paltry rations to just about survive her husband’s sadistic torture. Whilst Carrizales in *El celoso extremeño* meticulously controlled Leonora’s movements in and out of the house itself, he does not control her sustenance in such a dehumanising way. *Tarde llega el desengaño* takes spatial control to its verifiable limits, as unlike Leonora who can roam freely within her own home, Elena can *only* come out from her enclosed space when don Jaime orders for it to be unlocked. Furthermore, Carrizales makes arrangements with a caterer to bring food to the house and pass it through the revolving door; as readers, we are never given the indication that Leonora is left to starve. In Zayas’s *novela*, she pushes the concept of female imprisonment to its absolute extreme, as don Jaime controls every drop of water and crumb of bread that passes through Elena’s mouth.

The first time that don Martín and his comrade see Elena emerge from the little door, she is described as ‘tan flaca y sin color, que parecía más muerta que viva, o que daba muestras de su cercana muerte’.<sup>216</sup> The narrator of this *novela*, Filis, touches upon a crucial point in her description of Elena, namely, that her emaciated body, which had a deathlike pallor, is being kept in a near-death state by her husband in order to prolong her suffering. In Bordo’s twentieth-century theory, she

<sup>215</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.237.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, p.236.



reflects upon the political significance of slenderness, namely, 'slenderness [...] carries connotations of fragility and lack of power in the face of a decisive male occupation of social space.'<sup>217</sup> Don Jaime's forced starvation of his wife, therefore, is an extreme attempt to contain Elena's hunger and circumscribe the social space that she is allowed to take up. Another of Bordo's theoretical statements sheds light upon Zayas's intentions, she states, '[i]n hysteria, agoraphobia, and anorexia, then, the woman's body may be viewed as a surface on which conventional constructions of femininity are exposed starkly to view, through their inscription in extreme or hyperliteral form.'<sup>218</sup> Elizabeth Rhodes asserts that metaphorical meaning consistently displaces the literal in Zayas's *Desengaños amorosos*, consequently, Zayas may condition a female character to signify different concepts at various moments in the text.<sup>219</sup> Considering Rhodes's assertion and the fact that a symbolic reading of texts was explicit in the literary poetics of the Baroque, Elena's body in *Tarde llega el desengaño* may be viewed as a surface upon which the patriarchal strategies of spatial control are starkly exposed in an extreme form.<sup>220</sup> As we read the textual account of Elena's horrific suffering, Zayas is able to remind us, with the inscription of extreme gender ideals on Elena's body, that violence lurks just around the corner of "normal" married life.<sup>221</sup>

<sup>217</sup> Bordo, p.171.

<sup>218</sup> Bordo, pp.174-5.

<sup>219</sup> Elizabeth Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill: Death and Meaning in Zayas's Desengaños* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p.26.

<sup>220</sup> Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill*, p.23.

<sup>221</sup> Bordo, p.175.

In response to the early modern anxiety of female limitlessness, don Jaime makes unmitigated attempts to impose limits upon Elena's conduct and upon her physique. When Elena is allowed out from her cell due to her extreme famine, she is described as ravenously chewing upon her scraps as if she were a dog. The narrator describes, 'la desdichada belleza que estaba debajo de la mesa, los huesos y mendrugos, que aun para los perros no eran buenos, que como tan necesitada de sustento, los roía como si fuera uno de ellos.'<sup>222</sup> Namely, not only does Elena voraciously devour her scraps of food as if she were a dog, but she crawls out from her prison 'y como llegó cerca de la mesa, se entró debajo de ella' to consume her scraps of food, rather than sitting at the table with don Jaime, his guests and the maid who betrayed her.<sup>223</sup> Here, Elena assumes the subhuman status that don Jaime consistently imposes upon her. Creating a story that shows relentless revenge and a complete lack of sympathy for another's misfortune, Zayas reveals an exaggerated cruelty that she believes is reminiscent of some seventeenth-century men and she condemns those who simply take the words of one person as pure fact, as we discover that Elena was falsely accused of adultery by her maid.

*La inocencia castigada*, which documents the six years of torture doña Inés suffers for a false allegation of adultery, continues the aim of the *Desengaños amorosos* to defend women's good name, expose the cruel nature of seventeenth-century men and encourage women to

<sup>222</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.237.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, p.237.

stay alert to potential deception.<sup>224</sup> *La inocencia castigada* is one of the only *novelas* that can be suitably positioned in historical fact, making Zayas's didactic message in this particular tale even more applicable for discussing the functioning of patriarchy in early modern Spain.<sup>225</sup> In *La inocencia castigada*, doña Inés is subjected to the unrelenting courting of don Diego, despite the fact that she is clearly already married. Don Diego resorts to numerous strategies to try and win doña Inés's love, first enlisting the help of her neighbour who fools him into thinking that he has had numerous sexual encounters with doña Inés, when in fact he was with a prostitute disguised in doña Inés's dress. Second, don Diego resorts to the assistance of 'un moro, gran hechicero y nigromántico', who uses witchcraft as a means to win doña Inés's love.<sup>226</sup> Don Diego's resolution to use black magic to force doña Inés to love him places her in extreme peril, with both the Inquisition and her family.

With the help of a voodoo doll gifted to don Diego by the North-African magician, the infatuated youth was able to summon doña Inés to his room through a spell. The narrator describes the moment in which

<sup>224</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.124.

<sup>225</sup> According to Beno Weiss, Zayas was probably aware of a similar occurrence that happened to a young nun residing in a convent in Monza. He affirms, 'Sor Virginia, forzada por su padre a tomar el hábito, se enamoró de un libertino italiano y con la complicidad de otras monjas, mantuvo relaciones con él dentro del convento por un período de siete años'. After giving birth to two of his children in the convent, 'Sor Virginia fue condenada a reclusión perpetua y tabicada en un pequeño cuarto del Convento de Santa Valencia, en Milán.' Regarding the historical case of the Italian nun, Weiss affirms that apart from the fact that she had more space in her prison, Sor Virginia and doña Inés's punishments were the same. Most likely hearing of the case of Sor Virginia during her stay in Italy, Zayas uses events from a true historical case of early modern European violence in *La inocencia castigada*. (Beno Weiss, 'Introducción a la vida y obra de la autora', in María de Zayas y Sotomayor, *El castigo de la miseria: y, La Inocencia castigada*, ed. by Beno Weiss (Valencia: Albatros Hispanófila, 1990), pp.13-28, (pp.25-6)).

<sup>226</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.276.

doña Inés is stripped of the autonomy of her body as a result of the spell:

privada con la fuerza del encanto y de la vela que ardía de su juicio, y en fin, forzada de algún espíritu diabólico que gobernaba aquello, se levantó de su cama [...], abrió la puerta de su cuarto [...] salió a la calle, y fue en casa de don Diego [...] y cómo halló la puerta abierta, se entró, y sin hablar palabra, ni mirar en nada, se puso dentro de la cama donde estaba don Diego.<sup>227</sup>

Taking advantage of doña Inés's unconscious body, don Diego recognises that she would not have granted him such favours if she were in conscious control of her own body. Laura, the narrator states, 'aunque favores, por muertos, conociendo claro que si la dama estuviera en su juicio, no se los hiciera.'<sup>228</sup> Here, Zayas uses magic to expose how men can so easily abuse women's basic right to the autonomy over their bodies and lives, what Mies states is the first and most fundamental demand of the international feminist movement.<sup>229</sup> Don Diego recognises perfectly well that doña Inés is not in her right mind as she is unconscious and without the ability to speak. Yet, he continues to summon her under the spell night after night, subsequently violating doña Inés's autonomy and the right to the inviolability of her body, a basic human right that Mies states was not guaranteed by twentieth-century democratic constitutions for women.<sup>230</sup> In Laura's account of doña Inés's tale, she avers, 'si el acedia de ver que todo aquello era violento no le templara, se volviera loco de alegría'.<sup>231</sup> Behind the façade of black magic, Zayas hides a deeply unsettling story of a man who would happily have sexual

<sup>227</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.277.

<sup>228</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.278.

<sup>229</sup> Mies, p.222.

<sup>230</sup> Mies, p.26.

<sup>231</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.278.

relations with a woman who is blatantly unconscious and unable to give her consent. Furthermore through the shorthand of magic, Zayas signals the invisible forces of patriarchy at work in her seventeenth-century society. By hiding her invective behind the smokescreen of black magic, Zayas is able to make a far bolder indictment of men's disrespect of women's autonomy over their bodies and lives, satisfying her feminist plea whilst eluding the literary censors.

One evening when doña Inés is unconsciously summoned by don Diego, the mayor and her brother see her walking senselessly and they follow doña Inés in her tracks and subsequently find out about the enchantment controlling the poor girl's body. Revealing what had been happening to her whilst she was bewitched, doña Inés is so distraught that she orders for them to kill her as 'había sido mala, que, aunque sin su voluntad, había manchado su honor.'<sup>232</sup> One aspect of *La inocencia castigada* that proves pivotal for Zayas's thesis is that whilst doña Inés is acquitted by the Inquisition after having proved the efficacy of the spell, her family and husband refuse to believe that she was bewitched. Fuelled with cruelty, doña Inés's husband, brother and sister-in-law discussed ideas of how to kill the innocent doña Inés and they embark upon their plan of securing a secluded house in Seville with no witnesses to the horrific events they planned. *La inocencia castigada* is one of the clearest examples in which Zayas directly critiques the cruelty of family who although united by blood, show a relentless violence towards another family member. At the start of the

<sup>232</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.281.

*novela*, Zayas warns women about the dangers of allowing a stranger to enter your home as doña Inés had done with her neighbour however, by the end of Laura's blood-curdling account, *La inocencia castigada* provides a completely different thesis.

In *La inocencia castigada*, Zayas demonstrates that women should be far more concerned about how the people who are closest to you, may be the cruellest towards your fate. Here, it is key to note that the family according to Foucault, is 'the hinge, the interlocking point, which is absolutely indispensable to the very functioning of all the disciplinary systems.'<sup>233</sup> Namely, the family acts as a unit of patriarchal control in which norms are imparted to the members of that society, a notion which Zayas explores in her *novelas*. Commencing their six years of psychological and physical torture, doña Inés's husband, brother and sister-in-law sealed her into the chimney space with plaster and rubble, 'no dejándole más lugar que cuanto pudiese estar en pie [...] dejando sólo una ventanilla como medio pliego de papel, por donde respirase y le pudiesen dar una miserable comida, por que no muriese tan presto'.<sup>234</sup> In a similar way to Elena being quarantined into an inhumane space, doña Inés is kept within the chimney space for six years in which the waste and excrement from her body 'le servían de cama y estrado para sus pies.'<sup>235</sup> For six years, doña Inés is unable to rest her emaciated body and she never sees the light which causes her eventual blindness. Built into the chimney space with plaster and

<sup>233</sup> Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973-74*, trans. by Jacques Lagrange (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.81.

<sup>234</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.283.

<sup>235</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.283.

rubble, doña Inés is never allowed out of her designated space, even denying her the human right to sanitation and a toilet. Towards the end of the *novela*, a widowed maid moves into the two attic rooms adjoining the wall in which doña Inés was cooped up and from her bed, she is able to hear ‘entre los gemidos que doña Inés daba, llamaba a Dios y a la Virgen María.’<sup>236</sup> One night when the widow was listening more attentively, she heard doña Inés’s lamentations that despite her suffering, her cruel executioners continue to enjoy the power in torturing her, a clear sign of her psychological torment. Explaining her situation to the widow so that she could assist her escape, doña Inés describes her unbearable torture:

soy una triste y desdichada mujer, a quien la crueldad de un hermano, un marido y una cuñada tienen puesta en tal desventura, que aun no tengo lugar de poder extender este triste cuerpo: tan estrecho es en el que estoy, que si no es en pie, o mal sentada, no hay otro descanso, sin otros dolores y desdichas que estoy padeciendo, pues, cuando no la hubiera mayor que la oscuridad en que estoy, bastaba [...] bien sé que ha una eternidad de tiempo.<sup>237</sup>

*La inocencia castigada* exposes how doña Inés’s family could take part in the harrowing reduction of her social space and the callous treatment of her body in every respect, such a remorseless torture is even more shocking given the bloodlines that these individuals share. Keeping doña Inés on the brink of death so that she can endure her torture, similar to Elena in *Tarde llega el desengaño*, ensures that her family maintain power over her ever-weakening body and debilitated mental state. Whilst Elena eventually dies from her torture, doña Inés is left in a state of weakness for the rest of her life after being rescued

<sup>236</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.284.

<sup>237</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.285.

by the archbishop and the mayor. Her body is found in such a sickly state:

tan flaca y consumida, que se señalaban los huesos, como si el pellejo que estaba encima fuera un delgado cendal [...] descalza de pie y pierna, que de los excrementos de su cuerpo [...] no sólo se habían consumido, mas la propia carne comida hasta los muslos de llagas y gusanos, de que estaba lleno el hediondo lugar.<sup>238</sup>

Eventually, doña Inés recovers her health but she never regains her vision as the torture leaves its lasting impact on her body.

The cases of Elena and doña Inés speak to an immoderate male cruelty that Zayas desired to expose, however there is the crucial exception of doña Inés's sister-in-law who also executes the cruelty. Zayas also demonstrates that seventeenth-century women could be even more dependent on the patriarchal system for their status, namely, when women are disempowered, the only thing they have to sell is themselves. As Lisa Vollendorf suggests, 'Zayas's representations of men as violent matches up with other women writers' concern with the "perversions" of patriarchy.'<sup>239</sup> Throughout the *Desengaños*, Zayas engenders an extreme distrust of men and a condemnation of the violence they use to maintain their functioning system of complex hierarchical relations, namely, patriarchy.<sup>240</sup> At the end of *La inocencia castigada*, doña Estefanía addresses the ladies in the room stating:

no sé cómo tenéis ánimo para entregaros con nombre de marido a un enemigo, que no sólo se ofende de las obras, sino de los pensamientos [...] y si acaso sois comprendidas en algún delito contra

<sup>238</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.287.

<sup>239</sup> Lisa Vollendorf, *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism* (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Dept. of Romance Languages, 2001), p.18.

<sup>240</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle-Ages to Eighteen Seventy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.3.



ellos, ¿por qué os fiáis y confiáis de sus disimuladas maldades, que hasta que consiguen su venganza, y es lo seguro, no sosiegan?<sup>241</sup>

Here, doña Estefanía acts as a fictional spokeswoman for Zayas's warnings of marriage and for her denunciation of the cruelty of early modern men. Doña Estefanía pinpoints husbands as enemies who do not have their wives' best interests at heart, merely waiting for her to slip up so they can violently take revenge on their spouse. Here, the declaration of doña Estefanía echoes Mies's statement with regard to the new women's movement of the twentieth century. These consciousness-raising groups in 1970s Germany not only discussed pressing problems of abortion, but they also discussed their sexuality and their experiences as mothers, lovers and wives, Mies avers, '[i]n these discussions, it became clear that the 'enemies' were not only the state, the church, the law, the male doctors, but that each woman also had the 'enemy' in her bed.'<sup>242</sup> Mies's statement that a woman's husband is the 'enemy' in her bed mirrors the declaration of doña Estefanía in Zayas's *Desengaños*, that early modern women should not give themselves to the enemy 'con nombre de marido'.<sup>243</sup> The fact that Zayas is communicating the same thesis as a twentieth-century Marxist materialist feminist theorist, namely that the real origin of patriarchy is within the home, shows her exceptional recognition of how patriarchy functioned within early modern Europe.<sup>244</sup> Weaving

<sup>241</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.289.

<sup>242</sup> Mies, p.25.

<sup>243</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.289.

<sup>244</sup> Merrim compares Zayas's seventeenth-century Spanish *novelas* to Marguerite de Navarre's sixteenth-century collection of short stories written in French, namely the *Heptaméron*. Merrim affirms that Zayas's *novelas* twin and ultimately spin away from the *Heptaméron*. She posits, 'Marguerite de Navarre writes herself into the prevailing patriarchal ethos of the sixteenth century, supporting the interests of the state. The disillusioned María de Zayas of the seventeenth century feels compelled to defend women

criticisms of both the institution of marriage and the cruelty of the family unit within her *novelas*, Zayas provides a remarkable message for her seventeenth-century female readers.

Considering the circumscription of female space that spans Cervantes's *El celoso extremeño*, Zayas's *Tarde llega el desencanto* and *La inocencia castigada*, the situations of Leonora, Elena and doña Inés all reflect an enhanced state of female fragility that is reminiscent of the recommendations of early modern prescriptive literature, albeit to a far more extreme level. Pushing the political notion of reducing female space to its absolute limits, these *novelas* make a statement about the intense restrictions that could be made upon women's autonomy, when men's actions are protected by the privacy of the home and their family circle. The physical and verbal abuse of Elena and doña Inés can be read as a marker of a more structural, psychological abuse that almost all seventeenth-century Spanish women would have faced at some point during their lives. Furthermore, the emaciated bodies of Elena and doña Inés can also be read as a cultural statement about the specifically Spanish aesthetic of female beauty in the early modern period, an aesthetic that largely differed from the rest of Europe. Confirming the exclusion of Spain from the early modern European canon of beauty, Margarita Ortega López states:

Francia e Italia, por ejemplo, mostraban cuerpos femeninos más robustos como ideal a imitar, mientras que no eran tan apreciados en España e, incluso, las damas españolas para simular pechos mas

*against* the patriarchal ethos, as do more recent feminists, and to remove her sex from the injurious reaches of the state [...].’ (Merrim, *Early Modern Women's Writing and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, xxxvi-xxxvii)

escasos los cubrían con laminillas de plomo fino. El ideal aristocrático perseguido a base de palidez en los rostros y cuerpo, hacía necesarias unas reiteradas sangrías para conseguirlo.<sup>245</sup>

It is compelling that seventeenth-century Spanish cosmetic aesthetics were variably different to those of France and Italy, in so far as Spain promoted an excessive reduction of women's physical bodies. In contrast to their European counterparts' promotion of a healthy robustness, the fact that early modern Spain promoted an emaciated body shape and sickly pallor for their women reveals a morally dubious social strategy. By wanting Spanish women to flaunt a deathlike pallor, maintained through having themselves regularly bled and a thin body, the cosmetic aesthetics of Spain promoted an image for women to aspire to which would thereby reduce them to a state of constant fragility. Considering that Elena and doña Inés's bodies perfectly resemble the emaciated body shape and death-like pallor that the contemporary Spanish aesthetic was promoting, this suggests that Zayas's heroines can be read as a cultural statement. The emaciated bodies of Zayas's heroines expose the hard-edged reality of this beauty ideal, placing emphasis on paleness, frailty and thinness as aesthetically beautiful. By promoting such an image, seventeenth-century Spanish society was forcibly whittling down the space that its women could occupy, en masse.

<sup>245</sup> Margarita Ortega López, 'El Período Barroco (1565-1700)' in Pilar Folguera; Margarita Ortega López; Cristina Segura; Elisa Margarita Orte Garrido González, eds, *Historia de las mujeres en España* (Madrid: Editorial Síntesis, 1997), pp.253-344, (p.255).

Oozing back: Overflowing Bodies and Female Spatial Resistance in Zayas's *novelas*

In their essay, 'María de Zayas's Wounded Women: A Semiotics of Violence', Jehenson and Welles reflect upon the similar lens with which the hagiographic tradition and pornographic discourse view the female body, stating:

Unlike the distancing optic of the male authors, the focus for Zayas's hagiographic discourse as for the pornographic discourse is at close range on a female body that is debased and tortured, whose boundaries are not closed but spewing forth tears, blood, excrement, and pus.<sup>246</sup>

Here, the critics point out that in Zayas's *Desengaños*, the boundaries of women's bodies are not closed, but they spew forth various bodily fluids. Only commenting on the sacred perspective of their tortured martyrdom, the scholars fail to notice a strategy intrinsic to Zayas's feminist project. Women's bodies in Zayas's *novelas* consistently exceed their predetermined boundaries. After the wives in Zayas's *novelas* are subjected to horrific torture, almost exclusively at the hands of men, their bodies exceed their natural limits, spouting blood, tears, excrement and pus. However, it is not solely to reflect the tortured martyrdom that each heroine suffers that Zayas included these bodily details. Zayas's limitless female corpses shed interesting light upon Luis de León's agenda in *La perfecta casada*, namely the

<sup>246</sup> Yvonne Jehenson and Marcia L. Welles, 'María de Zayas's Wounded Women: A Semiotics of Violence', in Anita Stoll and Dawn L. Smith, eds, *Gender, identity and representation in Spain's Golden Age* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1999), pp.178-202, (pp.192-3).

unmitigated attempt to impose limits to contain, in some respect, the “perfect wife” that he describes and thereby the more general aim of conduct literature as a whole.<sup>247</sup> The open boundaries of the female bodies come to symbolically represent the male anxiety of female limitlessness, a subtle attack upon the patriarchal obsession with imposing limits on women. By producing bodily fluid in excess and overflowing the conceptual borders of their bodies, the fictional women retaliate to the consistent limits placed on them during their lifetime. It is worth noting here that the limitless female bodies that spew blood, tears, excrement and pus, are far more applicable to Zayas’s feminist strategy than Cervantes’s. The resistance strategies that are more intrinsic to Cervantes’s heroines include reversing epistemological control, a strategy that will be explored in the subsequent chapter.

Zayas scholars have been slow to discern the political message behind her limitless female corpses. Especially given the literary poetics of the Baroque that probed its readers to untangle what the text may symbolise, there is another meaning at work in the torture of Zayas’s heroines.<sup>248</sup> The boundless female bodies who feature both in her *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* and her *Desengaños amorosos*, can be read as a specific retaliation against the spatially confining recommendations of the contemporary prescriptive literature and the Spanish cosmetic aesthetics of the period. The bodies of Camila in *La más infame venganza* and Hipólita in *Al fin se paga todo*, show a subtle rebellion to the restrictions that their patriarchal society

<sup>247</sup> Dopico-Black, p.70.

<sup>248</sup> Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill*, p.23.

has been explicitly, or even implicitly, placing on them during their lifetime.<sup>249</sup> Rejecting men's "natural" monopoly on space, the bodies of Zayas's heroines show subtle rebellion through their blood seeping beyond the borders of their body or the boundaries of their bodies expanding at a disproportionate rate. In a society that consistently imposed limits upon women's social space and their bodies, Zayas provides the opportunity for her fictional female characters to expand beyond these conceptual borders in a subtle, deviant way that would elude the literary censors.

The first of Zayas's boundless female bodies who retaliate against the restrictions illicitly imposed on them during their lifetime, is Camila in the second *desengaño*, *La más infame venganza*. Camila and the 50,000 ducats she brought in dowry were enough to make her the new object of don Carlos's desire. The son of a rich senator, don Carlos quickly forgets his obligation to the beautiful, intelligent Octavia, whom

<sup>249</sup> Doña Mencía is another clear example of a tortured female body, whose boundaries are not closed but open, spewing forth blood and other bodily fluids (Jehenson and Welles, pp.192-3). In *El traidor contra su sangre*, Doña Mencía is betrayed by the men closest to her, namely her brother and her father as the two of them devise a plan and her brother eventually stabs her to death. Described as if she had just been stabbed, even though she had been dead from noon until 11pm, doña Mencía's excessively bleeding corpse is a prime example of Zayas's probing of the early modern male fear of female limitlessness. The boundaries of doña Mencía's body are described as explicitly open, as the blood that seeps from her wounds seems never-ending and indeed limitless, as the text describes, 'corría entonces de las heridas, como si se las acabaran de dar' (Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.382). The limitlessness of doña Mencía's body in death is a subtle retaliation against the limits placed upon the autonomy of both her body and her life by her father and brother, (Mies, p.222) as they restrict her freedom to select her desired path of marriage and they enclose her within the four walls of the house, as she scarcely leaves the house except to go to mass. The lake of liquid blood that seeps from doña Mencía's body leaves its marks upon her surroundings and she denotes complete limitlessness, defying the unmitigated boundaries that her father and brother placed upon her autonomy.

he seduced upon a false pretence of marriage. Camila, caught in the crossfire of a previous marriage obligation, is targeted by Octavia's brother don Juan who is intent upon avenging his sister's honour. Using Camila as a pawn to avenge Octavia's honour and punish don Carlos, don Juan dresses in one of his sister's dresses, deceives entry into Camila's bedroom and telling her of don Carlos' previous relation with Octavia, he rapes her at knifepoint. Raped and stabbed by don Juan and later abused by her husband, Camila is subjected to the callous treatment of two men. After don Juan's violation, the maids found Camila 'halláranla mal compuesta y sin sentido; y corriendo sangre del piquete que la daga del traidor don Juan le había hecho en los pechos'.<sup>250</sup> As Camila had not told her husband of don Juan's advances nor had she given don Carlos the letters that he had written her, she did not feel safe from her husband's wrath, despite her innocence.<sup>251</sup> Her friends and her maids advised her to immediately go to a convent before Carlos or her father-in-law, the senator, should return. The word of Camila's reputation spread throughout the city and during the year she spent in the convent, Carlos never left his house and 'no tenía consuelo'.<sup>252</sup>

One day, the senator visited Camila in the convent and convinced of her innocence, he persuaded Carlos to take back his wife as she had no part in the offence. Despite Carlos acceding to his father's demands, he welcomed his wife back to their home with such severity

<sup>250</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.193.

<sup>251</sup> Zayas, *The Disenchantments of Love*, p.107.

<sup>252</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.194.

that Camila was disconsolate and could barely look him in the eyes. For a year, Carlos never allowed his wife to set foot outside the house 'más a ver ni a ser vista de nadie' and Camila 'bien arrepentida de haber salido del convento.'<sup>253</sup> Refusing to let his wife sleep or eat with him, Carlos exuberates disgust at having to share the same social space as his wife as he fails to believe her innocence. This abhorrence of living in the same domestic space as Camila leads to Carlos poisoning her, in a desperate attempt to permanently remove her from his life. As a direct result of the poison, Camila's body swelled to monstrous proportions extending far beyond its natural limits, a moment in which Zayas employs the Golden Age dramatic trope of exaggeration. The narrator Lisarda, informs us of how Camila's body ballooned beyond its usual boundaries:

Y fue el caso que no la quitó el veneno luego la vida, mas hinchóse toda con tanta monstruosidad, que sus brazos y piernas parecían unas gordísimas columnas, y el vientre se apartaba una gran vara de la cintura; sólo el rostro no tenía hinchado.<sup>254</sup>

Carlos administers poison to his wife's body, intending to cause her immediate death and by extension, the exclusion of her from the same space as him. However, he actually causes the opposite effect. After she has ingested the poison, it makes her body swell to unnatural proportions and her body demands a disproportionate amount of space, exceeding that of a normal human being. Prior to the poisoning of Camila, Carlos worked extremely hard to significantly reduce his wife's freedom of movement by not letting her leave the house for over a year. For Camila's body to swell in such an abnormal and

<sup>253</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.195.

<sup>254</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.195.



exaggerated way, it becomes clear that Zayas intended to make a symbolic statement through the monstrous expansion of her heroine's body. In response to the spatial restrictions imposed by Carlos, Camila's body subtly fights back by taking up far more designated space than any individual would need and the boundaries of her physical body actually extend. Intruding upon Carlos's presumed monopoly over the domestic space and defying her husband's plan to whittle down the space she can physically occupy, Camila's distended body remains like this for six months.

Zayas's limitless female bodies continue with the seventh tale from her first collection, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares. Al fin se paga todo* tells the story of a female avenger Hipólita, who kills her treacherous brother-in-law after he tricks his way into her bed. Telling her story to don García who sees Hipólita thrown out of a house one freezing night, she explains that prior to her brother-in-law's deception, she had an extramarital affair with a Portuguese soldier, don Gaspar. During one of the comic attempts of don Gaspar trying to enter Hipólita's house to finally enjoy sexual relations with her, Hipólita's husband returns home and she hides her lover in a trunk. Thinking he had died of suffocation, Hipólita pleads her brother-in-law don Luis, to remove the trunk in order to avoid her husband's suspicions of her unconsummated adultery. Don Gaspar is moved to a friend's house by servants and placed in a bed, when they suddenly realise that he is not dead and don Luis threatens him to never contact Hipólita or he would take vengeance. As a result of such a fright, Hipólita explains that don

Gaspar was determined to never set eyes upon her again, 'porque fue [su] nombre a sus oídos la cosa más aborrecible que tuvo, como sabréis en lo que falta de este discurso.'<sup>255</sup> Here, Hipólita hints towards the abuse she suffers towards the end of the *novela*.

After stabbing don Luis, she flees to don Gaspar's house for safety, but she is faced with anything but protection from her ex-lover. Convinced that Hipólita has enlisted don Luis to kill him, don Gaspar tore off his ex-lover's clothes and beat her senselessly with a belt.<sup>256</sup> The narrator describes Hipólita unveiling her bruises to don García, 'la hermosa dama mostró a don García, lo más honesta y recatadamente que pudo, los cardenales de su cuerpo, que todos o los más estaban para verter sangre.'<sup>257</sup> The idea of her blood, barely kept beneath the surface of her skin, reveals a tension between established limits and a free-flowing limitlessness. As Lisa Vollendorf suggests, Hipólita's bruises reveal the unmistakable signs of violence demonstrating a tension between revelation and containment, the narrator's description of her injuries suggests that 'women must bear the weight, as well as the pain, of men's abuse.'<sup>258</sup> This is a nuanced analysis of Hipólita's blood-bruised skin; however, the concept of Zayas's overflowing female bodies is also prevalent in the image of 'los cardenales de su cuerpo, que todos o los más estaban para verter sangre'.<sup>259</sup> Another way that Zayas allows her female heroine to revel in a powerful sense

<sup>255</sup> Zayas, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, p.432

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid*, p.441.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid*, p.441.

<sup>258</sup> Vollendorf, *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism*, p.36.

<sup>259</sup> Zayas, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, p.441.

of limitlessness, is her attitude towards killing don Luis. When Hipólita stabs don Luis straight in the heart, he is described as surrendering his soul in the first blow, 'de la primera herida dio el alma'.<sup>260</sup> However, exuding limitlessness, Hipólita continues stabbing don Luis, delivering the same blow five or six times 'con tanta rabia y crueldad como si con cada una le hubiera de quitar la infame vida.'<sup>261</sup> Being one of the few heroines in Zayas's entire collection to avenge her own honour, Hipólita has a real power in the excess of her actions and Zayas presents an example of female strength for her seventeenth-century patriarchal readers to fear. Revealing the tension of Hipólita's limitlessness, Zayas allows her female character to have power brewing beneath the surface of her skin.

### Conclusion

During their lifetimes, the bodies of seventeenth-century women were confined within literal and metaphorical limits by the restrictive actions and recommendations of men, such as inquisitors, theologians, humanists, playwrights, husbands, fathers and brothers. The imprisonment of Leonora and the physical and verbal abuse of Elena and doña Inés can be read as markers of a more deep-rooted, psychological abuse that affected almost all seventeenth-century Spanish women: a harrowing reduction of the space that women were peacefully able to occupy. Specifically, the open boundaries of Camila's body in *La más infame venganza* and Hipólita's body in *Al fin*

<sup>260</sup> Ibid, p.439.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid, p.439.

*se paga todo*, all speak to Zayas's feminist strategy of giving her female characters the space to exceed any predetermined limit set by a patriarch. However, it is in the reversal of epistemological power that Cervantes's female characters most boldly resist the limitations placed on them by their early modern society.

Whilst this chapter has explored how Zayas and Cervantes expose male cruelty through showing an extreme extension of patriarchal boundaries, the next chapter will examine how the female characters in the *novelas* resist the restrictions placed on their intellectual capacities and their access to knowledge. Through surreptitiously withholding knowledge from patriarchal figures, cross-dressing and a reversal of reciprocal relations, the next chapter will analyse the intricate, epistemological rebellions that embellish Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*. Examining the trilateral feminist strategy of literature, dialogue and epistemology that is weaved within the *novelas*, an alternative reading of the texts will uncover a sophisticated rebellion of the female characters and narrators against the male-presumed monopoly on knowledge.

## Driving the narrative: Constructing and Deconstructing Knowledge in Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*

As part of their strategy to circumscribe women's social space and her public role within society, seventeenth-century European men also strove to confine women intellectually. The preceding chapter surveyed how men, both historically and in the contemporary literature, used spatially restrictive strategies in order to restrict women's social space and forcibly increase their own patriarchal boundaries. The patriarchal system strove to do this first, at the macro-level of restricting women's education and limiting their access to the public domains in which knowledge was generated. Second, this was enacted at the micro-level in each family unit, where every patriarch ensured that their wife or female family member remained in an epistemologically inferior position to themselves. On a basic level, the early modern issue of young girls being educationally disadvantaged in comparison to their male siblings is another form of economic deprivation that restricted women's access to resources and self-support.<sup>262</sup> Fundamentally, the functioning of patriarchal systems in early modern Europe was maintained through the meticulous control of each family unit, which primarily acted as a nexus of social relations.

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<sup>262</sup> Lerner, p.10.

<sup>263</sup> Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973-74*, trans. by Jacques Lagrange (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.81.

In Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*, the epistemological disadvantaging of female characters is often maintained through deceptive strategies of imprisonment, blindfolding or through a calculated *engaño*, a central motif for many of the *novelas*. As Zayas's omniscient narrator states in the opening of *Desengaños amorosos*, men are always trying to deceive women, 'como ellos procuran siempre engañarlas'.<sup>264</sup> Whilst this chapter is informed by men's confinement of women's intellectual capacities, it will focus more pointedly on how women retaliated against the epistemologically deficient position in which they were continually placed. Zayas's and Cervantes's female characters can be located within a broader tradition of women seeking alternative strategies in order to free themselves from patriarchally-constructed situations of powerlessness. Zayas and Cervantes constructed female characters who were exceptionally conscious of the power they had in withholding knowledge from others, a characteristic that was exceptionally "modern" for their seventeenth-century context. Allowing their fictional women to revel in epistemological authority, Zayas and Cervantes provide examples of consciously powerful women who developed sophisticated stratagems in order to negotiate the androcentric world they lived in. Not only do Zayas's female narrators bear secrets which must be revealed through the epistemological drive of narrative, but Zayas's and Cervantes's antecedents of the *femme fatale* and their female cross-dressers also present themselves as secrets to be unmasked. Zayas and Cervantes suggest that perhaps the most

<sup>264</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.118.

sophisticated resistance strategy for early modern women to cope with the intellectual restrictions placed upon them, is to reverse the gendered intellectual confinement.

Marina S. Brownlee carves out a link between the Baroque period and its continued fascination with epistemology. She avers, '[t]hat the Baroque is a period consumed with epistemology, with the individual subject's self-reflective interrogation of his or her relationship to society, is borne out as much by social history as it is by literary history.'<sup>265</sup> In the literature of the era she posits, there was an interest in the staging of problems of cognition and the subjective order of reality, the interest in the latter stemming from the chief concern of Baroque culture for subjectivity, namely the parameters of the individual in their society.<sup>266</sup> The Baroque period's interest in subjective consciousness, experience and epistemology however, has a more gendered focus in the *novelas* of Zayas and Cervantes, an interrogation of the ceaseless construction of knowledge as a male prerogative.

The first few pages of Zayas's *Desengaños amorosos* provide a gateway into contemplating the gendered imbalance of knowledge, promulgated by early modern Spanish society. In *Desengaños amorosos*, on the first night of the *sarao*, the noblemen who attended were described as being unhappy that they had been denied a

<sup>265</sup> Marina S. Brownlee, *The Cultural Labyrinth of María de Zayas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p.29.

<sup>266</sup> Brownlee, p.29.

platform to express their own views. Lisis's decision that 'habían de ser las damas las que novelasen', directly deprives the noblemen of their voices.<sup>267</sup> The narrator states, 'todos los hombres mal contentos de que, por no serles concedido el novelar, no podían dar muestra de las intenciones.'<sup>268</sup> Here, Zayas provides the reader with a microcosm for contemporary women's loss of voice and the hostility towards female expression in seventeenth-century Spain. Within the diegesis, Zayas textually imposes a voicelessness and a gendered suppressing of men's views that mirrors the contemporary denial of women's voices as valuable in the regulated world of seventeenth-century Spain.<sup>269</sup> The text states that the reasoning behind the exclusivity of women telling the *desengaños* is that men believed that women have always been storytellers, 'en esto acertó con la opinión de los hombres, pues siempre tienen a las mujeres por noveleras'.<sup>270</sup> Behind this façade of women as valued storytellers though, hides the courageousness of Zayas's more symbolic denial of men's voices in her second collection of *novelas*. It is clear therefore that Zayas was intent upon providing a role reversal for her readers to understand, that the consistent denial of an entire gender's voice is unjust. Zayas, who draws upon Cervantine models as we will go on to discuss, highlights the invisible structures of patriarchy by allowing her female characters to use their voices freely and to revel in epistemological superiority, at the expense of the men around them.

<sup>267</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.118.

<sup>268</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.120.

<sup>269</sup> Merrim, p.5.

<sup>270</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.118.



Building upon the *novelas* discussed in previous chapters, there are moments in which a female character chooses to withhold certain pieces of information, at her own discretion. In *El celoso extremeño*, Carrizales is never told the truth about his wife's innocence and the strength she uses to protect herself from Loaysa's attack. As Carrizales minimises the access Leonora has to the world outside of their barricaded house, he consistently strives to control his wife's knowledge. Essentially, Carrizales is one of the only sources from whom she can learn, making the perceptions she can build of her society extremely limited. Leonora lets her husband die without ever revealing the truth. The narrator explains their own bewilderment at Leonora's choice to remain silent and intensifies the reader's desire to know why Leonora never told her husband the truth:

Sólo no sé qué fue la causa que Leonora no puso más ahínco en desculpase [*sic*] y dar a entender a su celoso marido cuán limpia y sin ofensa había quedado en aquel suceso; pero la turbación le ató la lengua, y la priesa que se dio a morir su marido no dio lugar a su disculpa.<sup>271</sup>

Through his narrator whose identity remains hidden throughout the *Novelas ejemplares*, Cervantes incites his reader to question why Leonora chose not to tell Carrizales the truth and what she possibly could have gained from keeping this crucial information to herself. The answer to both of these questions can be seen in the epistemological authority that Leonora gains from refusing to impart her knowledge to Carrizales. As he controlled almost every angle of her life, Leonora tries to have one last hold over her husband, by refusing to tell him how hard she fought to protect herself.<sup>272</sup> By refusing to reveal what

<sup>271</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.135.

<sup>272</sup> Mies, p.222.

actually happened between her and Loaysa, Leonora maintains epistemological control over her husband, both her parents and the immoral duenna who failed to assist her when she was facing imminent danger. To further this, she also holds power over the narrator who makes the enticing remark regarding her decision, as they cannot make sense of her reasoning for not defending her innocence. By not ever explaining her rationale behind her elected silence, Leonora has a control that outstrips the mobility and freedom of the narrator which according to Audrey Jaffe, is often set up in contrast to the limitations of the characters.<sup>273</sup> Eluding her parents, husband and the narrator, Leonora yields an epistemological control that she was consistently deprived of during her marriage.

Surreptitious Acquisitions of Knowledge and Undermining Patriarchal Structures: Women's Conscious Struggle for Epistemological Authority in Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*

In a similar vein to Leonora being deprived of knowledge during her stifling marriage within *Desengaños amorosos*, Zayas demonstrates that women were cheated out of knowledge at the macro-level of their education, through the perpetuation of a less able version of themselves in the collective female consciousness and through individual incidents in which women were epistemologically deceived by men. In the context of women's bitterness at consistently being placed in a deficient position of knowledge, Matilde posits '[d]igo, en

<sup>273</sup> Audrey Jaffe, *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative and the Subject of Omniscience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p.12.

fin, que como las mujeres vieron que los hombres habían de más a más inventando contra ellas los engaños, hurtáronles, no el arte, sino el modo.'<sup>274</sup> As women saw men gaining more power through their deceptive strategies, they decided to steal their style of deception in order to settle the gendered imbalance of power. Stealing men's style of conscious deception in order to logistically stay one step ahead, Zayas's and Cervantes's fictional women began to fight against the male-presumed monopoly on knowledge.

Strategizing to take back some of the power that men had gained over women through their deceptive strategies, the Golden Age trope of *engaño* that is present in both the writers' collections becomes intertwined with some of the characteristics of the nineteenth-century figure of the *femme fatale*. Predominant in nineteenth-century cinema, literature and art, the *femme fatale* gained heightened presence with late nineteenth-century fears of sexual difference.<sup>275</sup> Mary Ann Doane provides a succinct introduction to the *femme fatale*:

The femme fatale is the figure of a certain discursive unease, a potential epistemological trauma. For her most striking characteristic, perhaps, is the fact that she never really is what she seems to be. She harbors a threat which is not entirely legible, predictable, or manageable.<sup>276</sup>

Contrived as a secret that must be aggressively unmasked, the figure aligns with the epistemological drive of narrative.<sup>277</sup> Revelling in the fact that she never really is what she seems to be, the *femme fatale* constitutes a potential epistemological trauma. Women throughout the

<sup>274</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.294.

<sup>275</sup> Mary Ann Doane, *Femme Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p.2.

<sup>276</sup> Doane, p.1.

<sup>277</sup> Doane, p.1.

ages have had to develop alternative strategies in order to negotiate their androcentric societies, and in order to obtain authority in such a male-centred, cultural environment. Doane affirms that the *femme fatale*'s power is of a peculiar sort in that 'it is usually not subject to her conscious will, hence appearing to blur the opposition between passivity and activity.'<sup>278</sup> According to patriarchal frameworks, the *femme fatale* is described not as the subject of power but its carrier, namely she is invariably stripped of the consciousness of her power.<sup>279</sup> Doane's generalising statement however, is problematic as there are many examples of self-reflexive *femme fatales*, for example in Flaubert's nineteenth-century novel, *Madame Bovary* and a number of Luis Buñuel's twentieth-century films.<sup>280</sup>

Friedrich Nietzsche examines what he claims is women's great art: the lie.<sup>281</sup> He avers, '[b]ut she does not want truth—what does woman care for truth! From the very first nothing is more foreign, more repugnant, or more hostile than truth—her great art is falsehood, her chief concern is appearance and beauty.'<sup>282</sup> Here, Nietzsche attributes dissimulation to his own, patriarchally-constructed image of 'woman' in which he speaks from a completely essentialist perspective. Crucially, Nietzsche deprives women of subjectivity by stating that they are not

<sup>278</sup> Doane, p.2.

<sup>279</sup> Doane, p.2.

<sup>280</sup> Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary: Provincial Manners*, trans. by Margaret Mauldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

<sup>281</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Beyond good and evil*, trans. by Helen Zimmern (Utah: Project Gutenberg, 2006), p.183. Ebook.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid*, p.183.

conscious of their dissimulation. Doane summarises Nietzsche's patriarchally-informed reading:

Her dissembling is not a conscious strategy. She has no knowledge of it or access to it as an operation. And this [...] blindness to her own work, is absolutely necessary in order to allow and maintain the man's idealization of her, his perfection of her as an object.<sup>283</sup>

By stating that women are not conscious of their deception, Nietzsche deprives women of the power associated with unmasking a secret. Nietzsche's assurance that women cannot be aware of their deception illuminates two key points, first the power that is associated with concealing an unpredictable secret and second, that women could not intellectually acknowledge such power, through the lens of patriarchy. Men's consistent construction of woman as an object would be broken however, if women intentionally planned to deceive men with strategic agency. This is where Zayas's and Cervantes's female characters are seemingly more "modern" than some of the nineteenth-century examples of the *femme fatale*, namely the women who feature in the Golden Age *novelas* are consciously aware of their deceptions. Infused with the Baroque theme of *engaño* and *desengaño*, Zayas and Cervantes construct female characters who never really are who they first appear to be. In contrast to Nietzsche's stripping of female subjectivity, the female characters in Zayas's and Cervantes's texts are intensely aware of their deception, often revelling in cognitive power. Have Zayas and Cervantes provided an antecedent to the *femme fatale*, with invariably more conscious authority?

<sup>283</sup> Doane, p.59.

Matilde, the narrator of *Amar sólo por vencer*, reflects upon women appropriating the art of male deception and she suggests, '[p]orque ¿qué mayor desengaño que quitarles su dinero y ponerlos en la calle?'<sup>284</sup> Matilde's reflection that it would be the greatest disillusionment for a man, if he were to have all of his money stolen and then to be kicked out onto the street, speaks to Cervantes's *El casamiento engañoso*. In this *novela* that deals specifically with the Baroque motif of *desengaño*, Alferéz Campuzano states that he was completely fleeced of his money and his hair by a woman as he affirms, 'porque ni tenía barbas que peinar ni dineros que gastar.'<sup>285</sup> Namely, as a direct result of a woman's strategic dissimulation, he is left without any money to spend as his wife takes every single item from his trunk and he is left hairless we can presume, due to the stress of the entire deception.<sup>286</sup> As John Jones and John Macklin state, this *novela* is interwoven with a context of deception, self-interest and lust.<sup>287</sup> The penultimate *novela* in Cervantes's collection demonstrates varying levels of deception, with the most successful being carried out by a woman. *El casamiento engañoso* begins with an image of Alferéz Campuzano, staggering out from the Hospital of the Resurrection in Valladolid after having been treated for syphilis, an STD associated with prostitution in early modern Europe. Campuzano encounters his

<sup>284</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.294.

<sup>285</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.292.

<sup>286</sup> He complains that he suffers from a condition called *alopetia* or more commonly, hair loss. To quote from the text, 'dándome una enfermedad que llaman lupicia, y por otro nombre más claro, la pelarela'. (Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.292).

<sup>287</sup> John Jones and John Macklin, 'Introduction to the Deceitful Marriage and The Dialogue of the Dogs' in Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Cervantes: The Complete Exemplary Novels*, ed. by Barry Ife and Jonathan Thacker (Oxford: Aris & Phillips, 2013), pp.579-586, (p.579).

friend Licenciado Peralta, who is intrigued to know why Campuzano looks so weak and off-colour, so he invites him back to his lodgings so that he can hear the entire story of his ills. Beginning to tell his account of his ill-judged marriage to doña Estefanía de Caicedo, from whom he contracted his case of syphilis, Campuzano describes the moment he first set eyes on his wife.

Shrouded in mystery, doña Estefanía presents herself as a secret to be unveiled by the men who are instantly drawn to her equally secretive and seductive appearance. Campuzano describes two women of genteel appearance who come into the inn where they are staying and the woman he later marries, doña Estefanía, is one of them. He describes Estefanía in the following way:

la otra se sentó en una silla junto a mí, derribado el manto hasta la barba, sin dejar ver el rostro más de aquello que concedía la raridad del manto; y aunque le supliqué que por cortesía me hiciese merced de descubrirse, no fue posible acabarlo con ella, cosa que me encendió más el deseo de verla.<sup>288</sup>

Estefanía presents herself explicitly as a secret to be unmasked by Campuzano. In fact, even her attire mirrors the threatening status of her as a secret, to be unveiled. Campuzano is drawn to the metaphorical and literal cloak with which Estefanía conceals her identity. By her choice of concealing attire, namely her cloak, Estefanía remains in charge of which specific parts of her body he is able to gaze upon. Doane states that the face more than any other bodily part, is a readable space *for* the other therefore, by refusing to reveal the most articulate space of the body, Estefanía holds significant

<sup>288</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.283.

epistemological authority over those around her.<sup>289</sup> After declining Campuzano's request to see her face, she further inflames his desire by slightly showing her white, bejewelled hand, 'sacó la señora una muy blanca mano, con muy buenas sortijas.'<sup>290</sup> As a woman who revels in the power of her false identity, Estefanía works to maintain power in the reciprocal relation of viewing. Namely, she refuses to let herself be a sexual image for the male voyeur, until it suits her own strategy of manipulation.

Estefanía, through her choice of attire and her secretive actions, is intent upon inflaming the epistemological desire of Campuzano. Whilst she is looking after her friend's house, Estefanía seizes the opportunity to construct herself a fictional identity in order to entice Campuzano into marrying her. Pretending that the entire property belonged to herself, Estefanía promises a fictional dowry to her husband Campuzano as in reality, 'que ni ella tiene casa, ni hacienda, ni otro vestido del que trae puesto.'<sup>291</sup> Estefanía employs a two-fold strategy in order to lure Campuzano to marry her, first she inflames his desire to see her face as a preliminary step to her *casamiento engañoso*. Second, she uses the lure of property to ensnare Campuzano into marriage under false pretences. Campuzano asks Estefanía for a second time to reveal her face to him; she replies with a curious statement, '[n]o seáis importuno; casa tengo; haced a un paje que me siga, que aunque yo soy más honrada de lo que promete esta

<sup>289</sup> Doane, p.47.

<sup>290</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.283.

<sup>291</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.289.



respuesta, todavía, a truco de ver si responde vuestra discreción a vuestra gallardía, holgaré de que me veáis.’<sup>292</sup> Here, it is notable that Estefanía mentions owning a property in the very first few words that she speaks to Campuzano, even though the reader and her husband discover the falsity of this allegation at the end of the *novela*.

Exploiting Campuzano’s desire for capital accumulation, Estefanía is able to instantly lure him by simply stating, ‘casa tengo’.<sup>293</sup> As an essential component of her manipulation, Estefanía uses the patriarchal desire to control the chain of capital accumulation against Campuzano. By demonstrating a key understanding of the male greed for capital, Estefanía knows that Campuzano will be persuaded by the capital he *thinks* he is getting hold of by marrying her. In fact, Campuzano later admits when he is recounting his story to Peralta that he was blinded by the money he saw displayed before him:

Yo, que tenía entonces el juicio, no en la cabeza, sino en los carcañares, haciéndoseme el deleite en aquel punto mayor de lo que en la imaginación le pintaba y ofreciéndoseme tan a la vista la cantidad de hacienda, que ya la contemplaba en dineros convertida, sin hacer discursos de aquellos a que daba lugar el gusto [...].<sup>294</sup>

She pushes Campuzano’s greed even further by stating the value of her property and how quickly this could be turned into capital for the two of them, ‘esto vale el menaje de mi casa, bien validos, dos mil y quinientos escudos; y éstos, en cosas que, puestas en almoneda, lo que se tardare en ponellas se tardará en convertirse en dineros.’<sup>295</sup> By

<sup>292</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.284.

<sup>293</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.284.

<sup>294</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.285.

<sup>295</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.285.

tempting Campuzano with the lure of property, Estefanía knows that he will be unable to resist an expeditious marriage with her if he thinks he will obtain significant capital as a result of it.

Mies's thesis that women's exploitation is bound up with the process of capital accumulation illuminates this moment of *El casamiento engañoso*.<sup>296</sup> Namely, Mies analyses the sexual and international division of labour, within the framework of capital accumulation and the lasting effects this has on women's life and humanity.<sup>297</sup> Mies contemplates an international movement towards a feminist perspective of a new society and she questions: what would a society be like in which women, nature and colonies were not exploited in the name of the accumulation of ever more wealth and money?<sup>298</sup> In the selected excerpts from the *novela*, Estefanía is shown to clearly understand the link between patriarchal control and the accumulation of capital, as she uses the patriarchal desire for ever-accumulating capital to her own advantage, to steal capital from her new husband and remove herself from a position of exploitation. Given the exploitative context of early modern Europe, Cervantes demonstrates the lengths that women would have to go to in order to have any authority. For Estefanía to obtain power and ensure she is not consistently exploited by the patriarchal chain of capital accumulation, she uses the essence of its structure: exploitation of another's wealth in order to gain more power for herself. Reversing an exploitative

<sup>296</sup> Mies, p.17.

<sup>297</sup> Mies, p.205.

<sup>298</sup> Mies, p.205.

relationship to favour the previously oppressed individuals is a problematic solution, and not one that Mies would recommend as she strove for a reality 'in which neither women, men, nor nature are exploited.'<sup>299</sup> However it is often difficult to illuminate exploitative relationships, unless something significantly shifts. Here, Cervantes's strategy relies on reversing the exploitative power dynamic in order for his readers to notice the oppression at work in seventeenth-century Europe. Through doña Estefanía using the logic of the patriarchal system to cheat Campuzano out of power and wealth, Cervantes ensures that the historically exploitative relationship between men and women becomes visible for the readers of Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares*.

Sexually independent, economically assertive and epistemologically superior women: Zayas's characterisation of Madame Lucrecia

In Zayas's *Desengaños amorosos*, a widow who maintains exceptional epistemological control over a man is Madame Lucrecia in *Tarde llega el desengaño*. The threat of sexually and economically independent women infiltrated Golden-Age literature. Jonathan Thacker makes an intriguing observation regarding Lope de Vega's later dramatic works. Namely as early modern Spanish society increasingly marginalized women's desires, Lope often placed an 'enticingly transgressive' female character at the centre of his

<sup>299</sup> Mies, p.23.

*comedias*.<sup>300</sup> Zayas's *novela* has a particular similarity to Lope's *La viuda valenciana* (1595-1603) which figures a young and beautiful widow, Leonarda, who seeks out Camilo and defies social conventions by initiating a sexual affair with the young man.<sup>301</sup> Using the impetus of the 'invisible mistress' plot which involves an inversion of the classical Cupid-Psyche story, Lope's play shows Leonarda satisfying her sexual desires whilst concealing her identity from Camilo. <sup>302</sup> She thereby avoids any kind of blemish on her public reputation, to refer to the Golden Age concept of *honra*.

In her fourth *desengaño*, *Tarde llega el desengaño*, Zayas also chose to employ the literary plot of the 'invisible mistress'. Initiating an affair with don Jaime de Aragón by sending him a letter through a squire, the young widow and princess of Erne, Madame Lucrecia, creates an economic and sexual exchange shrouded in complete secrecy. Ordered to meet the squire at ten o'clock that night if he wished to meet the author of the letter, don Jaime is immediately blindfolded so that he is unaware of the house he is being taken to. When he is brought up to Lucrecia's room, his blindfold is eventually removed but he is still submerged in darkness. Don Jaime states that he is taken to Lucrecia's house and liberally repaid '[por] su trabajo' for over a month, during which time she did not allow him to look at her. He affirms in his

<sup>300</sup> Jonathan Thacker, 'Lope the Comedian', in *A Companion to Lope de Vega*, ed. by Alexander Samson and Jonathan Thacker (Tamesis: Woodbridge, 2008), pp.159-170, (p.164).

<sup>301</sup> Lope de Vega, *La viuda valenciana*, ed. by Teresa Ferrer Valls (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 2001).

<sup>302</sup> Jonathan Thacker, *A Companion to Golden Age Theatre* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2007), p.47.

narrative, 'sin que, en todo este tiempo que he dicho, permitió dejarse ver, y si la importunaba para ello, me respondía que no nos convenía, porque verla y perderla había de ser uno'.<sup>303</sup> During their sexual relations, Lucrecia maintained exceptional control of the reciprocal relation of viewing, consistently subjecting don Jaime to the status of a sexual object for her own gratification. Whilst elaborating on her theory of the cinematic female spectator, Mulvey states a woman may 'find herself secretly [...] enjoying the freedom of action and control over the diegetic world that identification with a hero provides.'<sup>304</sup> In the case of Zayas's female spectator who gazes through a one-way window, she enjoys freedom over the events that she has constructed and her gaze is like that of a voyeur, who gazes upon her subject without him being able to see her. Even the house where Lucrecia lives is an allegory for her voyeuristic motives, as don Jaime and don Baltasar notice that 'aunque había muchas rejas y balcones, todas estaban con muy espesas celosías, por donde se podía ver sin ser vistos.'<sup>305</sup> Through the one-way windows she is able to see her potential lover and begin orchestrating their affair, without him ever knowing her real identity. Scopophilia, namely the pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object is only granted to Madame Lucrecia, the sexually and economically independent widow in Zayas's *novela*.<sup>306</sup> Don Jaime is positioned as raw material for the

<sup>303</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.242.

<sup>304</sup> Laura Mulvey, 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)', in Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.31-40, (p.31)

<sup>305</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.244.

<sup>306</sup> Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in Vincent B. Leitch et al., *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 2010), pp.2084-2095, (p.2086).

active gaze of Lucrecia, who yields trilateral power over her lover in the forms of sexual, economic and epistemological power.<sup>307</sup>

Submerged into a precarious situation as a result of Lucrecia's sexual desires, don Jaime expresses fear towards the entire situation, '[y]o os confieso que en esta ocasión tuve algún temor, y me pesó de haberme puesto en una ocasión, que ella misma, pues iba fundada en tanta cautela, estaba amenazando algún grave peligro.'<sup>308</sup> To borrow Doane's phrasing when she describes the elusive figure of the *femme fatale*, Lucrecia harbours a threat that is not entirely legible, predictable or manageable.<sup>309</sup> The danger that don Jaime fears due to the great secrecy of the affair, is not unwarranted. Lucrecia states the exact conditions of their sexual encounters to which don Jaime agrees:

te he traído de la manera que ves; porque tanto a ti como a mi nos importa vivir con este secreto y recato. Y así, para conseguir este amoroso empleo, te ruego que no lo comuniques con ninguno; que si alguna cosa mala tenéis los españoles, es el no saber guardar secreto.<sup>310</sup>

When don Jaime breaks the strict terms of the arrangement by telling his friend don Baltasar about his nightly escapades, he finds himself on the brink of death after he is stabbed by the swords of six masked men. Just as he was nearly recovered from his injuries, don Jaime receives a message that he should leave the country immediately, giving the reason behind his attack 'que le decía en él que por loco y mal celador de secretos había sido.'<sup>311</sup> Lucrecia demonstrates complete unpredictability by using six armed men to attack her lover

<sup>307</sup> Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', p.2093-4.

<sup>308</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.240.

<sup>309</sup> Doane, p.1.

<sup>310</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.241.

<sup>311</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.246.

and by sending threatening letters, urging don Jaime to leave the country. Therefore, don Jaime's association with Lucrecia is as he first feared, extremely dangerous due to its exceptional secrecy.

In addition to the epistemological power that Lucrecia holds over don Jaime, Lucrecia has significant sexual and economic authority, as she reduces him to a male prostitute whose services she pays for night after night. Brownlee also affirms this reading of Lucrecia's arrangement, stating that don Jaime is paid for his services like the typical female whore.<sup>312</sup> Don Jaime finds his payment after the first evening they spend together in his purse, 'abrí el bolsillo, y había en él una cadena [*sic*] de peso de doscientos escudos de oro, cuatro sortijas de diamantes y cien doblones de a cuatro. Quedé absorto, juzgando que debía ser mujer poderosa.'<sup>313</sup> Taking control of her own sexual desires, Lucrecia reduces don Jaime to a male prostitute who 'fu[e] recibido, y agasajado, y bien premiado [su] trabajo'.<sup>314</sup> Here, Zayas also implements the same strategy as Cervantes; she reverses the expected model of exploitation in order to highlight its injustice. Similar to the capital-seeking motives of Estefanía, Lucrecia is also presented as a legitimate threat to the patriarchal chain of capital accumulation, particularly as don Jaime explicitly acknowledges a connection between Lucrecia's wealth and her status as '[una] mujer poderosa.'<sup>315</sup> When don Jaime and don Baltasar unveil the true identity of the former's mysterious mistress, they realise that she is the

<sup>312</sup> Brownlee, p.83.

<sup>313</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.242.

<sup>314</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.242.

<sup>315</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.242.

only daughter of an elderly but powerful prince who 'sólo tenía una hija heredera de todo su estado y riqueza, viuda, mas muy moza, por haberla casado niña, de las más bellas damas de aquel país.'<sup>316</sup> A bold threat to a patriarchal system structured upon the never-ending process of capital accumulation, Lucrecia is introduced as a widowed only child who is due to inherit her father's numerous estates and wealth.<sup>317</sup> She therefore poses a legitimate threat to the patriarchal system, due to her status as a sexually independent widow and due to her inheritance which ruptures the chain of patriarchal capital accumulation. With a two-pronged strategy of maintaining sexual and economic power over don Jaime, Lucrecia is able to consciously keep him in a cognitively inferior position for her own safety and control. Lucrecia ensures that she has significant autonomy over her body, her life and her sexuality, significant factors that Mies states are fundamental for ecological, economic and political autarky.<sup>318</sup> When this control is jeopardised by don Jaime's incautious actions, Lucrecia resorts to violence to ensure that her sexual decisions will not threaten the freedom she currently holds in seventeenth-century society as a sexually and economically independent widow.

<sup>316</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.244.

<sup>317</sup> Mies, p.38.

<sup>318</sup> Mies, p.222.



Boundary Crossing and Cross-Dressers in Cervantes's *Las dos doncellas* and Zayas's *El juez de su causa*

In *Femme Fatales*, Doane insinuates an ease of female transvestism, namely she suggests that it is far easier for women to slip into male attire, than it is for a man to dress as a woman.<sup>319</sup> After providing a twentieth-century film as a cultural example, she avers '[t]hus while the male is locked into sexual identity, the female can at least pretend that she is other—in fact, sexual mobility would seem to be a distinguishing feature of femininity in its cultural construction.'<sup>320</sup> Cross-dressing is a trope that spans Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas* and it is most often employed as a mode of sexual mobility for their female characters.<sup>321</sup> Some of their fictional women pretend to be 'other', using sexual mobility as a strategy to achieve a certain goal, whilst taking advantage of certain privileges which have been socially restricted to the male gender.<sup>322</sup> The power to cross specific boundaries which women obtained through cross-dressing in the *novelas*, is not too far from historical reality. In early modern Hispanic society, there were cases of transvestism that have been explored by critics such as

<sup>319</sup> Doane, p.24.

<sup>320</sup> Doane, p.25.

<sup>321</sup> In Zayas's *novelas*, men also cross-dress as women to gain private access to a woman they desire, for example in the sixth *desengaño*, *Amar sólo por vencer*. In order to be as close as possible to Laurela, Esteban secures a position as a maid in her parent's house in Madrid, dressing in women's clothing and calling himself, Estefanía. Whilst *Amar sólo por vencer* shows a man using cross-dressing as a strategy to achieve a certain end, the cases demonstrated by Zayas and Cervantes are predominantly women dressing in male attire.

<sup>322</sup> Another clear example of a female character cross-dressing in order to achieve a particular motive is in Zayas's second *novela* of her first collection, *La burlada Aminta y la venganza del honor*. In this *novela*, Aminta uses male disguise in order to act out her revenge upon Jacinto and Flora, who took advantage of her innocence and sexually preyed upon her. Disguised as a page, Aminta served Jacinto and Flora for months until she stabbed Jacinto in the heart and Flora in the throat and chest and swiftly escaped with her companion, don Martín.

Merrim and Vollendorf.<sup>323</sup> For example, one of the most renowned cases is the paradoxical Catalina de Erauso, the Lieutenant-Nun who successfully participated in the male order, obtaining personal freedom in a restrictive context.<sup>324</sup>

Cervantes's *Las dos doncellas* is a salient, literary example of cross-dressing, as two female characters revel in the emancipatory function of male attire, referring to themselves as Teodoro and Francisco. The first character that the reader encounters is Teodosia who is disguised in male attire and seeking refuge in an inn for the evening. Surreptitiously concealing information from the opening of the *novela*, the disguised Teodosia catches the attention of almost everyone at the inn, all of whom are desperate to know more about the handsome "gentleman" who paid for both beds in a two-bed room. When another gentleman enters the inn, who the reader later discovers is Teodosia's brother, don Rafael, he is desperate to uncover the secrecy that shrouds the first "gentleman" stating 'aunque duerma en el suelo tengo de ver hombre tan alabado.'<sup>325</sup> Successfully gaining entrance to the room where the mysterious guest is sleeping, don Rafael hears unbeknown to him, his sister's continuous laments throughout the night. Teodosia, forgetting that there was someone else in the room, mourned her current state of affairs:

<sup>323</sup> Stephanie Merrim, *Early Modern Women's Writing and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999); Lisa Vollendorf, *The Lives of Women: A New History of Inquisitional Spain* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005).

<sup>324</sup> Merrim, p.3

<sup>325</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.203.

Pero ¿de quién me quejo, cuitada? [...] ¡Oh fementido Marco Antonio! ¿Cómo es posible que en las dulces palabras que me decías viniese mezclada la hiel de tus descortésias y desdenes? [...] Respóndeme, que te hablo; [...] págame lo que me debes; socórreme, pues por tantas vías te tengo obligado.<sup>326</sup>

It is in this moment that the reader and don Rafael realise that this mysterious guest is certainly not the man they present themselves as, due to their linguistic slip of using the female pronoun self-referentially. The epistemological layers surrounding the real identity of the mysterious gentleman are linguistically unpeeled by the words of Teodosia, as her pronoun use provides concrete confirmation that she is a woman. Whilst Teodosia's appearance deceives those around her, it is her words that reveal the truth. Teodosia affirms that her cross-dressing is vital in order to find Marco Antonio and demand the marital promise that he made to her, before he disappeared from their town in Andalucía:

Con todo esto, mi principal determinación es, aunque pierda la vida, buscar al desalmado de mi esposo, que no puede negar el serlo sin que le desmientan las prendas que dejó en mi poder, que son una sortija de diamantes con unas cifras que dicen: "Es Marco Antonio esposo de Teodosia".<sup>327</sup>

Defiantly claiming that she will make him fulfil his avowed word or that she would quite frankly put an end to his life, there is a real strength in the measures Teodosia is taking to ensure she can maintain control over her life. In a similar manner to Teodosia's words linguistically revealing her true identity, she holds onto the words of Marco Antonio and those on the diamond ring, as truth.

<sup>326</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.204-5.

<sup>327</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.208.

The other woman who surreptitiously conceals her true identity in *Las dos doncellas* is Leocadia, a woman who was similarly and deceptively promised marriage by Marco Antonio. On their journey to Barcelona to follow up the sighting of Marco Antonio, don Rafael and his sister who maintains her male disguise, find more than thirty travellers bound to the trees in the wood. Don Rafael and Teodosia are especially moved by the sight of a young boy who seemed to be only sixteen years old, tied to the trunk of a tree but '[con] tan hermoso de rostro que forzaba y movía a todos que le mirasen.'<sup>328</sup> Seeing that the suspected young boy had pierced ears and 'un mirar vergonzoso que tenía sospecha que debía de ser mujer', Teodosia decides to confront her suspicion about the so-called Francisco.<sup>329</sup> Hiding behind her own equally deceptive appearance, Teodosia speaks to the disguised Leocadia in an attempt to prise the truth from her, 'he venido a sospechar que vos no sois varón, como vuestro traje lo muestra, sino mujer [...] y quizá tan desdichada como lo da a entender la mudanza del traje, pues jamás tales mudanzas son por bien de quien las hace.'<sup>330</sup> Here, Teodosia makes reference to the necessity which lies behind both her and Leocadia's cross-dressing. Namely, Cervantes does not provide the textual opportunity for his characters to explicitly state the emancipatory nature of male attire. However, such a reading can be interpreted by reading between the lines of the text and through noticing how Cervantes lets his female characters stay epistemologically ahead of men at every opportunity in this *novela*.

<sup>328</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.213.

<sup>329</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.214.

<sup>330</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.216.

In *Las dos doncellas*, Teodosia and Leocadia are both positioned as bearers of surreptitious knowledge. Throughout the *novela*, the women employ conscious strategies in order to ensure that their real identities remain concealed for as long as possible. The disguised Leocadia builds layers of false knowledge in order to convince “Teodoro” and don Rafael of the noble family she belongs to, first she states she is the son of don Enrique de Cardenas, to which don Rafael affirms that he has no children.<sup>331</sup> Second, she avers that she is the son of don Sancho to which don Rafael concludes that he only has a daughter. Finally, Leocadia settles on her status as the steward of don Sancho, a lie which don Rafael and “Teodoro” accept. Leocadia even makes a self-referential remark regarding her own beauty, as she affirms that the daughter of don Sancho, ‘no tan hermosa como su fama dice.’<sup>332</sup> Revelling in the lack of knowledge of those around her, Leocadia makes self-referential comments when she is in fact, right there. Leocadia is seen to construct and deconstruct the knowledge that others have about her, in an authoritative manner. For women that had to cope with the notion that their reputations were damaged so to speak, if they lost their chastity to anyone other than their husband or husband-to-be, the notion of constructing and deconstructing the knowledge that other people have about your identity is particularly enticing.

<sup>331</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.215.

<sup>332</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.215.

Cervantes also allows Teodosia to have significant epistemological authority in *Las dos doncellas*, not only over the men that surround her who are completely unaware of her secret but also over Leocadia, who loses her epistemological authority when she deconstructs her false male identity. In the presence of Teodosia, Leocadia documents the reason behind her cross-dressing, stating that she had become involved with Marco Antonio and he had promised to be her husband. When he did not come to their appointed meeting, Leocadia discovered that he had disappeared from his town 'y llevado de casa de sus padres a una doncella de su lugar, hija de un principal caballero, llamada Teodosia, doncella de extremada hermosura y de rara discreción'.<sup>333</sup> Here, it is significant that Teodosia stands before Leocadia as the woman in question, albeit Leocadia does not know this due to her male disguise. In this moment, Teodosia surreptitiously conceals her knowledge in two ways, first she conceals her real identity as a woman and second, she stands before Leocadia as the woman in question. *Las dos doncellas* demonstrates an intriguing interplay of knowledge and Cervantes provides numerous opportunities for his female characters to reign cognitively superior.

In the case of Teodosia, Cervantes allows her to have exceptional sexual mobility, by textually fluctuating between the names of her male disguised self and her real female self. By consistently interchanging the names, Teodoro and Teodosia, Cervantes respects the sexual mobility which his character has established through her cross-

<sup>333</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.218.

dressing.<sup>334</sup> Marjorie Garber argues that transvestism particularly in Renaissance Europe, is not just a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of category itself.<sup>335</sup> She states that there is a tendency to erase the third term, to appropriate the cross-dresser “as” one of the two sexes, however the “third” is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility.<sup>336</sup> For example, whilst Teodosia is listening to Leocadia’s account still in her male disguise, Cervantes does not use one name to refer to his heroine, but switches between these at his own discretion, moving towards the space of possibility that Garber describes.<sup>337</sup> When Teodosia hears the first part of Leocadia’s story, her male disguise name is specifically used. However, on the same page, there is a shift back to her real name in order to describe her accumulating jealousy, ‘[r]espiró con estas razones Teodosia, y detuvo los espíritus, que poco a poco la iban dejando, estimulados y apretados de la rabiosa pestilencia de los celos’.<sup>338</sup> The textual shifts between Teodoro and Teodosia not only demonstrates Cervantes’s respect for the sexual mobility of his character, but it generates a sense of confusion, as if even the omniscient narrator cannot remember who she really is. Perhaps, with

<sup>334</sup> In the subsequent section, I am using the terms adopted by Marjorie Garber, a material historian who writes on cross-dressing, transvestism and cultural anxiety in Renaissance Europe. I am aware of the potential anachronism that these terms could generate, but I nevertheless use them to support my argument. Marjorie B. Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London: Penguin, 1993)

<sup>335</sup> Marjorie B. Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London: Penguin, 1993), p.17.

<sup>336</sup> Garber, p.11.

<sup>337</sup> Garber, p.11.

<sup>338</sup> Cervantes, p.218.

the linguistic slip between Teodosia and Teodoro, Cervantes is attempting to create space for the 'third term' that Garber describes.<sup>339</sup>

Cross-dressing is exquisitely employed in Zayas's ninth *maravilla* from *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, *El juez de su causa*. In this *novela*, Estela adapts her external appearance in order to head to Tunis and find employment in the service of the emperor, Charles V. Her transformation into her newly constructed identity as the soldier, don Fernando, is described in the following way, 'mudando su traje mujeril en el de varón, cortándose los cabellos, acompañada sólo de su cautivo español que el Príncipe de Fez le mandó dar, juramentado de que no había de decir quién era'.<sup>340</sup> The ease with which Estela transforms herself into her male identity as don Fernando, is textually stressed by Zayas's rather brief description of her transformation. Through her brevity, Zayas emphasises that clothes really do make the man, to quote Doane.<sup>341</sup> Under her male disguise as don Fernando, Estela excels in both of the roles she carries out. First as a soldier, as Estela is exceptionally rewarded by Charles V, among which was investiture in the prestigious Order of Santiago and also the title of duke with its income.<sup>342</sup> Second, in her responsibilities as the newly appointed viceroy of Valencia, with her beloved don Carlos as her secretary.

<sup>339</sup> Garber, p.11.

<sup>340</sup> Zayas, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, p.501.

<sup>341</sup> Doane, p.24.

<sup>342</sup> María de Zayas y Sotomayor, *The Enchantments of Love: Amorous and Exemplary Novels*, trans. by H. Patsy Boyer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p.286.



The literary theme of a disguised woman pursuing a career, was a popular theme in seventeenth-century Golden Age drama.<sup>343</sup> More often than not on the Golden Age stage, a female character was driven into this role by circumstances outside of her control.<sup>344</sup> McKendrick states that these plays had one salient feature in common, a feature which is also true for Zayas's *novela*, 'the heroine eventually attains a position of authority [...] which requires her to sit in judgement over her erstwhile lover, arrested, [...] for the murder or abduction of the heroine herself.'<sup>345</sup> For Zayas, the story of the female judge provides the framework for Estela to publicly ensure the legitimacy of don Carlos's love for her, 'quiso ver primero a Carlos más apretado, para que la pasión le hiciese confesar su amor, y para que después estimase en más el bien.'<sup>346</sup> In a similar vein to words playing a crucial role in the construction and deconstruction of truth in Cervantes's *Las dos doncellas*, Estela forces don Carlos to be accountable for his choice of words. Estela threatens that, given the current lack of evidence with which she is provided, she has no other choice but to condemn Carlos to death for 'el robo de Estela, en el quebrantamiento de su casa, en su muerte y la de Claudia'.<sup>347</sup> In response to this, Carlos affirms that this is not the case as, 'si aquí como a juez se lo pudiera negar, allá como a señor y amigo le dije la verdad, y de la misma manera la digo y confieso agora. Digo que adoré a Estela.'<sup>348</sup> Swiftly picking up on Carlos's rather bleak choice of the past tense of 'adorar',

<sup>343</sup> McKendrick, *Mujer varonil*, p.231

<sup>344</sup> McKendrick, p.231.

<sup>345</sup> McKendrick, p.231.

<sup>346</sup> Zayas, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, p.508.

<sup>347</sup> Zayas, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, p.508.

<sup>348</sup> Zayas, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, p.509.

Estela replies that he should say that he adores her in the present because '[se hace] sospechoso en hablar de pretérito y no sentir de presente.'<sup>349</sup> From her position of legal authority over Carlos, Estela is an exceptional example of a woman who surreptitiously withholds knowledge from a man in order to ensure the legitimacy of his love.

### Reading for the Marriage: Narrative Desire and Epistemological Power in Zayas's *Sarao*

The literary technique of the frame narration within *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* and *Desengaños amorosos* allows Zayas to manipulate the levels of epistemology in her text. Namely, she maintains significant control over which characters, narrators or readers have access to privileged information and she uses the discussions of the frame characters to guide the implied reader's response to the *novelas*. Zayas appears extremely aware of the power of narrative desire, namely she uses what Peter Brooks describes as the reader's inexorable desire *for* the end to drive the narrative forward, and she allows her female narrators to have significant narrational authority.<sup>350</sup> Cervantes seems similarly aware of the narrator's power in engaging the reader's desire for the end but his narrator's identity is never revealed, despite their several interjections in the first-person.<sup>351</sup>

<sup>349</sup> Zayas, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, p.509.

<sup>350</sup> Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.52.

<sup>351</sup> For example, in *El celoso extremeño* the narrator expresses their bewilderment at Leonora's decision to not tell her husband the truth that she did not have an affair, '[s]ólo no sé que fue la causa que Leonora no puso más ahínco en disculparse y dar a entender a su celoso marido cuán limpia y sin ofensa había quedado en aquel suceso; pero la turbación le ató la lengua, y la prisa que se dio a morir su marido no dio lugar a su disculpa.' (Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*,

Rhodes makes an intriguing observation on how both Zayas and Lisis deceive their real and fictional audiences about the actual purpose of the *sarao*.<sup>352</sup> In the first few pages of *Desengaños amorosos*, the reader is informed of Lisis's fever, which exhausted her body so intensely that doctors feared for her life.<sup>353</sup> Her illness grew worse and everyone including Lisis herself, feared that she would not fully recover. When occasionally she did feel a little relief from her pain, the omniscient narrator describes how Lisis began nurturing a new purpose, a purpose which she would not reveal to anyone until the right moment:

otras (aunque pocas) con más alivio, tuvo lugar su divino entendimiento de obrar en su alma nuevos propósitos, si bien a nadie lo daba a entender, guardando para su tiempo la disposición de su deseo [...].<sup>354</sup>

Here, the narrator points to a secret which Lisis consciously conceals from both the audience of the *sarao* and ultimately, from the reader. Maintaining epistemological authority for the entire duration of all ten *desengaños*, it is not until the end of the soirée that the reader will discover that the secret to be divulged, is Lisis's aversity to marriage. In her close analysis of Lisis's motives, Rhodes avers '[n]ot until the book's very end does anyone learn the hostess's secret, that Lisis—not so obedient after all—had decided not to wed don Diego before

p.135) Another self-referential remark can be found at the end of *La fuerza de la sangre* in which the narrator states, 'El cual hecho, déjese a otra pluma y otro ingenio más delicado que el mío el contar la alegría universal de todos los que en él se hallaron.' (Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.94).

<sup>352</sup> Elizabeth Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill: Death and Meaning in Zayas's Desengaños* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p.5.

<sup>353</sup> María de Zayas, *The Disenchantments of Love: A Translation of the Desengaños amorosos*, trans. by H. Patsy Boyer (USA: State University of New York, 1997), p.35.

<sup>354</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.116.

the soirée began.’<sup>355</sup> Lisis’s secret creates two epistemological levels: first, the reader of Zayas’s *Desengaños* knows that there is a secret to be divulged and this desire for the plot carries them forward, onward, through the text until Lisis’s revelation that she wants to take refuge in the convent.<sup>356</sup> On a lower epistemological level, the fictional audience of noblemen and noblewomen do not know that Lisis has a secret and they attend the entertaining soirées, expecting that they would celebrate the marriage of Lisis and don Diego on the last day before Lent. Brownlee also questions, given the tales of abuse and cruelty of men against women that Lisis orders for the *sarao*, ‘[w]hy consider marrying at all if that is the way she views men and the institution of marriage?’<sup>357</sup> Learning from the disenchantments told at the *sarao* and from the example all married women give, Lisis provides a rationale for her elected escape to the female-only space of the convent and her aversity to marriage, ‘estoy tan cobarde, que, como el que ha cometido algún delito, me acojo a sagrado y tomo por amparo el retiro de un convento, desde donde pienso (como en talanquera) ver lo que sucede a los demás’.<sup>358</sup> By disclosing to the reader of her *novelas* that Lisis has a secret, Zayas is able to significantly manipulate the reader’s desire for the plot to unfold whilst also placing power in the hands of her female protagonist. Epistemologically superior to the audience of the *sarao* and to the real reader of Zayas’s *Desengaños*, Lisis revels in a

<sup>355</sup> Rhodes, p.6.

<sup>356</sup> Brooks, p.37.

<sup>357</sup> Marina S. Brownlee, *The Cultural Labyrinth of María de Zayas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p.5.

<sup>358</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.509.

control that she wishes she had in her androcentric Spanish society. Here, the epistemological control that I am suggesting Lisis has over the other characters of the *sarao* is reinforced by Vollendorf's assertion that Zayas's frame tale functions as 'a corrective to the social problems brought to light in the novellas: unlike most of the novella protagonists, Lisis and her cohorts enjoy certain control over their lives and speak their minds without retribution.'<sup>359</sup> Rejecting the patriarchally-controlled institution of marriage in favour of a female-only space, Lisis utilises her knowledge of male deception in order to achieve what Mies defines as the collective aim of the international feminist movement, '[a]utonomy over our bodies and lives [Emphasis in original]'.<sup>360</sup>

We could state then, that the feminist aim of the *sarao* is a deconstruction of the knowledge propagated by the patriarchal system and a legitimate attempt to reconstruct a concept of society which includes women's strength, exposes men's perpetual deceptiveness and is a place where women can empathetically reach out to one another. A clear example of this is Filis, who provides contemporary examples of powerful women in order to prove her point that men have perpetually constructed an incorrect image of women as weak and 'obligarlas a que ejerzan las cosas caseras'.<sup>361</sup> By reconstructing their knowledge of society and with an enlightened sense of their own strength, some of the women in Zayas's *novelas* see no other option

<sup>359</sup> Lisa Vollendorf, *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism* (Chapel Hill: U.N.C. Dept. of Romance Languages, 2001), p.169.

<sup>360</sup> Mies, p.222.

<sup>361</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.229.

but to remove themselves from their androcentric society in order to get closer to their reconstructed vision. Not solely exclusive to Zayas's *novelas*, the informed decision to retreat to a convent is also applicable to Cervantes's heroine, Leonora in *El celoso extremeño*, who chooses female-only sanctity over marriage with Loaysa. In Zayas's two collections, there are numerous women who choose the convent over the patriarchal institution of marriage, and such a decision is directly linked to what King describes as the 'dignity and autonomy' of the convent.<sup>362</sup> Speaking specifically of the convent in early modern Europe, King claims:

Women could find in the convent [...] not only the freedom to pursue their goals in dignity, but also the freedom from those forces that rendered their condition "dismal": the risks and burdens of family existence [...] families were a growing problem for daughters, who had to endure the strategies in which they were always pawns and never principals.<sup>363</sup>

A refuge from the perpetual disregarding of women's subjectivity in the familial discussions of her marriage, the convent both fictionally and historically, became a safe space for women to recover the autonomy that they had been consistently denied by their society. Moreover, the convent was a space for women to develop intellectually, namely, they had the opportunity to read, write and accumulate knowledge. Lisis's retreat to the convent alongside doña Isabel, doña Estefanía and her mother therefore, is a bold statement, as the women seek refuge in a space where they will not be spatially or intellectually restricted.

<sup>362</sup> King, *Women of the Renaissance*, p.135.

<sup>363</sup> King, p.135.

Zayas's case study, Lisis, reconstructs her knowledge of gender relations and the institution of marriage through hearing the various *desengaños*. Lisis's decision to enter the convent is an example which solidifies Zayas's thesis that, a reconstructed feminist vision of early modern society may result in women entirely refusing to participate in their patriarchally perpetuated status as objects for others and a refusal to no longer experience their bodies as 'occupied territory'.<sup>364</sup> Using the knowledge she has acquired from the *sarao*, namely through women talking about personal issues to do with their bodies, their husbands and their families, Lisis is able to make the informed decision not to marry don Diego and to enter a convent instead.<sup>365</sup> In the concluding sentences of *Desengaños amorosos* which is followed by the tantalising signature of Zayas herself, the clear 'I' of our narrator states that Lisis's ending is the happiest one you could wish for, '[n]o es trágico fin, sino el más felice que se pudo dar, pues codiciosa y deseada de muchos, no se sujetó a ninguno'.<sup>366</sup> This statement evidently contradicts Rhodes's statement that 'the convent is an invisible locale that Zayas uses as a sad ending to a collection of already sad stories.'<sup>367</sup> Ultimately, the text provides the reader with apparent confirmation that the convent was the most viable space for women to happily claim back their autonomy.

### Conclusion

<sup>364</sup> Mies, p.25.

<sup>365</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.508.

<sup>366</sup> Zayas, *Desengaños amorosos*, p.510.

<sup>367</sup> Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill*, p.134.

In retaliation to the perpetual attempts to confine women intellectually, at both macro and micro-level within early modern Europe, Zayas and Cervantes fictionally create rhetorically persuasive and defiant female characters who refuse to succumb to their culturally constructed, epistemologically inferior position. Responding to the gendered deprivation of knowledge which effectively functioned at a macro level in early modern Europe, Zayas and Cervantes provide ample textual space for their female characters to acquire knowledge surreptitiously and consciously revel in their epistemological superiority. The women who feature as antecedents of the nineteenth-century *femme fatale* figure, Cervantes's doña Estefanía and Zayas's Madame Lucrecia, strive to limit the knowledge of their male victims and specific to the case of *El casamiento engañoso*, construct a completely false identity in order to strip a man of his material assets. The female cross-dressers, Teodosia, Leocadia and Estela, construct a completely false set of assumptions in order to convince those surrounding them of their male identity. Furthermore, Zayas's *sarao* provides the space for women to deconstruct the patriarchal notions that were propagated in early modern Spain and more productively, to reconstruct a vision of gender relations that was far more favourable to women than the contemporary society in which they lived.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I discussed how patriarchal concepts were built into the mental constructs of early modern Europe as to remain largely invisible.<sup>368</sup> These largely invisible patriarchal concepts

<sup>368</sup> Lerner, p.3.



attempted to ensure that women remained subordinate in a coercive male-female relationship and that men continued to passively accept their socially privileged positions, without questioning the systematic exploitation of women. In *La esclava de su amante* and *La fuerza de la sangre*, Isabel and Leocadia respectively resort to violence as methods of self-defence against their rapists. By reversing the power dynamic and allowing their female characters to exert violent tactics, Zayas and Cervantes shed light upon the oppressive, unequal male-female relationship characterised by systematic gender violence.<sup>369</sup> Similarly as this chapter has demonstrated, Zayas's and Cervantes's female characters appropriate men's epistemologically restricting strategies in an attempt to ensure that the intellectual restriction of women, at both micro and macro level, would not remain an invisible offence. As I have argued, Zayas and Cervantes strove to make the historical injustices of their patriarchal system visible for their contemporary readers. Through their subtly crafted *novelas* and their aim to provide a space for female expression, they most certainly satisfy Mies's definition of feminists as 'those who dare to break the conspiracy of silence about the oppressive, unequal man-woman relationship and who want to change it.'<sup>370</sup> Focusing on the reception of these texts by their contemporary readers, Zayas and Cervantes ensured that the forces, laws and beliefs at work to legitimise women's subordination to men, no longer remained invisible and that women's voices were not systematically silenced in their texts, as they had been historically. Initiating a discussion about the varying forms of violence

<sup>369</sup> Mies, p.6.

<sup>370</sup> Mies, p.6.

against women, in addition to restrictions placed upon women spatially and intellectually, the *novelas* open up a textual space for a feminist community of empathetic readers to lament the hardships of seventeenth-century Spanish women.

## Conclusion

In each *novela* that has been discussed in this thesis, the reader can identify a female resistance opposing the boundaries established by the contemporary patriarchal system. Adrienne Rich's statement provides a gateway into discussing how resistance threads through Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas*.<sup>371</sup> She posits that '[c]oercion and compulsion are among the conditions in which women have learned to recognize [*sic*] our strength. Resistance is a major theme [...] in the study of women's lives, if we know what we are looking for.'<sup>372</sup> As Rich states, when analysing how resistance features in the study of women's lives, we have to know what we are searching for. Each chapter of this thesis outlines different resistance strategies that Zayas's and Cervantes's female characters utilise as constructive coping mechanisms in order to claim back what Mies describes as, autonomy over our bodies and lives.<sup>373</sup> The concept of autonomy, consistently referred to by Mies as the positive goal towards which the feminist movement strives, is 'usually understood as the freedom from coercion regarding our bodies and our lives.'<sup>374</sup> Mies states that '[a]utonomy in this sense should not be understood individualistically and idealistically— as it often is by feminists—because no single woman

<sup>371</sup>Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', in Vincent B. Leitch et al., *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New York: Norton, 2010), pp.1591-1609 (p.1591-2).

<sup>372</sup> Rich, p.1592.

<sup>373</sup> Mies, p.222.

<sup>374</sup> Mies, p.40.

in our atomized society is able to preserve her autonomy.'<sup>375</sup> The patriarchal oppression that the fictional women are subjected to throughout the *novelas*, a reimagination of historical cases of abuse, gives the female characters the strength to fight for their autonomy as individuals and as a collective. As Rich posits, resistance is a major theme in the study of women's lives and this thesis has uncovered both the evident and more subtle resistance strategies of Zayas's and Cervantes's fictional women. As the theme of female survival threads through the *novelas*, we can hope that contemporary female readers could also find their own strength from these accounts of female resistance.

Responding to a breach of corporeal space, Isabel and Leocadia in the first chapter employed a range of resistance strategies in order to claim back their autonomies.<sup>376</sup> Namely in Zayas's *La esclava de su amante*, Isabel uses physical force, disguise and money as resistance strategies, as well as ensuring her rapist is held accountable for the damage he has caused. In Cervantes's *La fuerza de la sangre*, Leocadia physically resists the untoward advances of her rapist Rodolfo, when he shows signs that he wished to repeat his crime, in addition to using her rhetorical prowess to assert her autonomy. Isabel and Leocadia both utilise multifaceted resistance strategies in order to reassert that their bodies are in fact, *theirs* and overcome the fact that men have utilised them as objects to satisfy their egocentric sexual

<sup>375</sup> Mies, p.212.

<sup>376</sup> Mies, p.212.

desires.<sup>377</sup> Furthermore, Zayas's and Cervantes's fictional women attempt to control the next steps that their violators take. First, Isabel pursues don Manuel across the Mediterranean in an attempt to try and secure marriage with him. Disguised as a female slave, Isabel subsequently gains access to the Admiral's lodging where don Manuel was living. Finally through an assertive use of language, Isabel forces don Manuel to take responsibility for the damage he has caused to her and her subsequent life. The female protagonist of *La fuerza de la sangre*, Leocadia, also uses rhetorical assertion to ensure that she remains in control of the knowledge that Rodolfo has acquired of her body, ordering his perpetual silence in order to protect her reputation. Alongside Rodolfo's mother, Leocadia works to secure marriage with Rodolfo as the most viable social solution to the violation.

In the second chapter, we witnessed the patriarchal circumscription of women's social space in both Zayas's and Cervantes's *novelas* and an even more violent reduction of women's physical bodies in Zayas's *Tarde llega el desengaño* and *La inocencia castigada*. In the *novelas*, we are exposed to female bodies which are inscribed with constraint and pain. The reader bears witness to the brutal dehumanisation of these women at the hands of their husbands or family members. In retaliation against the consistent attempts of men to place women and their bodies within specified boundaries, we saw that some of Zayas's female characters overspill the established conceptual borders of their bodies. Imbued with the Golden Age dramatic trope of exaggeration,

<sup>377</sup> Mies, p.25.

Camila's body in *La más infame venganza* extends to monstrous proportions and Hipólita's wounds are ready to burst open and gush with blood in *Al fin se paga todo*. In response to the threat of female limitlessness, Zayas's female characters resist corporeal boundaries, revelling in the grotesque rewritings of their bodies.

In resistance to the gendered restrictions that the patriarchal system placed on knowledge, we encountered women in the third chapter who surreptitiously withheld certain information from men. For these women, having a secret reveals how and why knowledge can be power. More concretely, by reversing the exploitative power dynamic at work in early modern Europe, the historical oppression of women becomes visible to Zayas's and Cervantes's readers. The exclusion of women from certain spaces is partially overcome by the resistance strategies of the cross-dressing women in *El juez de su causa* and *Las dos doncellas*. Through their cross-dressing, Estela, Teodosia and Leocadia gain full access to spaces and positions of authority that they would not have been able to as women. In Zayas's *El juez de su causa*, Estela under her male pseudonym of don Fernando, assumes roles that were solely reserved for men in early modern society. For example, she is employed as a soldier in service of the emperor Charles V and she works as the newly appointed Viceroy of Valencia with her beloved Carlos, as her secretary. Estela not only assumes these roles without being recognised as a woman, but she performs her duties with such diligence that she is exceptionally rewarded by

Charles V.<sup>378</sup> At the peak of resistance, the cross-dressed Teodosia, Leocadia and Estela are able to take back the autonomy of both their bodies and their lives, reject the assumption that women were not the “natural” occupants of the public sphere and resist the limitations placed on women’s access to knowledge.<sup>379</sup>

Whilst considering the relationship between feminism and anger, Sara Ahmed states that women’s testimonies about pain are imperative, not only to the formation of feminist subjects but to feminist collectives which ‘have mobilised around the injustice of that violence and the political and ethical demand for reparation and redress.’<sup>380</sup> The female resistance pertinent to both Zayas’s and Cervantes’s *novelas* engenders female bonding and identification between the women who suffer. In her foreword, Rich posits that the realm of literature depicts female bonding and identification between women as essential for female survival.<sup>381</sup> In Zayas’s and Cervantes’s *novelas*, female survival begins with the resistance strategies of the heroines and continues with the female bonding not only between the women in the texts, but also between the female characters and the readers of the *novelas* who can narcissistically identify with their suffering. The frame-story which encases Zayas’s twenty *novelas* is one of the most prominent forms of female bonding within the texts. With particular focus on *Desengaños amorosos*, the *sarao* becomes something of a

<sup>378</sup> María de Zayas, *The Enchantments of Love: Amorous and Exemplary Novels*, trans. by H. Patsy Boyer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 286.

<sup>379</sup> Puwar, p.8.

<sup>380</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p.172.

<sup>381</sup> Rich, p.1591.

consciousness raising group in which women share their most intimate experiences with men, among an understanding audience. With the narrational device of the frame-story, Zayas ensures that the suffering of her female characters is noted twice: first, by the characters who attend the *sarao* and discuss the cases told by the narrators and second, by the readers of the texts who by reading these cases, are also part of Zayas's wider strategy of memorialising how early modern women suffered, both physically and mentally. Mobilising around the injustice of violence against women and demanding reparation for the wounds sustained by the victims is a centralising impetus of Zayas's *sarao* and an anger which drives the narrative forward in *Desengaños amorosos*.

Another significant example of women forming empathetic bonds through their experiences of pain takes place in Cervantes's *Las dos doncellas*, between his two cross-dressing heroines. In this *novela*, Teodosia and Leocadia both suffer at the hands of Marco Antonio and therefore, the traumatic aftermath of his unexplained abandonment deeply affects both women, in a very similar way. First, Teodosia provides an account of her psychological suffering when she first discovers that Marco Antonio has vanished after promising to be her husband, '[c]astigué mis cabellos, como si ellos tuvieran la culpa de mi yerro; martiricé mi rostro, por parecerme que él había dado toda la ocasión a mi desventura; maldije mi suerte'.<sup>382</sup> Second, Leocadia narrates her trauma in front of Teodosia, albeit unbeknown to her, and

<sup>382</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.207.



her stages of suffering appear almost identical to those suffered by Teodosia, '[m]altraté mi rostro, arranqué mis cabellos, maldije mi suerte'.<sup>383</sup> Through their paralleled experiences of pain the women begin to form a female collective, although at this point in the narrative, it is only Teodosia who realises this. With an awareness of the connection between herself and Leocadia, there is an extraordinary moment in which Teodosia reminds Leocadia that she shouldn't blame the other woman but Marco Antonio who has caused her pain. Withholding her status as the woman in question, Teodosia proposes a question to Leocadia, '¿Pues qué culpa tiene Teodosia – dijo Teodoro–, si ella quizá también fue engañada de Marco Antonio, como vos, señora Leocadia, lo habéis sido?'.<sup>384</sup> Here, Teodosia communicates an important message to Leocadia that women must unite and stand against the men who have betrayed them, rather than blaming one another.

Fundamentally, Cervantes's *novelas* begin the process of rejecting men's violent treatment of women, placing the blame entirely on male shoulders. In comparison to his literary brothers of the time, Cervantes takes an exceptional stance in refuting the sexual double standard and blaming men for women's extramarital affairs.<sup>385</sup> Forcing men to be aware of their own actions, Cervantes therefore, supports the view that it is men who must deconstruct the coercive male-female relationship and considering his privileged, androcentric position, this awareness

<sup>383</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.218.

<sup>384</sup> Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares II*, p.219.

<sup>385</sup> Mariló Vigil, *La vida de las mujeres en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1986), p.149.

is even more remarkable. Demonstrating a seemingly “modern” awareness of men’s responsibility for the unequal male-female relationship, Cervantes’s attitude illuminates Mies’s twentieth-century statement that, ‘[a] change in the existing sexual division of labour would imply first and foremost that the *violence* that characterizes capitalist-patriarchal man-woman relations worldwide will be abolished not by women, but *by men*.’<sup>386</sup> Through the reimagined gender relations in their texts, Zayas and Cervantes are able to highlight and denounce the varying forms of violence that characterise the male-female relationship, in such a way that they begin to contribute to a vision of society ‘in which neither women, men, nor nature are exploited.’<sup>387</sup> Zayas and Cervantes are remarkable, the former for claiming her voice as a woman and the latter as an early modern man, for his awareness of women’s tribulations.

<sup>386</sup> Mies, p.222.

<sup>387</sup> Mies, p.23.

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